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Letters for September 23, 2010

This article was published on [09.23.10](#).

Letter of the week

Rotten apples

Re "Rock and a hard place" by Jeff vonKaenel ([SN&R Greenlight, September 9](#)):

Jeff vonKaenel's column supporting [Sacramento Natural Gas Storage and] SMUD's proposed underground natural-gas storage misses at least half the point.

As an environmental matter, vonKaenel is wise to account for the potential risks and impacts of alternative ways to meet our region's energy needs when assessing the underground storage option. While we'd all do well to scrutinize the underground storage plan with great distrust in light of the developer's multimillion-dollar incentive to downplay the risks (think BP and Deepwater [Horizon]), it remains true that, unless we commit to a massive reduction in energy consumption (an alternative vonKaenel neglects to consider seriously), we're gambling with our safety and the vitality of the planet we'll be passing on to our children almost no matter how we meet that demand. There's small choice in rotten apples.

But the underground storage plan isn't just an environmental issue; it's a matter of environmental justice. The proposed storage site lies directly beneath south Sacramento, where a strongly disproportionate percentage of our region's low-income folks and people of color reside, so while we will all reap the storage facility's theoretical benefits of more stable energy costs, it is people of color and the poor who will be obliged to shoulder the bulk of what the final environmental impact report on the project found to be significant risks: water contamination, flash fires, flare fires and explosions (think PG&E and San Bruno).

So even if the plan is the least of the evils environmentally, it's still unfair, and unfair with potentially horrific consequences. If we must choose a rotten apple, let's at least distribute it evenly.

And who knows? If we all stood to bear the full risks inherent in our energy consumption evenly, maybe we'd finally get down to serious energy conservation, eliminate the supposed need to store the natural gas, and discover we're not stuck between a rock and a hard place after all.

Timothy Griffiths
Sacramento

Second Saturday for art

Re "Hijacked Saturday" by Rachel Leibrock ([SN&R Popsmart, September 16](#)):

I don't know if Second Saturday was hijacked; more like it is misinterpreted by many. I will agree that Second Saturday really isn't about the art anymore. I doubt some bros and girls who can't hold their liquor really care about impressionist or avant-garde paintings. I doubt if they even know what those two terms mean, anyway.

Second Saturday has to and needs to be about the arts, but will you admit that this is good for our local businesses to thrive in such a shit-show economy? If anything, I'm trying to be more proactive in supporting local businesses in Midtown. They need it more than ever!

But then you also have the very limited amount of things to do for kids who are under 18. Let me tell you, when I was that age, I hated it! I couldn't see bands I wanted, like [Chk Chk], because they always played at 21-and-over gigs.

Events like Second Saturday are prone to high criticism from our city officials and, of course, stupid, unnecessary violence gives them more stuff to throw at the arts community. I think we need it to not only let younger kids have good times, but also families. I like taking my younger brother out to see live bands or getting him a slice of pizza. But now, I'm more scared than ever to take him out or to even go out with my own friends. Times are tough, and the poverty just creates more unnecessary crime. I know that the Crocker [Art Museum] is planning to do some events with music and art sometime next year after they open this fall, but will the same thing happen to them?

You're right, it does need to be more about the arts and less about those \$2 drinks. Sure, the bars may be enjoying it, but then look what happens! Of course, someone always finds a scapegoat: "It's those minors!" "It's those petty thugs!"

Instead of pointing fingers, let's find a solution.

Giovanni Martinez
Sacramento

He counts quotes

Re "No matzo, no peace" by Lien Hoang ([SN&R Frontlines, September 16](#)):

This story was quite unbalanced in how it represented the ideas of one side over the other.

For example, three quotes were given to the party that opposed the boycott of Israeli goods at the Sacramento [Natural Foods] Co-op (Sen. Darrell Steinberg, Barry Broad and Len Feldman). Only one quote was given to the party that initiated the boycott of the products (Maggie Coulter of Sacramento Boycott, Divestments, Sanctions Working Group).

So the explanation of the reasons for the boycott were buried underneath the explanations against the boycott, which of course leads to the audience likely being influenced by the opinion of the side that is more represented and explained—in this case, the side against the boycott.

That is not fair reporting, nor is it balanced. This is unacceptable journalism.

Josh Cadji
via e-mail

Drolette's a smartass ...

Re "Taken for a ride" by Mark Drolette ([SN&R Essay, September 9](#)):

Your self-indulgent, smartass article on riding bicycles on the sidewalk was a handshake and a goose to an awful lot of elderly and disabled [people] who live and frequent the

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downtown and commercial areas. At best, it educated those who honestly believe they can ride the sidewalks anywhere connected to any electronic device. They careen around pedestrians, then fly in their path before there would ever be a chance to avoid hitting them if the timing was a split second off). There are almost as many bikes on the streets downtown as pedestrians. If you lived there, you'd know it.

People who "just want to get along" need to know that there are others out there with hip replacements or other health problems that cause poor balance. Skirting injury on a daily basis creates emotional distress. It confuses and disorients pedestrians, especially older people. Poor eyesight is one reason people are pedestrians—so why should they be responsible for avoiding being hit by a bicycle on the sidewalk?

Going along to "get along" is a jailhouse mentality. I—and many others—can barely walk on the street without wondering what is behind us or when we'll turn the corner and it will be curtains. Bicycles are dangerous vehicles on sidewalks with pedestrian traffic.

The police say that they can't enforce the ordinance, but I say that's a crock. Scuttlebutt from a downtown bumblebee guide has it that there was only one cop that would ticket bicyclists, and he's no longer with the department. Sacramento is the only city I've lived in that doesn't license bicycles. Just think of the revenues if you ticketed all the rogue bicycles. Being able to walk on the sidewalk without being hit or run over shouldn't be an issue for any citizen.

Madeline Coren
Sacramento

... and shouldn't duplicate scofflaws

Re "Taken for a ride" by Mark Drolette ([SN&R Essay, September 9](#)):

I'm glad that Mr. Drolette has seen the light and is enjoying the freedom, convenience, cost savings and health benefits of riding his bike.

However, duplicating the scofflaw behavior he's observed in others, especially riding against traffic and riding on the sidewalk, increases his crash risks and makes my job harder. Lots of people already have a negative image of bicyclists, and a cavalier attitude about following the rules doesn't help.

We can all get along, and safely, if bicyclists and motorists obey traffic laws, share the road (and not the sidewalk) and look out for each other.

Walt Seifert
executive director
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates

Give him a better reason

Re "Taxing thoughts" ([SN&R Editorial, September 9](#)):

Why do we have to justify our political agendas in this country with subjective words like "patriotism"? Quite frankly, I care not that the SN&R editorial board believes that paying taxes is an act of patriotism. It may sound nice to say that we have a moral duty to "contribute to the common effort" by opening our wallets ever April 15, but how does doing so impact the economy? That is the issue we as a society should be focused on.

Every year, the federal government extracts \$2.8 trillion from private citizens and businesses, according to Cato Institute economist Chris Edwards. That is money businesses could use to hire more employees and individuals could use to improve their quality of life. Instead, much of it is wasted on things that are decidedly harmful—like fighting offensive wars and bailing out failing Wall Street firms.

I enjoy reading the SN&R opinion page because it usually runs counter to my own views; what I find irritating, however, is opinion with little substance. Why will allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire address our budgetary problems? Why is more stimulus spending necessary? Can the economy actually be revived with injections of government credit?

If another editorial extolling the virtues of higher taxes is published, and I am sure one will be, it would be greatly improved if it answered these questions.

Cameron English
Sacramento

Burning Man, riding bikes

Re "Desert on fire" by Kat Kerlin ([SN&R Green Days, September 2](#)):

Yes, of course there is an impact, even with the Leave No Trace idea. However, we make way less of an impact than 50,000 people would living their normal lives in the default world.

It's obvious that the author hasn't been to Burning Man. If you had, you would know that it's not just a big party, and there aren't cigarette butts, beer cans and water bottles everywhere. If something as large as a beer can is floating around, 99 percent of the people out there would pick it up.

I agree that it is up to the veteran burners to help the newbies understand the Leave No Trace plan and to understand what [Matter Out of Place] is. It's clear your agenda was to try and call out Burning Man, to make it out as a negative experience that makes a harsh impact on the environment. I just can't imagine how 50,000 people riding on bikes for a week is worse than those same 50,000 people driving their car for a week.

If you wanted to write an article about things to do in Sacramento over Labor Day weekend, then that's what you should have done. Don't use something you don't know about—Burning Man—as your vehicle to write an article.

If you'd like to go to Burning Man and experience what it is truly about, I invite you to camp with me. We love newbies, and love skeptics even more! I promise you would have an amazing burn, and we can make you president of MOOP patrol!

Danielle Fewings
Sacramento

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