

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion piece review

Editors:

I've noted with pride the positive steps you and the editorial board have taken to improve the content and quality of our newspaper.

I was surprised, therefore, to read [in the Spring 2014 *Applegater*] Chris Bratt's disjointed, inflammatory rant. Notwithstanding the utter lack of factual support or reference, what in the world does it have to do with our community?

I frequently disagree with Chris, who is a friend, but, up to now, his columns have tied in with local issues.

I recommend that your editors review your policies on opinion columns. Publishing this kind of piece in the *Applegater* is inappropriate.

Respectively,
Tom Carstens
Applegate, OR

Chris Bratt responds

My friend Tom Carstens got a little hot under the collar over my opinion piece ("Money Talks") in the Spring 2014 issue of the *Applegater*. Carstens is right about one thing: we do disagree on many issues. And his berating my writing skills (a "disjointed inflammatory rant") or my Robin Hood opinions (take the wealth from the rich and give it to the poor) are fair game for criticism, since I still consider myself in training as a contributing writer to the paper.

But I do reject his accusations that my article was "inappropriate" for publication in the *Applegater* and that it had nothing "to do with our community" (not "tied with local issues"). For the life of me, I can't see why my warnings about the extreme inequality and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people in America could be inappropriate to write about—especially when this inequality has weakened our rural social and economic stability. Most importantly, I think Tom is laboring under the illusion that the power of our country's ultra-rich individuals and corporations has no effect on local problems that many residents face on a daily basis.

If Tom is really serious about wanting us to review our policies on opinion columns or any other issue, I suggest he take more interest in helping the paper increase more of those positive steps he states that we have already taken.

Chris Bratt
Applegate, OR

Atrazine

Dear Editor:

I wish you would check the veracity of some of the statements made in the articles you choose to print.

When I read the article by Daryl Jackson [in the Spring 2014 *Applegater*], I almost fell out of my chair.

He says that Atrazine "has proven to be one of the most toxic chemicals ever created by man."

This is so far from the truth it's almost laughable. It's not even close. If Atrazine was responsible for all of the problems he cites, the EPA would have banned its use long ago, just as they did with DDT in 1972.

Either Mr. Jackson is being untruthful, trying to make a point, or he's just badly misinformed. I suspect the latter.

Richard Cody
Applegate, OR

Government and corporate pesticide use—upcoming ballot measure

Dear Editor:

There has been a lot of information circulating on this issue lately, thankfully. I think people sometimes just don't understand the extent of what has gone on and the players involved. We rarely get a chance to fix something like this—special interests can spend a lot more than most citizens, and many have no stake in the quality of life here once those ballot measures pass. (A recent article in another publication pointed to Monsanto and DuPont chemical companies providing financial support in 1990 to a group called "Josephine Citizens for Maintaining Safe Roadsides," whose advertising campaign helped *defeat* a ballot measure to ban the use of herbicides along country roads.)

In March, the county sprayed along my property with an extended sprayer that went across the ditch draining roadside water. The last vote was over 20 years ago, and most of us have since achieved a sort of state of enlightenment in regard to chemicals in our homes, forests, roadsides, food, virtually in every aspect of our lives—they are everywhere. We are aware now and can actually see the damage. The introduction of most of these chemicals into our lives was done not only without our permission, but also without our knowledge.

We as a family have been systematically eliminating chemicals used in our home in order to protect our family. The remainder to be dealt with are garden chemicals that have been rounded up in the garage and are waiting for a hazmat notification from the sanitation company. After researching those, we found some that contained the toxin now believed to be responsible for killing honeybees.

There are a large number of plants and animals and habitats being negatively impacted by these toxins, and they are disappearing. And when they are all gone, we will be too.

Thanks.
Pete Fisher
Grants Pass, OR

OPINIONS

Is natural gas the clean fossil fuel?

BY ALAN JOURNET

The Pacific Connector Natural Gas Pipeline may not threaten your backyard, but just like a wildfire blowing through Northern California, it ultimately threatens us all. Extraction, transport, and export of natural gas (methane) pose a threat to our future for the following reasons.

Because methane releases much less carbon dioxide than other fossil fuels when burned, natural gas (methane) proponents argue this is the end of the story. It is not.

Although we focus on carbon dioxide when discussing climate change, a better measure of our emissions is carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). This measures carbon dioxide plus the other greenhouse gases: methane, nitrogen oxides, and chlorofluorocarbons. While methane has over 30 times the long-term warming potential of carbon dioxide, the other gases are even worse.

Because of its greater warming effect, only one percent methane leakage is necessary before the benefit seen at combustion is erased. Unfortunately, in some situations, over 15 percent leakage is reported. Methane may reduce carbon pollution, but it can accelerate global warming. Before promoting natural gas, we should insist that leakage from mining and shipping are reduced such that it is a clear improvement over other fossil fuels.

The "Halliburton Loophole" in Dick Cheney's 2005 Federal Energy Policy exempts fracking from regulations that protect us from toxic chemicals. Consequently, many companies insert toxic and carcinogenic chemicals under pressure into the ground. Because courts uphold the claim that these are a protected trade secret, the identity of the chemicals is not public knowledge. If fracking is safe, the Halliburton Loophole should be closed.

According to international agreement, we must hold global temperature increase to below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature increase to date combined with the future consequence of gases

already emitted demands our leaving in place over half of known fossil fuel reserves.

Two criteria can help us decide what to leave:

1. How much energy is returned to us for each unit of energy we invest to get it (EROEI). When this drops to one, the resource is exhausted so we should not extract that fuel. Fuel extracted by fracking exhibits a very low EROEI. Furthermore, the energy used to extract the fuel is generally derived from carbon-polluting fossil fuels.

2. The potential human and environmental health threat. Natural gas extraction techniques fail this test dismally.

Methane's cost/benefit ratio is questionable, even as a "bridge to the future."

Fracking consumes vast amounts of water. In an age when droughts are gripping the nation and are only expected to worsen, we should pause before promoting a technology that consumes so much water.

Undoubtedly the climate crisis is driven largely by our combustion of fossil fuels. Since it is a global problem, we cannot protect ourselves by shipping fossil fuels overseas. Exporting our fossil fuel reserves contributes at least as much to climate change as burning them here. We only solve the problem if we collaborate internationally. Exporting fossil fuels only accelerates the onset of climate chaos. It also raises domestic prices.

Since climate change is the defining threat of our era, anyone concerned about inter-generational justice should demand we address it.

Before endorsing methane export, we must fully evaluate its extraction and use. If our concerns cannot be addressed, we should rethink natural gas and focus our efforts on promoting clean energy.

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OPINION PIECES AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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