

...the camping issue...

These are truly the...

Hepper Spray Times

July 2005

...or P.S.T...



It's penates...it's free...if you can find it

"Here is my space. Kingdoms are clay."*

Vol. VII No. 7

WESTWARD HO! *Homeless Go Camping!*

by *Becka Gain*

Police in San Francisco wrote more than two and a half times the tickets for illegal camping in 2004 than they did in 2003, proving that camping on the western edges of the city has become increasingly popular with housing challenged groups.

"It must be the fresh air," mused one San Francisco city official, still convinced that the city's "Care Not Cash" policy is a success. "We forget that these homeless people are just like us, and enjoy putting up tents in the great outdoors just like the rest of us."

Critics argued that the "Care Not Cash" program's main effect is the same as any other crackdown, that of moving homeless people from place to place without really changing anything.

"If that were true, would Mayor Gavin Newsome be on the cover of so many magazines?" scoffed one of his assistants. "This is really new and different and working and people who don't agree with us are a bunch of babies and whiners who maybe don't have as bright a political future as the rest of us do."

Critics pointed out that the long-term failures in homeless policies rarely get the same spotlight as their well-documented origins, citing Berkeley's "Berkeley Cares" voucher program as an example.

"Berkeley Cares" was all over the press," remembered one camper near Golden Gate Park shaking out a blanket. "Magazines, newspapers, the press loved it. And the coverage was national until it hit bottom. Then all the attention to it just disappeared."

"Everybody loved 'Berkeley Cares' alright," affirmed one Berkeley resident. "Everybody except the people who had to try to use it. The few merchants who tried to go along with it had to give up



CAMPING CAN BE FUN! Join the homeless in a local park for a weinie roast and a rousing song.

valuable counter space to a messy pile of coupons, find space in the cash drawer for them, and go out of their way to try to get them re d e e m e d at some point. The customers trying to use them w o u l d lose them or find that stores which were supposed to redeem them had given up even trying."

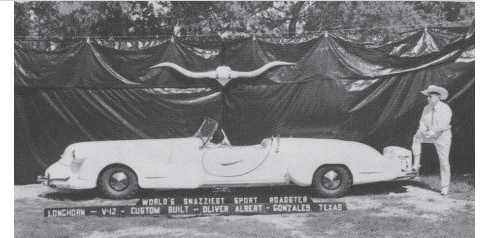
Berkeley officials insisted that the program had been a success.

"We loved that program," stated one outreach worker. "We all got on tv. If money wasn't so much easier to use we'd have been home free."

Critics insisted that the failure of the voucher program should have gotten the same coverage as its well-publicized kickoff, so other cities wouldn't waste their time and taxpayers' money with it.

"Right; and the headline would have been 'Berkeley Doesn't Care Anymore'," pointed out a city official. "We can go along with wasting years of taxpayers' money, but some things we just can't afford."

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DON'T EVEN LOOK at this car or you could really be in a lot of trouble.

FAILED CRACKDOWN ON MALICIOUS OBSERVATION

by *Julie Viet*

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown's strategy for stopping car rallies known locally as sideshows was rejected by the Oakland City Council, who refused to crack down on malicious observation.

"Cheering crowds...create the environment for the mayhem," announced Brown, surrounded by a nervous group of city hall staff who quickly put on blindfolds.

"We're never sure how far he plans to take this stuff," explained one member of the mayor's staff trying to avoid walking into a plant. "If this backfires we don't want to be technically complicit."

The Oakland City Council sympathized with the Mayor's effort to look tough on crime, but expressed concerns about constitutionality.

"We've passed enough unconstitutional measures on Brown's behalf," explained one council representative. "We're a little concerned that we might be going too far. Not that we're watching, of course."

Neighbors who have witnessed the careening, spinning cars crashing through their neighborhoods had mixed reactions to Mayor Brown's proposal.

"I guess I'm guilty," mused one Oakland resident uneasily. "I've been observing the sideshows through my front window here for years."

"We're really sorry if we've contributed to the problem," added another resident. "I'm hoping the Mayor will loan us some of those blindfolds. Or a lot of Viagra."

* * * * *

ASK THE EXPERTS



LENA DEETER knows the answers to everything forwards and backwards.

Dear Lena, so what do you think of the “new partnership” agreement the Berkeley made with UC Berkeley?

A: I think they could have picked up something besides a handful of change and an opportunity to swell the already swollen planning department. Like a spinning restaurant on top of the campanile where we could wear fancy hats. I think that would help us all feel better about ourselves.

Dear Lena, what’s with all these secret meetings the mayor likes so much?

A: You shouldn’t worry your pretty head about it. The mayor really likes his secret meetings, most of which are extremely tedious. He’s just trying to spare you as much unpleasant municipal monotony as possible.

Dear Lena, what should you do if you get stuck in a traffic circle?

A: Try to remember which side is your best profile, and adjust your direction accordingly.

Dear Lena, who do you think should run for Governor now that Schwarzenegger seems to be on the way down?

A: I believe it would be wise to stick to celebrities for awhile, at least until the local economy improves. I would put my money on Paris Hilton.

Dear Lena, isn’t it dangerous to go the wrong way around a traffic circle?

A: You need to take a deep breath and open yourself to the traffic circle’s healing energy. Don’t be afraid to achieve oneness with the unknown.

Dear Lena, do you think they can tame the Bulb?

A: Not even Paris Hilton can tame the Bulb.



STAR WARS FANS’ might be willing participants in reality tv shows, but seem to have very little clarity about reality in the first place, and nobody can find a way to relate to them.

TV RUNNING OUT OF REALITY SHOW PARTICIPANTS

StarWars Fans Plentiful But Not Qualified

by Jodi Money

The nation’s television producers joined together recently to address a current crisis in reality tv shows, which are running out of people to bribe into eating bugs and publically humiliating themselves doing stunts and dating miserable losers.

“Our very survival is at stake,” whispered one producer, nervously handing invitational fliers to startled passers-by. “We thought there was an endless supply of morons and wanna-bes to load into the latest reality tv formula, but we’re actually running low. Who knew it would be hard to find people who would want to crawl into a tank of scorpions or eat rotting pond scum?”

“It makes you re-think your whole reason for going into this business,” admitted one producer. “It makes you re-examine your ideals.”

“If we really lose it all, we’re certainly going to film our slow descent into homelessness and suicide,” vowed another producer. “After all, we still have our pride.”

“It isn’t that I don’t like the idea of being dragged behind a speedboat or drinking pig’s blood,” mused one woman reading the flier. “And there’s nothing I wouldn’t do to help save the industry. It’s just that lately I’ve been

The new food pyramid:

four years of study have not helped explain what in the world made anyone think this symbol would help people eat better.



What does the new food pyramid mean to you?

The Pepper Spray Times decided to find out!

“It means that no matter how hard you try, eating a nutritious diet is a pointless, monotonous, uphill struggle.”

“I think it means that you should run up a lot of escalators if you don’t have a treadmill.”

“It means that eating according to the Department of Health is a lot like an accordian.”

“I think it’s something about how you should first check to see if there is any way down the backside of a mountain.”

“It means if you try to eat a really balanced and nutritious diet your friends will kiss you off and you end up on a lonely road.”

* * * * *


kind of busy.”

The producers’ group admitted that they had been tempted to approach the long lines of Star Wars fans waiting in hot, uncomfortable costumes, since it seemed likely that they would be used to extreme discomfort, humiliation, and were accustomed to revolting food, but worried that they would lose their core audience.

“Nobody can relate to these people,” stated one producer. “Eating insects is one thing, but spending a lifetime costumed in a movie line is hard to watch.”

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FUN IDEAS FOR DECORATING YOUR TRAFFIC CIRCLE

Fill it with fireworks and light it up.

Throw a round dance right in the middle.

Buy some lilypads, a few frogs, and have a lovely local fishbowl.

Make yourself the world's largest banjo.

See how many of your friends can fit inside of it! Have a traffic circle capacity contest with the other traffic circle survivors.

Pull a tarp tight across it: instant trampoline.

Put a big ball in the middle, paint it yellow, and call it Saturn.

Fill it up with water, add some rubber duckies, and have yourself a local swimming hole.

Add some wooden livestock and make it a neighborhood carousel.

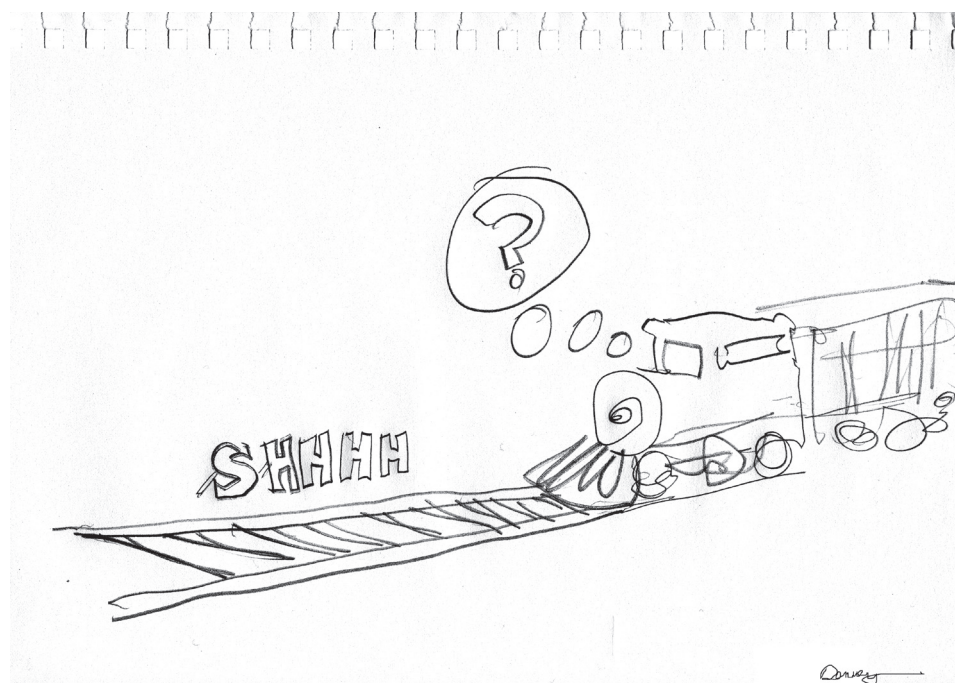
Give it a paint job and turn it into a Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket.

Walk or jog round and round inside your circle reciting poetry and call it art.

Hire a local theater company and throw a production in it.

Plant it with marijuana and watch the police raid it.

Got some suggestions? Send them to us here at the Pepper Spray Times, cdenney@igc.org!



Berkeley's latest art project...

MAIO TO TRAINS: SHUT UP

by Sara Lidon

Local politician Linda Maio's vigilance on behalf of her West Berkeley constituents is manifesting in a determined effort to silence trains, which she claims are causing complaints.

"In the middle of the night they are awakened," she stated, "by engineers who blow "hard and long and often..." causing a disturbance.

Several West Berkeley neighbors expressed an interest in meeting the engineers, while others claimed that they enjoyed the sound of the trains, although they could use a good bass line and maybe a fiddle solo.

The trains themselves were devastated to learn that they are not universally loved, and demanded to be allowed to weigh in at a public hearing.

"We tend to have great command of a room," modestly stated one local locomotive, pointing out that it was not the train, but rather the conductor who was responsible for the whistle, which is only a safety feature designed to signal danger.

Maio's supporters responded that Berkeley was too crowded anyway, and that many less startling and lower volume methods exist for signaling the public that a train is coming.

One suggestion involves the use of smoke signals, rather than whistles, to signal the proximity of a train, and is very popular with people concerned about noise.

"I would much rather just look up at the sky if I'm about to cross the tracks," stated one West Berkeley resident, adding that soap bubbles might be a nice "very Berkeley" touch.

Maio's office is suggesting that there be train whistle simulators here and there along the tracks which would "focus" the sound and be more difficult to hear.

Some West Berkeley residents expressed an interest in having the experimental train whistle simulators set up near Maio's house, or perhaps City Hall, to assess the long-term effects.

Critics argued that the train whistles were an important safety issue, and that taxpayers of the City of Berkeley would be the first to have to shell out of pocket if someone were hit by a train. Others suggested that developers who wish to situate expensive condominiums near the tracks would be the main beneficiaries of a new train-whistle policy, and were dismissed as a bunch of crabby nay-sayers who hated progress.

Citizens opposed to train whistles are invited to meet with picket signs near the tracks and convey their message directly to the conductors.

Citizens who support the traditional train sounds and safety features are invited to request a public hearing, hence enjoying a spectacular silence in response.

* * * * *

TOM BATES APPLAUDS HIMSELF

by Louden Obnoxious

Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates recently held more than 20 community meetings with his supporters and discovered that he is doing a really good job.

"Who knew?" commented a happy Bates, showing off the results of his supporter response surveys. "I'm just so fortunate over 300 people who agree with me were willing to share their overwhelming approval. They like me-they really, really like me."

Critics objected that there was nothing representative about the survey, which endorses Bates' fast-track economic development as a high priority.

Bates responded that there was a measure of truth in the objection.

"Any survey like this is necessarily biased in favor of more active people who are willing to take the time to attend meetings and fill out surveys and who can stand to be in the same room with me and have spare time in the first place," he conceded. "It's also true that there was nothing to stop people from attending multiple meetings and filling out multiple surveys to bias the results. But that won't stop me from waving this thing around like a flag on the 4th of July."

Critics noted that the "priorities" offered to survey-takers did not include options such as feeding the poor, building single-room occupancy housing, or lowering the salaries of City Hall district representatives, salaries which wildly inflated after Berkeley managed to seat a self-described "progressive" majority.

"I'm curious as to why they didn't include silencing the trains as a priority option" mused one observer. "If we're really going to put people near

train crossings at risk, then we might as well find out whether or not this is an honestly public priority or whether it's just some developer whispering in City Hall's pro-development ears."

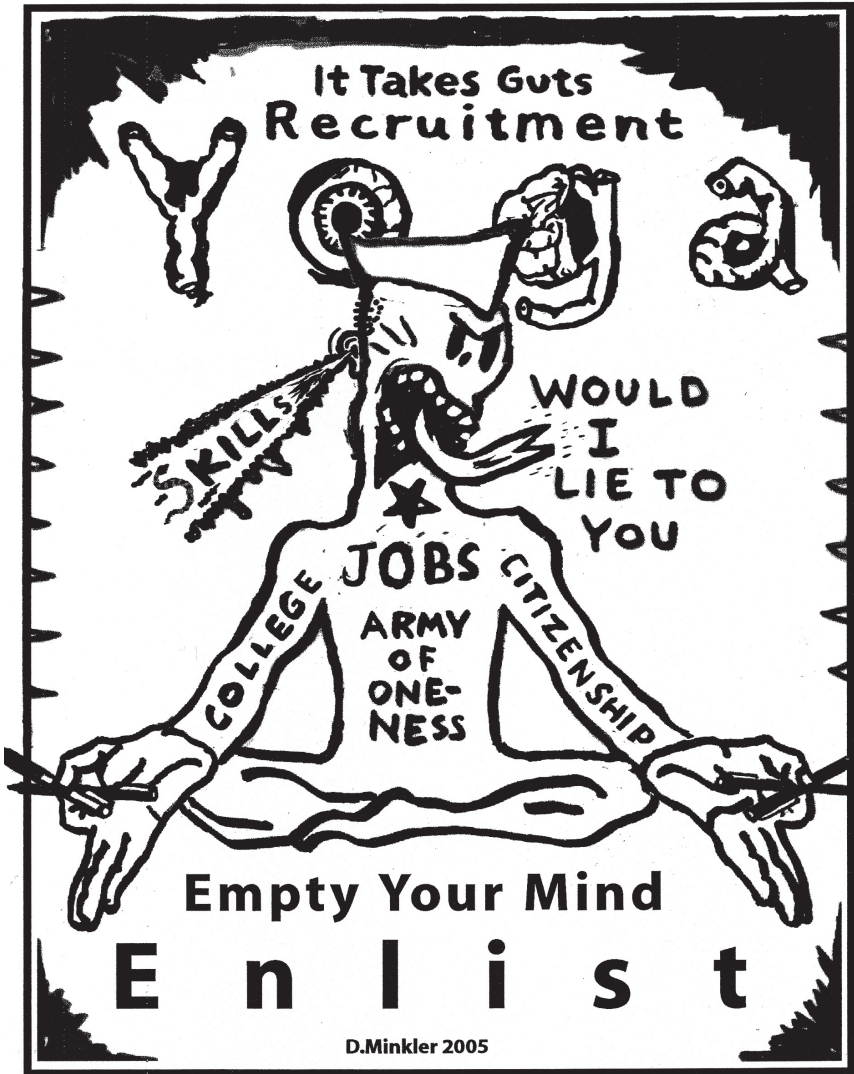
Others noted that the "don't know/refused to answer" category was larger than the responses from Betty Old's district, Laurie Capitelli's district, Darryl Moore's district, or Dona Spring's district, and equal in number to respon-

dants from Kriss Worthington's district.

Bates defended the "don't know/refused to answer" group as a very important part of the survey, with a very important political message.

"These are people who show up at meetings without really knowing the our private agenda," he stated. "They are the heart of our electoral success."

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D.Minkler 2005

The Pepper Spray Times gratefully accepts donations, death threats, mailing list additions, etc., at:



Pepper Spray Times
1970 San Pablo Ave. #4
Berkeley, CA 94702
cdenny@igc.org
www.caroldenney.com

Pepper Spray Times Staff

Editor.....Grace Underpressure
Art Director.....Egon Schiele
Comics.....Roger Dondis
Staff.....Becka Gain, Julie Viet, Jodi Money,
Sharon D. Love, Sara Lidon, Doug Minkler,
Louden Obnoxious



Pepper Spray Times is made possible by the natural comedy inherent in the local political landscape and all its inhabitants,

best exemplified by...

Available at some of the finest public meetings, or mailed to your door for a hefty bribe. Plagiarize wildly.

We appreciate those who understand that satire is serious business.

* Anthony and Cleopatra