

Fed Meddling

Simple blundering, or strategic suppression?

As a volunteer for the May 30 rally in Eugene supporting an end to roadside spraying of toxic herbicides in Lane County, I'm a little confused as to why Homeland Security, a federal agency created to protect the nation from terrorist attacks, was spying on us in the first place. According to a Homeland Security spokesperson, one of the roles of Homeland is to protect federal buildings, such as the U.S. Courthouse. Yet the May 30 rally was held several blocks away from the courthouse in the Ken Kesey "Free Speech" Plaza. Just the same, an undercover federal agent monitored our small rally while another stood guard at the federal courthouse.



The spokesperson claims Homeland was worried our small peaceful group of less than 35 people would march to the federal building. What I can't figure out is why the federal government would think that those of us supporting an end to Lane County herbicide spraying would even consider marching to the federal building?

It turns out that's not the only incorrect assumption made by Homeland Security – the agency we are told to count on to prevent another 9/11. Homeland was also confused as to who the organizers for the May 30 anti-pesticide rally even were. Homeland agent Tom Keedy's reports (obtained from attorneys) state that the agency incorrectly believed the rally was being organized by the Pitchfork Rebellion, a small group of farmers living in the Coast Range among timber industry clearcuts, who have been trying to obtain buffer zones around their homes and schools from the helicopter herbicide applications they are routinely exposed to.

In reality, the May 30 rally – which unfortunately ended with three arrests, multiple Taserings and more than a dozen witness complaints of police brutality by the Eugene Police Department – was organized by a newly formed student group at the UO called "Crazy People for Wild Places." Agent Keedy's report admits the reason for stationing Homeland agents at both the rally and the courthouse was because of a March 7 rally against the BLM's WOPR plan to increase native forest logging by 700 percent. In that rally, some participants tried to present the staff of Sen. Wyden and Congressman DeFazio with a petition calling for the protection of our public forests.

Homeland also incorrectly thought this rally was organized by the rural Pitchfork Rebellion. But it was actually organized by the student group OSPIRG. I'm starting to wonder if Homeland Security sources are the same ones who reported WMDs in Iraq. What Homeland intelligence failed to gather was that Day Owen, a spokesperson for the Pitchfork Rebellion, had speaking slots at these rallies. As did Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson, Oregon Toxics Alliance Executive Director Lisa Arkin and many other community members who want to protect our water-purifying, carbon-storing forests, and end the wanton use of deadly chemicals.

So why would a couple of speeches warrant monitoring by the federal government? Over the past few years, the Pitchfork Rebellion has become a leading voice calling attention to the risky practices of timber industry herbicide spraying – as individuals who have had their livestock, organic crops, water sources and even they themselves contaminated by the toxic spray, having to seek medical attention on several occasions. Pitchfork Rebellion also speaks out against the backward timber industry practice of clearcutting, which is the whole reason for using forest herbicides: With selective logging some of the forest canopy remains, which keeps away much of the invasive weeds.

Pitchfork Rebellion's tactics include writing op-eds and articles for newsletters, attending Oregon Board of Forestry meetings and conferences, public speaking and organizing an occasional rally (not the ones Homeland Security thinks: instead, a Dec. 21 rally in Eugene to oppose WOPR, with former Congressman Jim Weaver as a keynote and which 300 people attended).

Why these simple actions would warrant the attention of Homeland Security puzzles and worries me. Is it because the members of Pitchfork Rebellion have been making their voices heard, with many environmental organizations responding to their cry for help to join them at their side? Is it because they are challenging the status quo and are actually being heard? Is it because they are becoming a force Big Timber must reckon with that the feds are monitoring – and calling police on them?

Josh Schlossberg is co-director of the all-volunteer Cascadia's Ecosystem Advocates and an editor for the Forest Voice newspaper.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRUSTING POLICE

Is there no end to the reasons citizens of Eugene cannot trust the Eugene Police Department? From the use of extreme force to subdue protesters, the shooting of Ryan Salisbury, the two officers, Magaña and Lara, who sexually abused so many women while on duty, their attempts to oust the police auditor to their most recent show of lack of professionalism, the public insults at Councilor Bonny Bettman, there seems to be a long, ugly laundry list of things our police go out of their way to do to demonstrate that they still cannot be trusted. In fact, they seem to have no interest at all in straightening up and behaving themselves.

One cannot even call to file a police report on an accident involving an uninsured driver with a suspended license, even if the person whose car was hit was in fact injured. I was greeted by callous, insensitive dispatchers who told me that it was up to my insurance company to deal with it since I wasn't taken to the hospital by ambulance.

Of course, she made the famous claim of "understaffing" — a problem that afflicts all police departments, large and small — and during the conversation, I felt I was being toyed with. I continued to raise the issues of the suspension, lack of insurance and the injury as she continued to refuse to help in any way and then she told me that my demeanor was a problem for her. Well, officer, your demeanor is no doubt a severe problem for a lot of people.

I suspect many citizens of Eugene have not gotten the sensitivity and assistance they needed in their time of crisis, when they needed the police to be their protectors, not the people specially assigned to antagonize them. The EPD has steadfastly maintained its reputation for uselessness and engendering fear and hopelessness in law-abiding citizens.

*Kimberly Hill
Eugene*

WHERE'S THE DOG?

On July 7, while delivering mail on

8th Avenue, I was bitten on the leg by a dog that was not being controlled well by the girl who was walking it, and who was with two other dogs and four other girls. I received three lacerations and two puncture wounds on my left calf.

I had to make the girls who were walking the dogs stop and wait for me to call my supervisor to come out and take a report. With any dog bite that draws blood, like mine, the post office gets involved and has to file a work-related injury report. The wait for my supervisor and the report took just over half an hour of standing in the hot sun, and the requirement from the post office, that I see a doctor, meant that I did not get home until 9:45 pm that night after a long wait at the after-hours clinic.

Animal Control was notified and I was told that the dog would be quarantined for 30 days because of the bite. Well, today, July 17, I get a letter from Animal Control that stated they "could not locate the dog." So what amazes me is the blatant dishonesty of the people who were caring for the dogs. Where's the dog, girls, hmmm?

*Don Robertson
Eugene letter carrier, Rt. 218*

CYCLE OF UGLINESS

The recent Taser incident has once again revived the stale, flawed argument that police "in harm's way" must use potentially lethal force so as to protect themselves. This may sound reasonable on the surface, but why did police put themselves in harm's way?

Too often police find themselves needing to hurt somebody. An officer who enters a harmless situation and puts himself and others in danger is not serving the people. A peace officer wisely avoids the traps of fear and anger.

A police officer's job is to look for trouble. Unfortunately the problems we seek tend to materialize. It is a difficult situation for police. The energy they bring largely determines the outcome. If they are