

I'm not a "poster girl" for Measure 37

...and I am not afraid to speak my mind!

Dorothy English

I'm not sure what offends me most about this newspaper's April 28 editorial on Measure 37 – the inference that I am just a "poster girl" in the fight for land use reform or that the legislature's gutting of Measure 37 is somehow "fair" to little people.

Since no one from the *Oregonian* editorial board has ever bothered to ask me a single question, I will assume that it is just their arrogance and not the fact that I am a woman, or that I am elderly, or that I am not rich, that causes them to dismiss me and my nearly 40-year struggle to use my land for the purposes for which my deceased husband and I purchased it. I can't think of any other reason why this newspaper would display such disdain for people like me and others in my shoes, who have watched as our property has been taken in a completely arbitrary fashion.

After I bought my land, the land use system in Oregon barred me from dividing my land. Before the State of Oregon and Multnomah County took my rights away, nobody asked me if they could use my land for something other than what I wanted. Nobody paid me for taking the use of my land.

What is even more galling is that the reasons for taking my land are so petty. My land, which is about 1,000 yards from the City of Portland, is zoned for commercial forest use, because LCDC, the state land use planning overlord, claims that my land is suitable for commercial forest activities. What a joke.

I have about as much chance of convincing a timber company to buy my land for commercial forest use as I do convincing a downtown developer to buy it for a skyscraper.

But the editorial board writes about me without having ever visited my property or even attempting to understand my plight. When it waxes poetic about "saving farmland" and "preserving forestland," I sit back and laugh, knowing that vast amounts of the land zoned "farmland" and "forestland" have never been farmed or forested, and never will be. Yet under our "unique" set of land use laws, the only one of their kind in the United States (which hardly makes them a model as so often claimed), nearly every acre of rural land is called "farmland" or "forestland," a fact this paper conveniently ignores.

It must be easier for the editorial board to sit in their offices and call everything outside of cities "farmland" or "forestland" than to actually go outside of downtown and see for themselves how much of rural Oregon is neither "farmland" nor "forestland," no matter what LCDC calls it.

For nearly four decades, I've asked for relief. I've asked for help. I've asked to be treated fairly. I've tried being nice. I've tried being mean. I've invited people to my property. I've asked everyone from local county commissioners to the governor to help me.

But unfortunately, I've been ignored or dismissed by nearly every politician, and those who have tried to help me get attacked by the editorial board with the same arrogance and lack of understanding they have displayed towards Measure 37.

I don't have the kind of money it takes to fight the zealous lawyers from organizations and individuals who contributed huge amounts of money to stop me from using my land like San Francisco-based Sierra Club (\$20,000), the Washington, D.C.-based League of Conservation Voters (\$275,000), the Washington, D.C.-based Partnership Project (\$90,000), the Nature Conservancy (\$183,500), 1000 Friends of Oregon (\$111,000), winemaker Eric Lemelson (\$550,000), and contributions by the public employee unions (\$325,000).

But a number of Oregon gentlemen have stood up for me and helped me pass Measures 7 and 37. Yet when these men try to protect all our rights, they are labeled as "big timber companies" and attacked for being greedy.

I don't know why the *Oregonian* thinks that campaign contributions from family businessmen who are located in Oregon, vote in Oregon, hire Oregon people, pay Oregon taxes, and build Oregon's economy are bad, while big money campaign contributions from undisclosed people back East who have never lived here, never paid taxes here, never voted here, and never contribute a damn thing here, is good.

And after attacking the generous Oregonians who contributed to protecting all of our property rights, you dismiss me as being their unwitting puppet. How condescending of you to assume that I can't think for myself.

So let's get one thing straight – Measure 37 helps me. It helps people like me. It doesn't distinguish between big or small, rich or poor, timber companies or city residents. Measure 37 gives everyone the exact same right – the right to use their land the way they could when they bought it.

I know this paper doesn't like Measure 37, and no doubt never will. And I know that it doesn't give a hoot that my life's savings was stolen or that there are many others just like me. But when it claims that people like me are just pawns in some grand conspiracy by "big greedy corporations" it insults me and everyone who knows me. For the last time, knock it off.

It is too bad I had to use an ad to get the truth out.

Sincerely,

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