

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

"Balanced" budget is smoke and mirrors

This commentary rarely leaves local topics but, occasionally, the illusions performed inside the Beltway are too entertaining to ignore. Well, "entertaining" isn't really the appropriate word, "horrifying" is better.

In what Oregon Rep. Peter DeFazio called a "budget burlesque" the House of Representatives cut \$385 billion out of the Medicare program over the next ten years. While some of the "savings" will come from reduced reimbursements for things Congress apparently considers unimportant, such as home oxygen service, most of it will result from lower payments to doctors and hospitals. Sounds great, right?

Wrong! What it means is that seniors will pay more for less care and that everyone who pays for their own medical care, whether out-of-pocket or through insurance, can count on making up that \$385 billion. Huge amounts of Medicare dollars go for fraudulent charges, it's true, but the budget doesn't increase funds to control the fraud.

Next, \$276 billion in tax cuts were rushed through. Wonderful, we can all use tax cuts, especially middle and low-income taxpayers.

That's why the corporate alternative minimum tax was repealed in this bill. That mouthful of words — "corporate alternative minimum tax" — was the only language that forced many of our largest, most profitable corporations to pay any federal taxes. That's why it was passed in 1986. And that's why it was repealed in 1997. (The Treasury Department says this could create 76,000 profitable corporations that will pay nothing in taxes and we will make up the difference.)

Surely, out of \$276 billion in tax cuts, there must be some benefit for ordinary people, right?

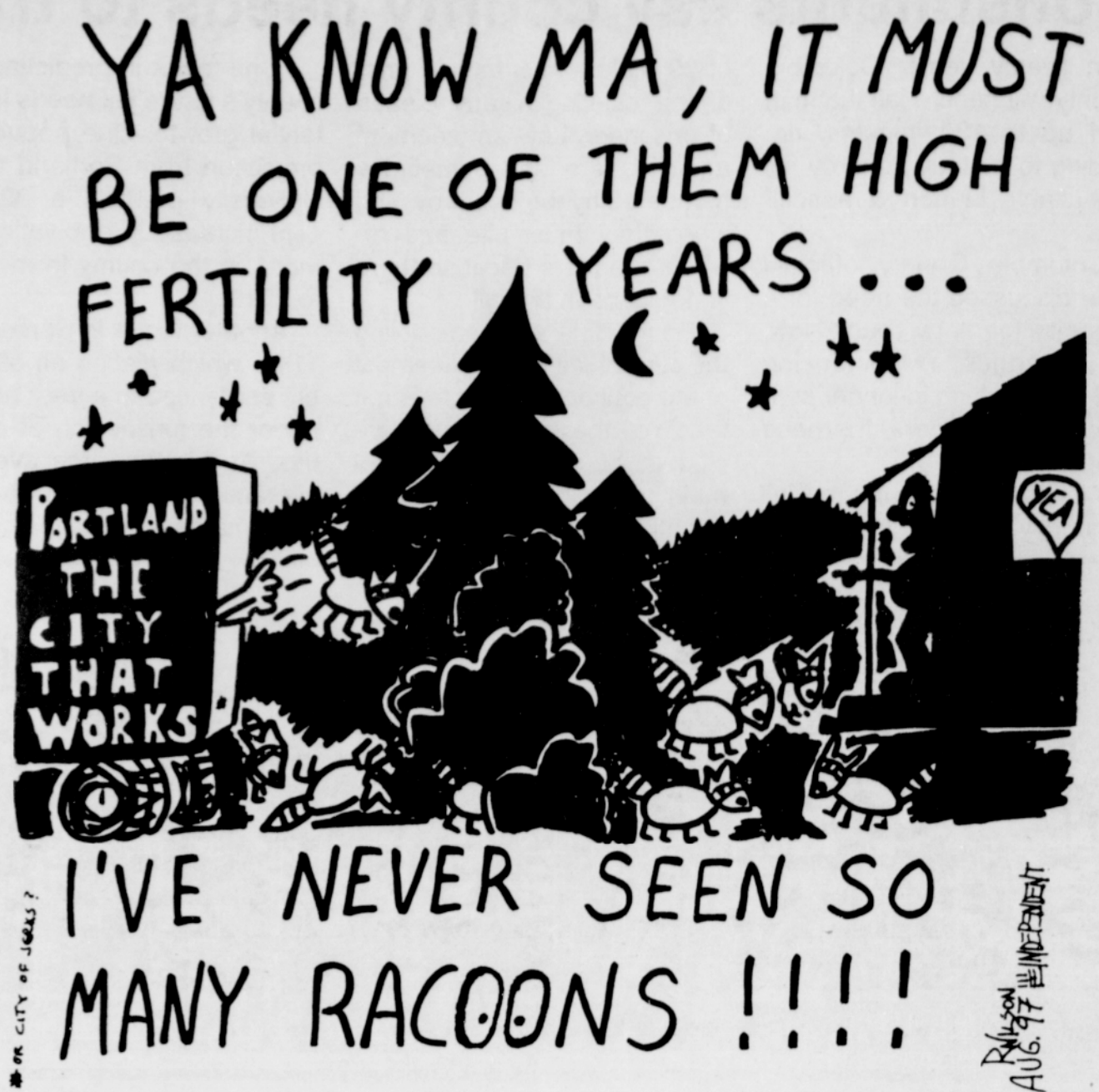
Well, yes, of course. When we sell our houses, we won't have to pay as much in capital gains because the rate has been reduced from 28 percent to 20 percent. On the other hand (smoke and mirrors), most of us won't have to pay capital gains on our homes, anyway, because a change in the law eliminates capital gains on most homes. But, let's face it folks, it sure *sounds* good to say a reduction in capital gains will help the middle class.

Actually, the cleverest part of this whole illusion is that it has nothing at all to do with balancing the budget, because this budget will *increase* the deficit for at least the next three years. And, if economic growth slows down, the deficit could quickly get out of hand again.

In 1990, under President Bush, and in 1993, under President Clinton, budgets were developed to cut the deficit and they worked so well that, without any hurrahs, the budget would have come into balance within the next three years.

This year, the smell of the greasepaint and the roar of the crowds were just too enticing for the Beltway illusionists in both parties. They had to get back on stage and, since they didn't have an act, they returned to the smoke and mirrors.

We have very expensive front row seats and, unfortunately, the show stinks.



Ike Says...

By David M. Jones, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

Bowhunting season opens at the end of August and many hunters will not continue to practice with their equipment before they begin to hunt. This lack of practice may be understandable with a rifle you used a lot in that was all sighted in and ready to go.

Months of practice before the season is necessary for bowhunting. Daily practice should continue even after the hunt has commenced because the muscle groups and the hand-eye coordination necessary for accuracy must be constantly worked and tuned to enable the hunter to make the most accurate and ethical shot possible when afield.

Another consideration is the influence of adrenaline in the hunting situation. When I was guiding hunters, a doctor client of mine told me that adrenaline is the strongest drug the body produces and that it shuts off the reasoning part of the brain. This is the "fight or flight" substance that has helped our species survive through eons. But it is also the drug that has led to a number of wounded animals that are out of our range. Adrenaline is the influence behind the stories of "buck or bull fever." We can wound our quarry when we don't understand what is happening to us and take too long a shot that isn't accurate even at the ranges where we practiced all year.

There are some things that you can do before that big bull comes into the call all of a sudden, or that nice buck steps out of the brush in front of you and an arrow is gone before you're really ready. First, practice at different ranges after you have your bow shooting the way you like. One thing I like to do is pull my arrows from the target and throw them back to where I want to shoot from. But throw them one at a time and make sure they all land in a different area or distance from the target. When you are out in the brush, that bull isn't going to let you step off the distance to him, so you know which pin to use.

Another good way to practice before the season gets going is at some of those 3-D archery shoots with the plastic animals, where you have to shoot with your foot touching a peg. This forces you to shoot in some pretty awkward stances and in some situations that you may face in the field. Most archery clubs

sponsor this type of shoot and your local archery shop could tell you where they are.

Have you shot in your broad heads yet? Do they hit the same place your field tips do? Are you sure? Are they razor sharp? Before these fancy, pre-sharpened broadheads came out, we used to sit around the fire the night before the hunt with our stones, files, and steels, touching up the razor heads. We'd wet the hair on our forearms and shave them with the broadhead to prove they were sharp enough. At the very least, sacrifice one broadhead to make sure it shoots the same as your target arrows and tips. Are your arrows straight? I took a hell of a fall last year and landed on my bow quiver full of arrows. Luckily, I didn't stick myself and all the arrows were still straight. I took the tips off all of them and spun them on my fingernails to be sure. If you don't know how this is done, go to an archery shop and have someone show you. It is a good skill to learn.

Ok. Arrows are straight and your bow is tuned. You've practiced 'til you're good at all ranges. How fast can you get a second arrow out and on its way? I know your first arrow is going to be a double lung shot and the bull will run about 75 yards and pile up. Nevertheless, sometimes that first arrow flies a little high and the animal looks around to find what made that funny whistling sound, so you may have a second chance. Practice with target arrows in your quiver and see how fast you can get a second arrow off. This simulates an adrenaline-pumped hunting situation because you must hurry, take an arrow out, nock it and get a shot off as speedily as possible...all things you will have to do afield.

When you do go afield this fall, please respect private property and your quarry. One of the best reasons to practice is in order to make an accurate and merciful shot on your prey. If we take the life and spirit of an animal, we should do so in the quickest, most merciful way we can. Remember to promptly field dress your animal and chill the carcass as soon as possible so as not to waste the meat.

Good hunting and please keep practicing.

Izaak Walton League meetings are on the third Thursday of each month, 7:00 p.m. The public is welcome. For meeting location, call 429-7193.