

THE AMERICAN WAY

I oppose biomass energy production. We need to sharply reduce energy waste instead. If we are going to seriously challenge all of our environmental problems, we're going to have to change the way we live. Most of the things that we perceive to be necessities are not. We have had the misfortune of living in the most ridiculously wasteful century in all of human history and we consider this lifestyle to be normal, sane, and desirable. It is not.

The cities of Oregon are highly visible at night from satellites in outer space. I can almost walk from one end of Eugene to the other while reading a book at midnight. Car dealerships and shopping centers are ridiculously well lit, all night long, with wasted energy. They could hire a security guard, turn off the lights, and increase their profits. We need more jobs, and less waste.

I once read an article on Guernsey, an island in the English Channel. The author was impressed by the astonishing common sense of this land, which resulted in a prosperous life with an extremely light footprint. For example: "And at night much of Guernsey is a dark place indeed because many of the parishes have long since decided that street lighting is a waste of money. So there isn't any. Guernseymen argue that if you go out at night and want to see, you carry a flashlight. Which is of course a very practical and exceedingly cheap solution."

Clothes lines and drying racks can get clothes just as dry as electric clothes driers. Small screen TVs provide us with no less mindless garbage than large screen TVs. For thousands of years, people have enjoyed rich and satisfying lives without air conditioners. And so on.

We are already using biomass fuel to power vehicles — ethanol. Highly subsidized ethanol is reducing grain exports, and resulting in food riots in poor countries. Biomass energy corporations have two primary objectives: growth and profits, by any means that they can get away with.

Richard Reese
Eugene

OUR OWN KOCH

Eugene, did you know? We have our own Koch brother, here.

Think hard, who might that be? Is there a mill called Seneca? There must be an owner, a great local funder of who and what.

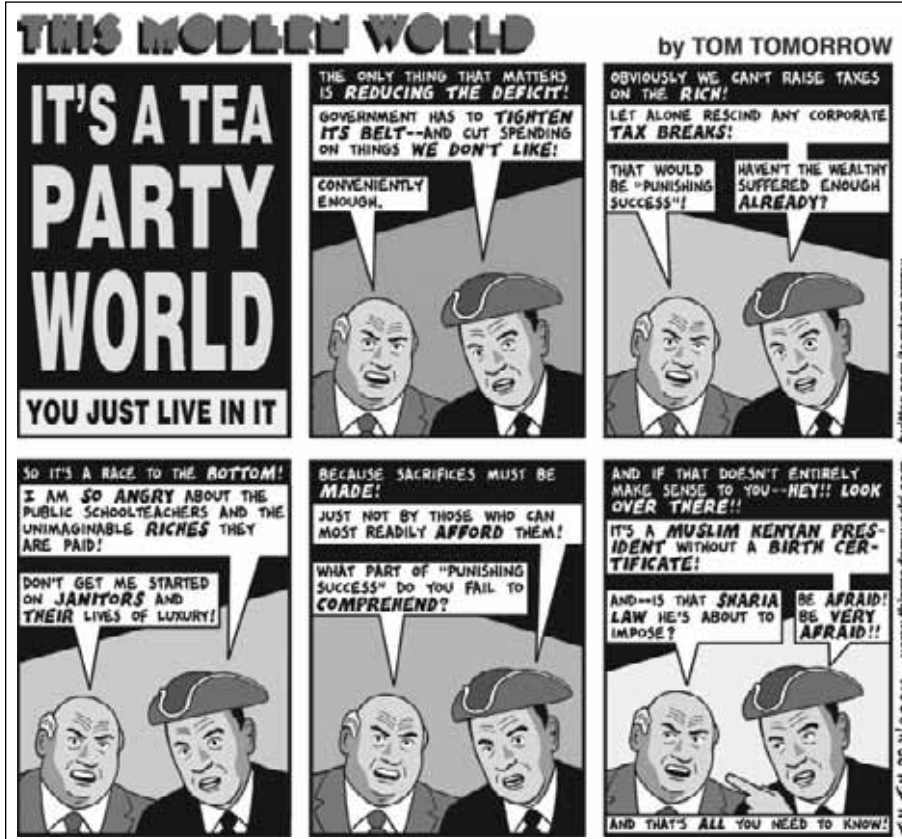
Having your underwear ironed doesn't keep you honest and straight. Just helps you salute to your money and bark as a baron.

Steve Trimmell
Veneta

WINDBAG PUNDIT

I'm constantly underwhelmed by the idiocy and ludicrousness of Mark Harris' articles and "contributions" to the community. Mark, you are such an arrogant windbag! Congratulations, you are one of a handful of black people in Eugene. Why don't you do something constructive with your status instead of stroking yourself?

You can only get away with it here because no one calls you on it. Guess what, buddy? I'm calling you out. We all are pretty aware there are few people of any color here. Why not do something positive and help people be comfortable with unfamiliar cultures instead of rubbing your different-ness in their faces constantly? Why not be more approachable instead of swaggering around campus like your balls are so huge you need a wheelbarrow



for them? I'm really disappointed and embarrassed by and for you.

Just so you know, I'm Native, black and white, grew up here, and was trained as a drug and alcohol counselor. You of all people have the training to be a positive contributing member to society. Get over yourself.

Clarice Smart
Eugene

A PROGRESSIVE TAX

On Feb. 14, the Eugene City Council decided to put a city income tax measure on the May ballot dedicated to keeping

class size down and making the school year whole again. Most speakers during the public comment section spoke in favor of the income tax. Several, however, spoke against it and specifically referred to the progressive nature of the proposed tax as "class war" against the well-to-do.

The reality is that we have been in class war for some time now. Warren Buffet, the icon of American capitalism, was quoted recently, "There is class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war and we are winning." Since the 1980s we have seen the largest redistribution of wealth

natural resistance BY MARY O'BRIEN

Good Legislation

The foundation for effective collaboration

This week is the 29th Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (PIELC) at the UO. I remember attending the first PIELC in 1982. If I recall correctly, it was scheduled for just a Thursday afternoon and Friday, not four days. I was in my second year of working at Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides and was thrilled to have the chance to learn about environmental laws, and how I might make sure they are followed. I brought a small cassette recorder to tape what I was hearing.

I'm back for the PIELC this year. (I don't think I've missed more than one or two.) While my love of strong environmental law and of citizen litigation when it is necessary remains, I am much more conscious now than I was in 1982 of the complementary role of collaboration within the sideboards of environmental law (or labor law, or civil rights law). Generally, when environmental (or labor or civil rights) litigation is completed, someone has won and someone has lost. That's not necessarily bad, because sometimes, for the sake of a society guarding its natural resources, environmental or social health, and future generations, someone *needs* to lose.

But losers can be a pretty sore bunch, and they often have a lot more money and political power than

the winners. And that's where collaboration comes in. Because more often than we think, there are more possibilities than a stark win-loss (think Wisconsin).

Once, when some power companies were duking it out over who would build how many dams on the Snake River in Hells Canyon, the Supreme Court didn't decide between them, but rather sent the case back down to a lower court to consider whether any dams needed to be built in Hells Canyon at all. It's that kind of thinking that often comes up in collaborations.

I've spent the better part of the last 30 years in one collaboration or another — whether developing alternatives to aerial herbicide spraying on national forests in Oregon and Washington; drafting Oregon groundwater legislation; developing Toxics Board and industry reporting processes following passage of Eugene's Toxics Right-to-Know Law; considering alternatives to the West Eugene Parkway; developing a new management plan for Hells Canyon; developing aspen restoration guidelines for national forests in Utah; jointly drafting a beaver plan for Utah; or grazing cattle differently on some beat-up national forest allotments in southern Utah.

The end result of a successful collaboration feels different than a win in court. There isn't the fist-pumping rush. Generally, there are just some quiet last hours of wording being worked out by the ones who are still willing to sit in a chair. But collaboration, particularly if it has run on consensus and all principal stakeholders have had a strong, informed representative, generates its own rewards.



One of them is that a solution has been reached that seems workable to all, and thus is likely to be implemented rather than undermined.

Another is the gratifying moments when a participant has broken a stalemate with a suggestion that seems just right to everyone. The interesting thing is that it isn't always the same person. Sometimes a person who got stuck in one situation is the very person who unsticks everyone else at another point in the collaboration. Sometimes the person who offers a workable solution is one who would have been expected to have *opposed* such a solution.

And that's the best of collaboration: when each participant is honestly working at hearing everyone else and looks a little sideways at the situation and sees some possibility that hadn't been on the table till then. Sometimes it's just a different wording; at other times a significantly different way to accomplish underlying, rather than surface needs. But each time the participants get unstuck they get an increased sense the collaboration is working. And each time one of the participants is generous at changing, others are more likely to be generous.

There is a prerequisite for collaboration, however, and that is good environmental (or labor or civil rights) law. We do need to decide we *will* protect the Earth and society's opportunities for *everyone*. And then we're surprisingly good at putting our heads together to figure out how to do that, to the ultimate benefit of all.

Mary O'Brien has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She is currently dividing her time between Eugene and Castle Valley, Utah.