

HOMELESS ANSWERS

Seldom does anyone get up in the morning and say, “I think I am going to sleep on the sidewalk, lose all my possessions over and over again, beg for money and listen to people shout obscene things at me.”

Here are some answers given to me when I interviewed some of our homeless population. With the exception of the few mentally ill homeless I talked with, all that would talk with me have had past or current drug and alcohol problems.

“My wife and I separated, and I drank a lot. Now I am clean and sober and even though I quit being a productive part of society for a couple of years the child support payments didn’t stop. So if I go to work, my paycheck will be garnished.”

“I have moved so many times, have a record, have no identification and if I started the process of getting ID, someone will find me, and I will have to resolve the warrants for my arrest and have more fines and fees.”

“I found an apartment but when they did a background check they refused to rent to me because of my unpaid fines and fees.”

“I found an apartment but when they did a background check they refused to rent to me because I was evicted from my last apartment.”

“I found an apartment and the management Googled me and saw I was arrested two years ago for a drug charge. It was a misdemeanor but they didn’t care.”

One of the boroughs of New York City is now addressing this problem. When someone makes a mistake and is arrested, we could benefit from helping them get back on their feet, not with handouts but with case management. Almost every person I interviewed expressed the degradation they felt even though they covered this up with an entitlement bravado.

Let’s work together. This is not going to go away.

Carolyn Shawgo, M.S.
Eugene

SLAPPING THE CLASSICS

This pertains to your recent article [“Locavore Music” by Brett Campbell, 4/10] on classical music and its mention of an upcoming Eugene Symphony concert featuring three 19th century “Euro classics.” It takes a slap at magnificent music that has endured over the centuries and will likely forever touch people’s hearts and souls.

Contemporary American composers should, of course, also be given the stage, but I wonder how many fans will be filling concert halls in 200 to 300 years with their music? I would love to see what happens. Instead, I will be attending the Sibelius, Schumann, Mendelssohn concert at the Hult April 17 and reveling in the magnificence that these “dead Europeans” created. It is timeless.

I will also keep an ear out for modern music that might fill me with joy. Marin

Alsop was a big fan of American music and would often include a contemporary piece in her more classic programs. I think this is an excellent way to get more people to hear such music. If the music is deserving, the recognition and appreciation will follow.

Jane Dods
Springfield

GLENWOOD CALLING

The news from the last month or so has been so inspiring that I’ve come up with a solution for homelessness.

The Whos of Whoville should move on — let’s say to a piece of land out in Glenwood. They should name their new encampment the Whoville Luxury Hotel. Instead of asking for extravagant handouts like stones for pillows, they should ask for a subsidy of several million. How could local officials turn down a subsidy for luxury? After all, luxurious folks are the ones who create jobs for us little people.

In their new positions as the rich and subsidy entitled, the Whos could meet the best families in Lane County: the Chambers, the Giustinas, maybe even the Bakers. Working with these self-made tycoons who never inherited anything more than some real estate, some media assets and a few million dollars, the Whos could make a movie and get it shown over at Valley River Center. Maybe it would even be written up big in the local paper.

After six or eight years of running the hotel into the ground, the Whos can retire and take up painting. By then, the art-loving media will have run out of fulsome words for that grand body of work by the self-made painter George Bush. The world will be ready for painting by Whos.

And so, by dint of their own hard work, the Whos will solve homelessness. They will become rich by choice.

John Blonigen
Eugene

BOZIEVICH’S SLOGAN

County Commissioner Jay Bozievich has planted campaign signs all over the district with the slogan “Solving Problems Together.” My single interaction with him was exactly the opposite. In September 2012, Bozievich was given a completely false allegation about my professional work by a constituent whose identity he has kept secret. He treated that unsubstantiated rumor as a fact without doing any checking of any kind. He then passed on that rumor to one of my clients, alleging that I was associated with a “cult” that has “been carrying out a campaign of intimidation.”

I sent a message to Bozievich strongly objecting to what he had done, pointing out that he had damaged my reputation and risked my employment with his reckless act of gossip. He responded that he now trusted my client’s assertion that I was ethical and

VIEWPOINT BY BOB WARREN

Two Old Memos

IS TIME RUNNING SHORT FOR TIMBER COMPROMISE?

I’m looking at two memos that I wrote in July of 1991 when I worked for Congressman Peter DeFazio as a natural resource policy advisor. The memos were written on two consecutive days to reflect two meetings, one with the timber industry and the other with the environmental community. Earlier that year, all timber harvests on federal forests were halted by a federal court injunction. Thousands of jobs were at risk and the economies for many rural communities were in limbo. The two meetings were to determine if any form of compromise legislation was possible and what level of support we could expect from either side in the controversy.

As I read the old memos, a comparison with the current controversy over DeFazio’s O&C forest bill is unavoidable. The memos show the vitriolic rhetoric thrown at DeFazio for his current O&C forest compromise is nothing new. Back then, just like today, DeFazio was trying to create compromise legislation to provide relief for rural communities and workers while also providing significant environmental protections and safeguards.

The memos also clearly indicate that neither side was willing to support any compromise at all. Both sides were ready and willing to live with zero harvest, but for very different reasons, regardless of the impact on communities and workers.

The meeting with the environmental community went as expected. They were opposed to DeFazio’s bill and they would oppose any bill that included any timber harvest at all. With zero harvest as the current reality, any compromise was seen as a step back for them. I concluded that, unless a bill had everything they wanted, they would not support it, or even consider it. And, while I was not surprised by their lack of support for the bill, I was baffled by their anger, suspicion and disrespect. I had hoped they would look at the big picture and try to maintain a better working relationship with a congressman who clearly cared about protecting forest ecosystems.

The timber industry meeting produced very different reasons for why they would not support a compromise bill. The industry representatives told me their members

wanted them to get tougher and stop trying to cut a deal. And that “it’s better to go down fighting than to give in to the total unreasonable demands of the forest activists.” They believed the environmentalists had overplayed their hand, and in a strategic blunder of epic proportions, they indicated they would get a better deal if they waited for a public backlash to develop — a backlash that never materialized.

The industry was slow to recognize its new reality. The economic and political tides were not moving in its favor. The Oregon economy had diversified steadily since the mid 1980s and by 1991 the handwriting was on the wall. While timber would still be an important part of the Oregon economy, its days as “the big dog” were over. Meanwhile, politics were not going the industry’s way either. Barbara Roberts was elected governor in 1990, and George H.W. Bush would lose to Bill Clinton in 1992.

While the industry waited for that public backlash to develop, the forest activists had reason to believe they could get it all if they held out. Or at least, the longer they held out, the better the deal. My memos show that both sides would stand firmly behind their own bills and strongly oppose all others; there would be no compromise for Mother Timber or Mother Earth.

Now, in a strange turn of events, it appears the forest activists may be making a similar strategic blunder of their own. While the industry appears to have learned from the past, and has been willing to embrace compromise, the forest activists continue to oppose any compromise at all. They continue to hold out for zero harvest while they berate and demonize progressive Democrats like DeFazio and Ron Wyden. I wonder how they believe they can get a better deal without a working relationship with our congressional delegation? And then there are those pesky mid-term elections right around the corner that could change the balance of power in the Congress. Even without alienating DeFazio and Wyden, can they continue to assume they will get a better deal the longer they wait?

A good friend of mine once told me the problem with the timber industry was that it was always ready to accept the previous deal, the one that was no longer on the table. That could be about to change. The shoe may now be on the other foot. With several Oregon counties on the brink of financial collapse, and with the balance of power in Congress up for grabs, the tides may be changing. And the forest activists? They might soon find themselves wishing they could accept the previous deal. You know, the one that is no longer on the table.

Robert Warren has been a Eugene resident since 1984. He retired in 2012 as regional business development officer for the Oregon Business Development Department for Lane, Benton and Linn Counties and had a long career in economic and community development, forest policy and natural resources consulting.