

TO THEIR DEFENSE

As I think about the accusations, condemnation, and persecution of Pete Sorenson and Rob Handy, I think of these lines from *The Second Coming* (Yeats): “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” Who is going to come to the defense of two dedicated public servants who are unjustly accused, convicted, and penalized?

As an elected official in a related body, I have had ample opportunity to observe Sorenson and Handy and have been impressed by their dedication to the public good and to government transparency. I have admired their honesty and their unselfish contributions of time and talents.

I am dismayed by the injustice perpetrated on Pete and Rob. I am also very concerned about the chilling effect on other public officials and potential candidates — will everyone currently in office who is not wealthy enough to pay huge fines walk in fear? Will spouses of potential candidates warn them against risking the family’s security by the possibility of being put on trial for planning actions or discussing issues outside of a public meeting?

As an English teacher, I always encouraged my students to test ideas through sharing and listening and questioning. One’s thinking is sharpened — and sometimes modified or even reversed — through interaction with the ideas of friends and colleagues. I would hope that elected officials, when they have the opportunity, would test their ideas and refine them by discussion before a meeting in which a decision is made.

We all know that we cannot make decisions except in a public meeting and that we cannot meet as a quorum to deliberate outside a public meeting. But to have the entire process be public would prevent discussions with constituents. As I think about it, it becomes more ridiculous.

I hope that Pete and Rob’s constituents will speak out against injustice and urge the other commissioners to join their colleagues in appealing the court decision.

Betty Taylor
Ward 2 City Councilor

BE CAREFUL

Public officials all over the state better be looking over their shoulders. Thanks to an imaginative interpretation of what constitutes a quorum in the Public Meetings Law by a Coos County judge, routine communication and strategizing among decision makers is now in jeopardy.

Politically motivated and orchestrated by a ruthless, conservative lot, including Aaron Jones of Seneca Lumber, the suit filed by former commissioner Ellie Dumdi and Gang of Nine member Ed Anderson, meant to bring down liberal commissioners Handy and Sorenson and assure a long-term pro-growth, supermajority on the county board.

However, in his reckless ruling the Coos judge cast a wide net. In it East Lane Commissioner Faye Stewart, who testified against two of his fellow commissioners, was caught as well. For narrow-minded political reasons, Handy and Sorenson were singled out as fall guys.

But the implication of the ruling has sent

shock waves through the entire system of public officialdom.

If not out of compassion and common decency, then for their own self interests, the board majority should join the minority and appeal a bad decision. Judge Gillespie’s reasoning distorts the meaning of a quorum and testifies to the moral, “Be careful what you wish for, you may receive it.”

Robert Emmons
Fall Creek

NOT SO BRILLIANT

I attended Van Jones lecture and read the Slant piece in last week’s (1/27) *EW*. I wonder if I went to the same lecture as the author of that piece who touted the lecture as brilliant, while I think it was a disappointing pep talk for the high tech industry.

Jones pointed out that a wind turbine needs the amount of steel of 20 cars and has about 8,000 finely machined parts per turbine. These turbines and solar panels can only be manufactured by using large amounts of fossil fuels. How are we going to pay for that when oil is \$200 per barrel?

Never mind the wildlife kills of the wind turbines and the e-waste of discarded solar panels.

Jones talked about changing the way we grow food and expressed his desire to see more urban greenhouses for growing food, noting that we are already capable of growing large crops of marijuana in greenhouses. I definitely believe that we need more urban farming, but it is rather misleading to point out how marijuana is grown, without pointing out the huge amount of electricity that it takes.

I do believe that we need to promote much more alternative energy, but Jones could have pointed out that there is no way we will be able to maintain current levels of GDP with declining fossil fuels. I would have liked to see him promote promising low tech solutions to our dilemmas, like biogas and better efficiency, instead of the delusional high tech solutions.

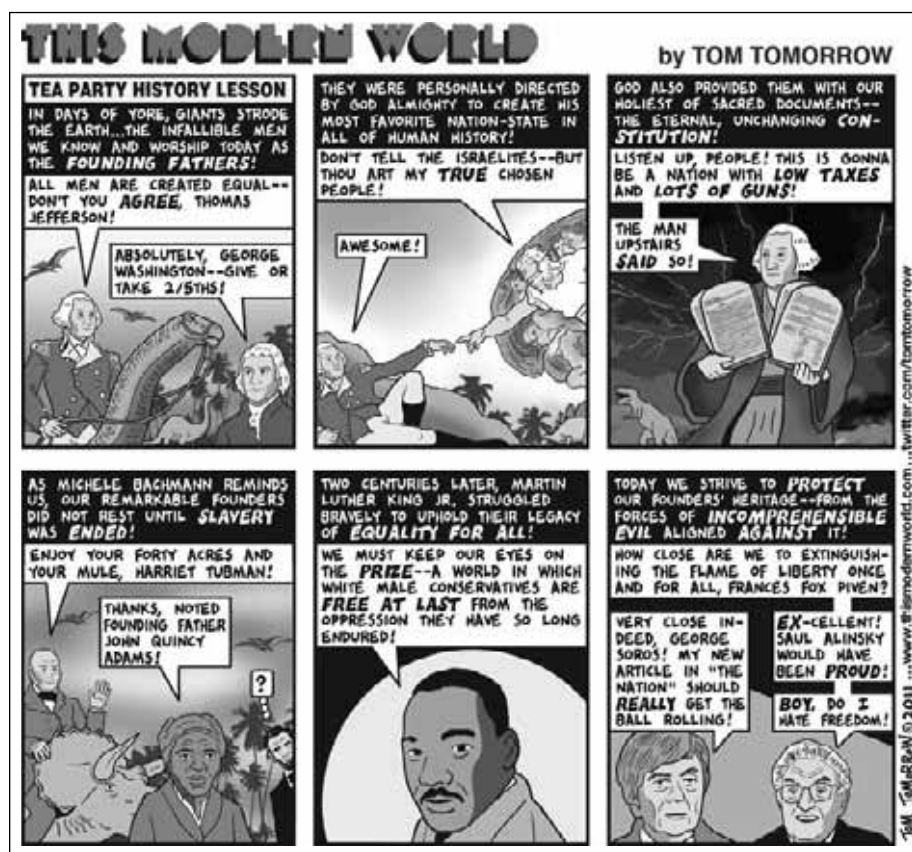
Arjen Hoekstra
Eugene

TRIAGE FOR SCHOOLS

Its \$22 million shortfall gives District 4J the opportunity to do the right thing. During flush times, “the right thing” is banished, because ok politically incorrect truths make too many people feel uncomfortable. But now is a different time. When tears flow, sometimes minds open, and opportunity will then find its champions.

Our predicament requires triage thinking: doing the greatest good for the most people with the available resources. In triage, some victims are not helped, but “greatest good” thinking can go a long way toward helping everyone.

District 4J should: 1) transform Edison School from a neighborhood elementary school to a citywide high school for Eugene’s most brilliant mathematics and science students; 2) transform North Eugene High School from a regional general high school to a citywide special education high school focused on preparing students for blue-collar work, independent contractor self-employment, and/or apprenticeships in union and/or shop trades; and 3) create a



citywide on-campus middle school at South Eugene High School so Eugene’s most brilliant eighth grade students can enroll in high school classes.

The basic education standard should be: every child 21st-century-literate at no less than grade level while being actively challenged and fully facilitated to achieve personal potentials in all core academics.

At the top end, the education standard should be: Students must be advanced to the academic level at which they can succeed while being challenged.

Schools teach to the middle. Therefore, more on-topic learning happens if students are grouped according to their academic ability.

Steven A. Sywester
Eugene

EDITOR’S NOTE: A longer essay on this proposal can be found at <http://wkly.ws/10t>

ALIENATING CUSTOMERS

As one who lives, commutes and shops along West 11th Avenue, I agree with Ralph Wombat’s proposal (letters, 1/20) to boycott businesses that display anti-EmX signs. Improved mass transit is key to improving the current livability of our community, and is our best bet to pass on a decent and sustainable environment to our children. Plenty of high-density apartments are directly south of the route and residents would no doubt take advantage of more efficient bus travel to go to work and school.

While these businesses may have legitimate reasons to oppose EmX, by taking such a visible stand on a controversial issue they can alienate a substantial portion of their customer base. They are mixing politics and business in a way they have previously avoided. The profusion of signs is ugly.

Please notify these businesses that you are boycotting them through letters and phone calls, especially if you have been a customer. Notify the corporate headquarters of the chains since they may not know what their franchises are up to. Let businesses know that with their in-your-face signs, they can lose customers forever.

Chuck Areford
Eugene

WHY SO FAGGOTY?

In her Jan. 28 column, Sally Sheklow uses the term “faggoty” to describe the guest conductor. Why is this an acceptable adjective to her? I thought the LGBT community tried to discourage the use of the word. Or is it only OK for LGBT people to use it and not straight people? Clarification desired please, Sally.

Jessica Zuckerman
Lorane

PUNISHING SUCCESS

Ruth Duemler (letters, 1/20) seems to think “we all know” income tax is the fairest tax. I disagree. A tax on income is a punishment for being successful — a punishment for being efficient — a punishment for being productive and able to compete. And a graduated tax of any kind is ridiculous and obscene. Ability to pay is irrelevant when it comes to raising the revenue to fund government operations. The “fairest tax” — if there is such a thing — is an activity tax like they have in Washington state. Locally, a “fair” tax is the tax on gasoline — the more activity you have the more tax you pay.

In Washington state companies who have a lot of activity and no profits pay a lot of tax — because their activities create a need for government services. In Oregon there are hundreds of companies that pay no tax because they have no “taxable income.” But still create the same need for government services.

Frank Skipton
Springfield

REDEFINING LANGUAGE

At a recent Eugene town hall forum, we discussed the 2010 Supreme Court decision, *Citizen’s United v. FEC*. With its 5-4 decision in this case, and earlier rulings (*Buckley v. Valeo* and *Santa Clara*), the court has constructed these head-scratching equations: Corporations = people and money = speech.

By anthropomorphizing inanimate objects and redefining language, the supremes have given corporations the green light to spend unlimited funds to influence our national, state, local,