

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

School will start soon, so please drive carefully

School will be starting very soon and a reminder may be in order that children are not always careful when they walk (or run) to school. Sometimes they are busy talking with friends, sometimes they just aren't paying attention. In other words, sometimes they act like children. Let's try to remember that and drive alertly and cautiously whenever children are around, not just in school zones.

School buses will soon be on the road, too. Remember, it is illegal to pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing. School buses must make a lot of stops and they don't travel very fast on our narrow country roads. Fortunately, most bus drivers are very courteous and pull over whenever they can to let other traffic by. If you must be on the road at the same time as the buses, just start a little earlier. Impatience won't help anyone and may do some harm.

Speaking of school.....

There seemed to be an increasing number of parents in Vernonia last year who expressed frustration at the bullying going on at the grade school, or with the communication (or lack of communication) between themselves and their children's teachers.

The specific complaints are not important. What is important is that the situations causing the frustrations be alleviated before they get out of hand.

A Letter to the Editor in this issue of *The INDEPENDENT* suggests a desire on the part of a parent for an active parent-teacher organization. This is one avenue through which better communications and more understanding can be built.

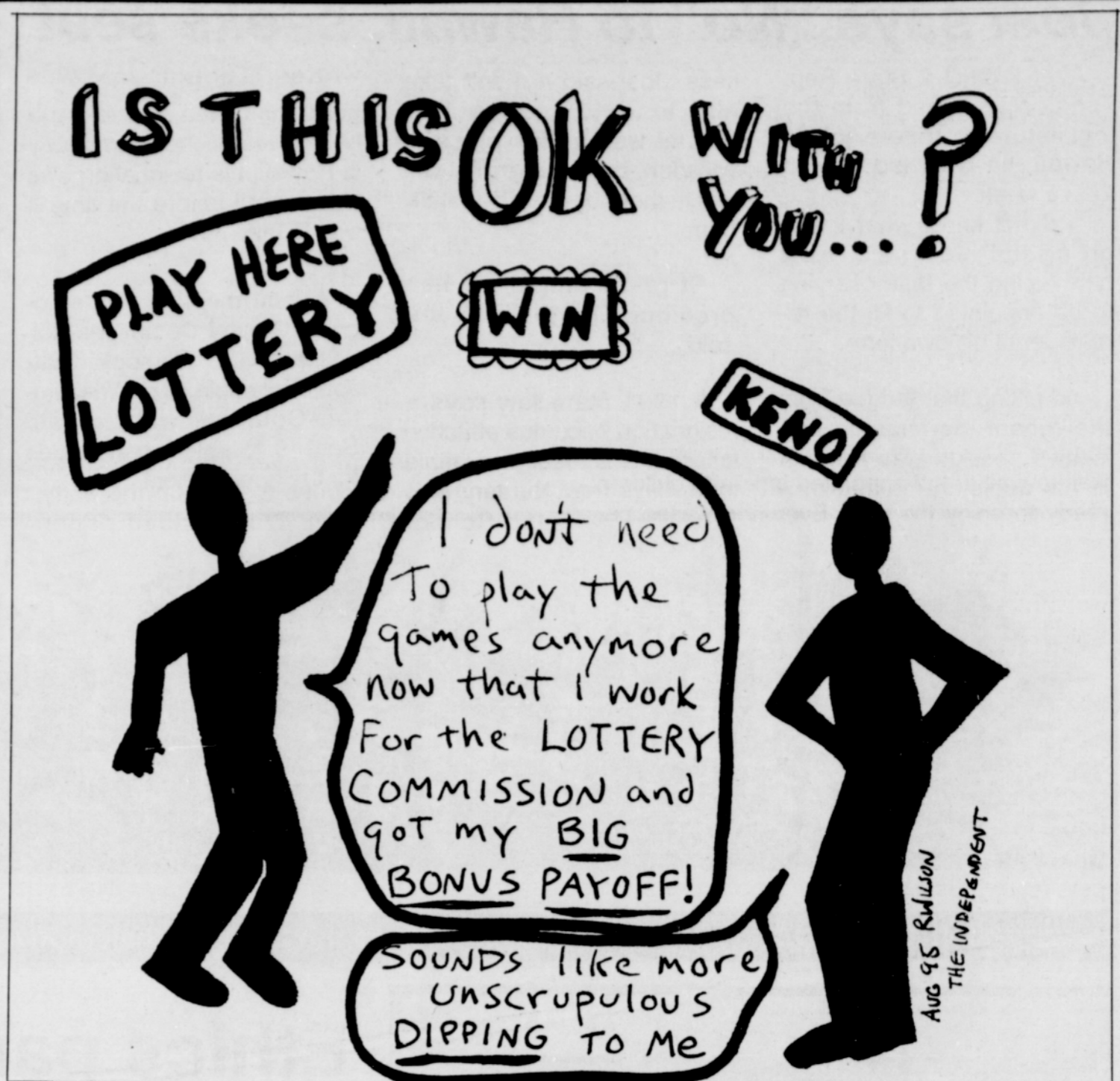
Another avenue would be for the school to use more community people in its site councils or other committees where volunteers can be of help. True or not, it is the perception of too many people that both the administration and the school board have deliberately built walls to keep parents, teachers and other members of the community from looking at decisions and policies that will impact their children. It is up to the board to change that perception, if it is wrong.

Sensible for council to know city facilities better

Any citizens who were late getting to the Vernonia City Council meeting last Monday missed the whole meeting, it seems.

Actually, what happened is that the council convened half an hour early, then recessed early for a joint tour of the City's water treatment and sewage treatment facilities. This had previously been discussed and approved in open meeting.

Because the councilors must deal with all parts of the city's operations, it was a sensible decision. The better they understand these vital functions in public works, the better they can deal with any problems that may arise. It is always a good idea to understand your job.



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

This has been a very disturbing year for conservationists. In no other year (in many of our lifetimes) has there been such a blatant attack on our natural resources as is occurring in our state legislature and in congress. Many of the new legislators and congressmen ran on platforms of government reform, but are now trying to totally abolish regulations that protect our water, air and animals.

In what should make taxpayers even madder, is the way they're trying to sneak in the back door. A recent vote in congress cut funding for the EPA, a strategy designed to reduce the EPA's ability to enforce environmental protection laws, rendering the agency powerless.

Other targets of congress this year are the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act and the infamous Endangered Species Act. I don't think any of us want the Willamette River to regress to the condition it was in, in the sixties, but there are people in congress who really don't care.

We can all understand the pressure exerted by big money lobbyists and how that might influence votes. In the cases of the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, it is rumored that the lobbyists are actually rewriting the laws that regulate their bosses' industries. There are frequent reports that science is being removed from the laws. I can envision a law that states, "If a person can swim in a river for an hour and not go into convulsions, the level of pollution is tolerable and, therefore, permissible."

One particular concern in the Clean Water Act is the 404 section, dealing with wetlands protection. If congress is successful in their attempts to gut this section of the act, it is calculated that the U.S. duck population would drop by at least 50 percent in the next ten years. Duck hunting in America is a \$1.8 billion industry and will experience an equal decline in employment and revenues. This is really a shame, for the duck population has been restored to somewhere between 83 to 90 million birds, and is reaching for the 100 million goal set by the Fish and Wildlife Service and conservation groups.

Another program at risk is the Conservation

Reserve Program, which seeks to set aside marginal agricultural lands from production by reimbursing farmers for doing so. This program has been a great success; it not only took marginal grounds out of production, it greatly increased wildlife by providing habitat for nesting and survival. The CRP has been a major player in the turn-around of America's duck population. It is feared that the CRP will fall victim of the budget axe.

Congress is also proposing to turn our national forests over to private landowners and transfer ownership of most national parks and wild life refuges to the states.

In Salem, our state legislature was not much better than congress. Legislators were hell-bent on giving away water resources; they wanted to pay landowners for *not* polluting our waters. They even wanted to curtail any future environmental regulations for situations we don't yet know about. Luckily, we have a governor who does not want Oregon to become a dried up, polluted place where people can only sleep, eat and work. I would rather eat, sleep and go fishing.

There was a big surge of "property rights" proponents this year, people who believe it is their right to do whatever they want on their land. Well, I agree—as long as what they do doesn't affect someone else.

I hope that those who advocate absolute property rights will consider what that could mean. I'm sure they would be the first to scream when the fallout from someone else's coal-fired generator killed their trees. The fact is, we have all been living under government regulations for a long time, many of which are necessarily environmental in nature. Many studies show that when animals become overcrowded, they become increasingly antisocial and territorial and, if the crowding continues, it results in chaos. If we want to curb the rising tide of regulations, we will have to seriously consider the increasing population of our country and state.

It appears that many congressmen and state legislators make decisions that are unduly affected by big money lobbies. Let's put these issues to the people, along with the realities of each issue. Let us decide whether we want an Oregon with natural resources for