

MUPTE MAKES SENSE

Alan Pittman's article (6/23) about Oregon's Multiple Unit Property Tax Exemption Law (MUPTE) creates the misleading impression that this program is an irresponsible, controversial tax giveaway. If it is so controversial, why did the 2011 Oregon Legislature vote 87 to 2 in favor of extending MUPTE for 10 years? Our legislature has slashed countless tax loopholes and incentives in this session, but not MUPTE. Democrats and Republicans alike understand that without MUPTE, many desirable construction projects will never get built. Simply put, MUPTE is among the most effective tools available to stimulate economic development in Oregon.

Pittman's claim that MUPTE is a tax giveaway is dead wrong. When City Council grants a MUPTE petition, by definition, Council is satisfied that the project cannot be built without MUPTE support. In most instances, tax revenues generated by the new construction are fully recaptured within two years after the expiration of the exemption. After that, taxes are collected at a rate that is generally 100 to 150 percent higher than in the pre-exemption period. In other words, the MUPTE program dramatically increases property tax revenue in the long term.

It is widely recognized that the councilors who withhold support for MUPTE applications in our community — generally the councilors serving the south Eugene area — do so to satisfy those vocal constituents who object to growth within our community, or at least within their part of our community.

The Paradigm on Pearl will be among the first LEED certified midrise buildings west of the Mississippi. Gold or Platinum certification is expected for this environmentally sensitive project. We are grateful to Mayor Kitty Piercy and the majority of the City Council for supporting the MUPTE application for The Paradigm on Pearl. None of the councilors who supported this application felt that it represented a tax giveaway. On the contrary, they felt strongly that this project will benefit our community.

*Dan Neal
Eugene*

BRING DOUGHNUTS

This was on Fox News' website on June 28: "It vindicates all of us who say our Judeo-Christian heritage is under attack ... sometimes it's in the courts, sometimes it's elected officials and sometimes it's the media." That was attributed to Jordan Sekulow, director of policy and international operations for

the American Center for Law and Justice, and it was his reaction to the Eugene City Council voting to say the Pledge of Allegiance at four of the 24 meetings per year, instead of before every meeting.

Councilor Mike Clark, whose proposal was to have the Council recite the Pledge before every meeting, says he meant to "unite the council." It appears that all he did was vindicate those people who have made an industry out of claiming our "Judeo-Christian heritage is under attack."

Hey Mike, next time you want to unite the council, bring doughnuts.

*Kevin O'Brien
Eugene*

GUN-CLINGER'S WORDS

In the first sentence of the Viewpoint in the May 26 issue, the writer (Gordon Lafer) states, "I'm going to shoot someone." Needless to say, I was too outraged to read further. However, I did glance at the photograph of the author, obviously some bitter gun-clinger from Springtucky. Come on! I can read the *R-G* if I want this kind of crap.

Fortunately my twittering nerves were somewhat allayed when I read about the healing arts practitioner (Elie Fionn) who specializes in past-life interpretations. Especially her work with the dog who

suffers from battle trauma incurred during the Civil War when he had been a horse. As for myself I was a rat in Antwerp during the Black Death. Do you think she could help me from chipping any more teeth?

*Tom Tracey
Eugene*

WHAT IF?

The Oregon Country Fair is thought to be a legacy of the 1960s. But what would the legacy of the 1960s be if initiatives to end the Cold War in 1963 had been allowed to continue?

On Sept. 20, 1963, the day before I was born, President Kennedy gave a speech to the U.N. calling off the nuclear arms race and converting the "moon race" to a cooperative venture with the Soviet Union. You can read and listen to the speech at www.oilempire.us/moonrace.html

In October 1963, JFK ordered a troop withdrawal from Vietnam and started an effort to resume diplomatic relations with Cuba. What would "The Sixties" have been if the war on Vietnam had ended in 1965 and the military industrial complex had been converted to peaceful purposes?

JFK's change on the moon race was part of a broader effort to turn off the Cold War, the reason JFK was removed from office. JFK called for scattering the CIA into a thousand pieces and the CIA

viewpoint BY SAMUEL C. PORTER

A Moral Ecology

Bridging today's issues with our rich heritage

In 1961, I was eight years old living in Washington, D.C., as a middle class white boy sheltered from much of the world's harshness.

Although often forces of good, I still find baffling how major religious and secular institutions, including the press and government, were complicit in the racism and brutality of only a half-century ago. Such memories break in from our past and shine a harsh light on the present. They threaten our complacency; but they are, above all, the things we have to remember.

The documentary *Freedom Riders* recently aired on PBS and was shown at a UO symposium called "Stand Up for Freedom!" It presents a vivid picture of the violence of state and local laws in effect from 1876 to 1965 in places like Alabama and Mississippi. The courage of the freedom riders helped to break Jim Crow's iron grip.

Still, in Portland we now have *de facto* segregation by class and race. Using recent U.S. Census data, *The Oregonian* (May 1) shows Portland is not only the whitest major city in the U.S.; it is getting even whiter as gentrification pushes blacks into the suburbs. Eugene is, I suspect, even whiter.

Indeed, in Springfield we have City Councilor Dave Ralston bashing "illegal" Latinos (*Register-Guard*, April 23) evoking memories of the hatred depicted in the *Freedom Riders* documentary. Like Ralston's rants, the accusation that the freedom riders deliberately provoked the violence is an exasperating, jaw-dropping evasion of responsibility.

My father, Charles O. Porter, served as the U.S. representative from Oregon's Fourth District from 1957 to 1961. In 1960, he, New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and others picketed Glen Echo, an amusement park near Washington, D.C.

Yet, a *The Register-Guard* editorial (Aug. 21, 1960) criticized my father for picketing because, the editorial claimed, "many of his constituents would feel better if he didn't try to get in on every act." For this reason "Mr. Porter's friends, even more than his detractors, have cause to say in anguish, 'Charlie, why do you do it?'"

In a letter to the editor, my mother, Priscilla Porter, replied (Aug. 23):



The time has long since passed when all men in positions of leadership in this country should have stood and been counted on this subject. If standing in a picket line or participating in a sit-down strike will in some small measure help to bring the facts of this struggle to you and others far from the scene, then it is to be commended, not derided ...

Because of an attitude such as yours, the Negroes have yet a long road to travel in order to gain meaningful citizenship in this country.

Is it not the duty of every citizen — be he congressman or not — to do his part in advancing every cause that has true democracy and human justice on its side?

My dad lost the 1960 election by 2 percentage points to his Republican opponent, Edwin R. Durno, M.D., of Medford.

As the *Freedom Riders* documentary clearly shows, there was vigorous disagreement within the civil rights movement. Yet, today, instead of vigorous disagreement we have radical individualism. It is an individualism that prevents blacks, women, labor activists, homosexuals, Latinos, Jews, Native Americans, environmentalists, and other progressive groups from coming together to form a coherent social movement.

What brought and held the civil rights movement together long enough to bring about dramatic social change? Martin Luther King Jr. was embedded in a particular tradition. There would not have been a civil rights movement were it not for the theological, moral and institutional resources of the Black Church.

But what held the civil rights movement together had much to do with King's ability to draw on American civic and religious traditions in a way that spoke to a broad spectrum of citizens across many lines of social difference.

Today, we need to identify, cultivate and articulate such moral sources in a way that speaks to our present realities. The serious problems we face — economic, social, political, environmental, and institutional — require a coherent, broad social movement that crosses sex, class, race and religion.

The extraordinary courage of the freedom riders was based on common biblical and civic languages, moral sources and institutions — rooted in American history.

King and the freedom riders, while accomplishing a lot, never fully succeeded in getting to the Promised Land. But they left us an unquenched heritage of criticism — a rich legacy we cannot ignore or take for granted if we are to sustain the moral ecology of a free, democratic republic.

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