

RHETORIC VS. REALITY

Here are just a few of the dismal statistics I've learned about Oregon schools after 15 years of cutting staff and programs: Oregon elementary classrooms are the second most crowded in the nation, as of 2000; our 71 percent high school graduation rate ranks 32nd; per-student funding has dropped from 15th place (1990-91) to 30th place (2002-2003); 37 percent of new Oregon teachers leave the profession within the first five years. As a retired educator, I don't see these as indicators of progress on the issues addressed in the 1983 educational report "A Nation at Risk."

But, finally, two rays of light recently appeared: the well-researched results of a two-year study by the non-partisan Chalkboard Project (www.chalkboard-project.org), and the lawsuit filed March 21 by the Oregon School Funding Defense Foundation

against the state Legislature for failure to adequately fund K-12 public according to the Oregon Constitution and the Quality Education Model approved by voters in 2000. I see two opportunities to re-frame discussions about educational quality, accountability, and funding. However, rather than embrace the boldness and creativity of these two independent but related ventures, *The Register-Guard* editors took a disappointingly defeatist view of the lawsuit in their March 23 editorial "Suing for better schools."

Few people are naïve enough to assume that a successful lawsuit magically produces money, plus I agree with the editors that "the problem would demand a political solution." Great! An unrelenting spotlight will be on our elected representatives, forcing them to make their rhetoric match the reality.

Laura Sherrill
Eugene

IRKSOME EAR TRASH

I'm not an expert on the restaurant business, but I am an expert on the pursuit of relaxation, and I know something about music. I have some advice for every restaurant in this town that hasn't figured it out yet: Turn off the damn radio.

I'm not talking about satellite radio or programmed music. I'm talking about car commercials, closeout sales, football hype and disgraced Republicans. Aggravating ear trash! How stupid, to subject your customers to that aggressive, bellowing crap when they are trying to relax their stomachs enough to digest food.

I don't really like eating in a crowd of loud-talking, elbow-jabbing, germ-spewing strangers, but my cooking sucks. To keep it simple, I order exactly the same thing at each of several restaurants where I eat. Sometimes, I try a new restaurant if it fits two requirements: one dish I like and no radio.

Light classical or ethnic instrumental music go nicely with eating. Not "Come on down!"; "Motor homes! Motor homes!"; "You've gotta try this mattress made of a brand-new substance — foam rubber!"; "Dennis Rodman pierced his butt today ... and it looks like rain!"

I like rock 'n' roll, but a tube-screamer with a knife edge scrunch and an angry monotone singer from Seattle turns my chow mein into chow pain. There's a place for that

kind of music, and my esophagus isn't it.

Sometimes there are televisions on that no one is watching, jabbering about the knees and ankles of athletes I have never heard of. When no one's looking, I turn off the TV and no one even notices.

Unfortunately, one of my favorite restaurants just got a TV in the open kitchen. They still played the soft, relaxing music from a program but it was drowned out by Will and Grace arguing about who has the best marinade and Jack knocking things over with his ass. Another place has the same dish but it has an old beverage cooler that sounds like a band saw.

It's so easy to provide a pleasant atmosphere for dining: good food, clean tables, friendly service and a lack of obnoxious noises when people are trying to eat. Maybe I'm too sensitive to sound, but think me as a canary in a mine shaft or a frog in Pittsburgh. If it bothers me a lot, it probably bothers everyone else a little bit.

Don Beckett
Eugene

GET OUT THE MAP

Many people have suggested that there should be a hospital in West Eugene. I agree. Along Beltline between West 11th and 99 North is a good place to consider, but also along any other major road in West Eugene, such as Danebo, Roosevelt, Barger, Bertelson or Royal. For those people who don't know those other roads exist, I suggest you get out a map.

If you want to go to the coast or to Veneta from anywhere north of 11th Avenue or from Springfield, you will get there faster by Beltline or any of the roads listed above than by West 11th. There is plenty of road capacity for travel between central Eugene and the western fringes. All that is missing is the mental capacity to use it.

The proposed wetlands highway would merely duplicate Roosevelt Boulevard, which now extends to Terry Street on the west edge of Eugene. Terry Street connects to West 11th.

Ann Tattersall
Eugene

REALITY CHECK

Hello, Eugene companies. I have a strong desire to remind you of a fact. It is the year 2006. I know you are shocked. It is not 1980 anymore. I am sure you have heard of the term "inflation." That means the price of living has gone up. It's an amazing concept: To keep an economy generating, you pay people enough so they can buy things. So, all you have to do is spin the clock forward about 25 years, loosen the belt and we're going to be OK. Believe me, I know.

Paul Casey
Eugene

IF ONLY ...

This immigration thing is such a heart-break. If we hadn't gotten into Iraq, we'd have funds available (trillions) to invite Mexico to join the U.S. in a unified country.

We could have extended industry, education and medical care there so they could actualize hopes and dreams on their home turf.

To mark the event, we could've redesigned our flag — red, white, blue and



green, with the words "No Tears" stitched boldly across it, beautifully and in black lettering.

If only it were true.

Lori Kasprzak
Eugene

CITIZEN PATROLS

My response to "Same Old Cops" by Talia Delman (4/6) is to tell her I think the problem of law enforcement in Eugene cannot be solved locally. The answer is in Salem — not Eugene. The police are not going to deal with neighborhood problems. They never have and they never will.

I would suggest Talia go to Salem and get enabling legislation that would allow citizens to police their own neighborhoods, collect evidence with video cameras or other means, send warning letters to the violators, and have the authority to issue citations for certain misdemeanors. These citizen patrols would not have the authority to confront the wrongdoers, only collect evidence and issue certain citations.

We the people created this country and we the people are responsible for law enforcement — not the police. The police are our agents.

Frank Skipton
Springfield

WE HAVE THE LAWS

My ancestors immigrated to the U.S. from Europe around the turn of the 20th century. They arrived by ship and were processed through Ellis Island. I cannot remember them flying flags other than Old Glory, regardless of the occasion.

I watched the protests over the last couple of weeks, and noticed many protesters were carrying Mexican flags. If they are loyal Mexicans, they shouldn't be protesting against our laws, rather they should be thankful that they can apply legally for working visas to earn a living here in the "land of opportunity."

Unlike our neighbors to the north, we are not a bilingual nation. Through decades, immigrants came to the U.S. and learned

English and American history and applied for naturalized citizenship.

Today my family has many successful and contributing members of this nation: doctors, financial consultants, attorneys, business owners, musicians and artists. They have raised proud and patriotic Americans who fought bravely for freedom in two world wars, Korea and Vietnam.

We do not need or want immigration reform, it's the enforcement of current laws that is the problem. With over 11 million illegals in this country, it is easy to see why social programs suffer. Farmers say they need these people because they couldn't afford to pay minimum wages to pick crops. I say it can be done legally and should be done in accordance with the laws already in place.

But we do need to address the security of our borders and what to do about the many illegals that are already here. Higher fences, surveillance equipment, and armed patrols are needed. Those that are already here illegally, step forward, and make yourselves known.

America is a land of great opportunity, so why not come in the front door and be welcomed properly?

Fred Marsico
Corvallis

HILL IS THE GUY

Four years ago I changed my voter registration from the Green Party to Democratic in order to vote in the gubernatorial primary election for candidate for Jim Hill (former State Treasurer, eight years; and legislator for 10 years). A few weeks ago I once again re-registered, this time from independent to Democrat so I can vote for Jim Hill in the May primary. I sincerely hope many other concerned citizens will register to vote (or re-register), and consider voting for Hill.

If you're interested in supporting a candidate for Governor who has a great vision for Oregon, who's inspiring, has integrity and experience, then Hill is the guy. Hill's record of handling state budgets as treasurer instills confidence in his leadership ability. Oregon's economy was strong and resilient with Jim