

CALCUTTA IN EUGENE

Millions of Americans, in the richest country in the history of the world, are left out with no income. The only safety net is a small food voucher; the monthly worth is about what the “middle class” eats in a week.

In historic Calcutta, the “untouchables” were allowed to build slum shanty communities with scrap materials. Here in Oregon, we do have “food stamps,” an ATM card for limited food only, from the federal government. That is Oregon’s safety net.

For Oregon’s unemployed and disabled persons not yet certified by years of federal investigations, our untouchables are called homeless persons. Many are seen as beggars, but the police remove them from the urban areas. Where can our homeless people go? They are ignored, abandoned or arrested for criminal trespass or “illegal camping.”

Federal and state governments have the unfulfilled responsibility for the welfare of homeless persons. What can local governments do with very limited revenues? Local governments can allow homeless persons a legal, safe place to camp and build shelters. Eugene and Lane County now have no such legal safe place for our untouchable homeless persons to exist.

Local charities, nonprofit organizations and generous citizens meet as much of the needs of the homeless population as they can, but they are unable to shelter all those in need.

We need a legal safe place for homeless persons to try to help themselves with support of volunteers from the community.

*Jerry Smith
Eugene*

GIFT TO TIMBER BARONS

It is a clear-cut decision in more ways than one to support Rob Handy and Pete Sorenson. Putting more of our forests in the hands of the timber barons to clear cut and burn in Seneca’s polluting biomass plant or send overseas as whole logs is not what I want to happen to our beautiful Lane County forests.

I’m also very disappointed in Andy Stahl’s thoughts on countywide elections that reduce the power of neighborhoods and up the power of large timber owners and their wealthy friends. By this time everyone should have concluded that the lawsuit against Rob and Pete was politically motivated to give (the plaintiffs) more of our forest to misuse. The ruling was wrong. We need to recognize the years of service to our community and re-elect Pete and Rob.

*Ruth Duemler
Eugene*

HATCHET JOB

Lane County voters have a choice between tacitly endorsing dirty, right-wing tricks or re-electing Commissioners Rob Handy and Pete Sorenson.

I suppose that nearly every citizen of Eugene knows about the Aaron Jones-funded lawsuit accusing Sorenson and

Handy of violating the open meetings laws. If you are not convinced that this suit was a right-wing hatchet job that has been repudiated by every respected legal authority, you can find a good summary of the case in a *Register-Guard* editorial by Robert Roth that appeared March 25.

That resource extractors and developers found it necessary to orchestrate the persecution of Handy and Sorenson is proof positive that they are doing the job we elected them to do — standing up for the interests of the many, not the few.

Voters have an easy choice. We can vote for Pete and Rob, who have stood by their progressive principles, or demonstrate that dirty politics work by voting for their go-along, get-along opponents.

*Paul Nicholson
Eugene*

CALIFORNIA BASHIN’

When I told my family I was moving here, they said: “Don’t tell them you’re from California!” I got a list of grievances — bad service after being ID’d, smashed windshields and fingers for California plates, etc. But my experience has been nothing but good.

Seems I was wrong to defend Oregon. Every week this newspaper informs, amuses and disturbs me. I like *EW* for wearing its heart on its sleeve. But imagine my surprise to read on March 15th in *Slant*: “So what’s driving expansion locally? A lot of pressure from land speculators and developers, and an ill-informed, California-style attitude that

growth is not only inevitable, but necessary for our economic growth.” Never thought I’d see state-ism in the *Weekly*.

I was further stunned not to see an apology or letter the next week. Should I assume all your readers are OK with this? I have no strong opinions about Envision Eugene. The state requirement to periodically evaluate city land is enviable. I worry about poor development practices, too. But put blame where it belongs: greed or developers, maybe deaf city officials. Just don’t blame my home state.

Californians aren’t sprawl-loving fiends. We battle developers, too. One reason I love my hometown is its location close to the forest, beach, desert and downtown. Don’t forget California is where the Sierra Club was founded, hopeful home to our nation’s first real high-speed rail line and has long led the country in emissions restrictions. More land is set aside in California for National Forests than in Oregon, not including other land preserves. With all due respect, you’re not perfect either. Your own article’s proof. So, *EW*, you owe Californians an apology. Please refrain from promoting bigotry of any kind. It doesn’t look good on you.

*Ian Korn
Eugene*

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DESIGNMATTERS

BY JERRY DIETHELM

An Epic Clash

Conservation ethics underlie timber fight

I suppose it makes a kind of desperate sense to think about stepping up logging again on the BLM’s O&C lands. In a time of financial crisis in Oregon’s timber dependent counties and with revenue from the last of the federal payment acts about run out, why not try to restore the revenue flows they once knew with renewed cutting in the federal forests?

There is a clear-cut irony here. In a “Great Recession” brought on by the deregulation of the financial industry, is the obvious answer the deregulation of logging in our public forests?

One would think that excessive and radical deregulation in the name of liberty and free markets over the past three decades would have caused enough harm. Can you say Enron? Credit default swaps? But when people are desperate, when they themselves become the endangered species, they have historically accepted such “out-of-the-box” extreme measures as the internment of Japanese Americans, the more recent terror-driven erosion of our Fourth Amendment rights, and are presently considering the Stahl-DeFazio “timber trust” return to the over-cutting practices of the 1970s and ‘80s.

This belief that a return to that golden age of logging will solve the counties’ financial problems is easy to understand and sympathize with, but it is mistaken, illegal and unwise. And, more fundamentally, it misses the evolved understanding of conservation that has captured thoughtful minds.

Present forest law was born in the turn-of-the century Utilitarian conservation ethic of wise use. Until the 1970s, this took the form of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, a good law and guide, but one that utterly failed to rein in intensive industrial and political pressure on the public forest.

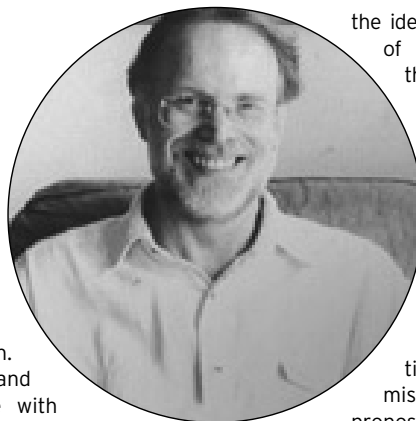
And then, during the 1970s Nixon administration, Congress passed two important new laws, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which President Nixon signed, and the “NW forest wars” began. The upshot has been that old practices and environmentally deficient plans have with frustrating frequency ended up in court. It has taken these stronger laws to be able to stand up against the economic pressures (and many corruptions) that can and often do subvert wise use.

But even under the new laws, it hasn’t been easy. In the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, “the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (finally) admitted that they had been significantly over-cutting the federal forests and not giving enough weight to wildlife, fish and water quality concerns.”

What we have been witnessing for the past quarter century or more is an epic clash of ethics regarding conservation.

In the 1960s, our traditional ethics (systems of conduct) and morality (the good choices we make) jumped out of their old human-centered box. It became clear that “the greatest good for the greatest number” of utilitarian concern needed to include more than just people. And likewise, that a humanistic ethic of duty, rights and justice needed to be expanded to include our duties and responsibilities to the natural environment we live in, which had rights of its own.

Remarkably, the environmental laws of the 1970s, NEPA and ESA, fully embraced and encoded this new conservation ethic. It was the beginning of the end for those invested in



the ideas, plant, equipment and forest practices of the past. Today, of course, we honor the Rachel Carsons, Aldo Leopolds and Albert Schweitzers whose inspirational ecological awareness started the country on this path. The real radicals now are those who remain stuck in an ethical past unable to face the fact that newer ecological conservation, with its wider duties and responsibilities, has firmly taken hold and is not going away.

That’s what makes the proposed Stahl-DeFazio-Walden-Schrader timber trust proposal such a retrograde misconception and tragic mistake. Their proposed law would try to hide the public forests in a state trust impervious to the nuisance of federal environmental regulations, like NEPA and ESA, and from all of us who believe that it is time to become better and more responsible citizens — not just users — of our federal forests. Leasing these lands out to an industrial forestry overseen by an appointed state timber trust board, and then having them managed as short-rotation tree farms under the Oregon Forest Practices Act, would send us back to darker forest days.

Unfortunately, the north and south Eugene county commissioners races are also caught up in this conflict. Two committed conservationists, Commissioners Sorenson and Handy, stand in the way of this timber trust strategy to increase logging in Lane County, most of which would occur on lands presently designated in the Northwest Forest Plan for forest restoration. What better explains the timber industry-funded slap suit and smear campaign underway to try to unseat them?

Yes, the times are tough and the counties are desperate for more revenue, but jumping on an old logging train running on worn out ethical tracks just won’t cut it.

Jerry Diethelm is a Eugene architect, landscape architect and planning and urban design consultant.