

...the pious issue...

These are truly the...

Hepper Spray Times

September 2005

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



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

"That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold..."

Vol. VII No. 9



BEFORE AND AFTER: The trains in west Berkeley have a profound effect on not only the people but also the clothing of people forced to endure their constant noise, as this before and after photo of two hapless 4th Street shoppers makes clear.

They're Not Just Too Loud - Trains Cause Poverty, Confusion, and Unfashionable Clothing

by Padma Dues

Berkeley Council Representative Linda Maio's effort to silence trains has met with support from scores of residents who can testify that the loud, prolonged train whistles have affected their sleep, their hearing, their vegetable gardens, their sense of fashion, and even their mileage.

"I used to get around 20 miles per gallon," affirmed one resident still searching for a way to exit a local traffic circle. "Those trains are costing me an arm and a leg."

"Tupper and Reed had trombones, French horns, clarinets, but they just couldn't compete," sighed another Berkeley resident. "Those trains are having a devastating effect on what was once a thriving downtown."

Experts on planning and development agreed that much of Berkeley is a ghost town, with vacant retail space on almost every corner.

"It could be that the property owners are charging too much rent to make it profitable for small businesses to get off the ground," mused one development expert. "But more probably it's

the trains."

Protesters have gathered continuously near the train tracks, holding candles and singing songs in an effort to pressure the trains to wreak their havoc elsewhere, but the trains continue to claim that they are "on track" and have no intention of relocating.

Maio's office continues to state its dedication to silencing the offensive whistles.

"\$200,000 is only the beginning," stated one staff member. "Public money may be in scarce supply, but the atrocity of train whistles must be stopped whatever the cost."

"We're relieved someone understands our suffering," offered one resident. "I mean, just look at my hair."

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THIS MAY LOOK LIKE FUN but it is not fun enough, according to military recruitment figures and the American public, which would rather watch tv.

New Study Reveals Public Not Really Enjoying the War

by Lotta Luck

President Bush's efforts to sell the war are coming up short, experts say, because the public is not really having much fun with it.

"In the beginning we had a very positive response," insisted a consultant working with White House staff. "September 11th, the flags, the uniforms, the families waving their family members goodbye, that's all good. It's this quagmire stage where the going gets tough."

Political observers agreed that while the initial search for weapons of mass destruction stage of the war had generated some excitement, the regime change stage, the building infrastructure stage, the building democracy stage, and the current insurgency fighting stage are losing the public's interest to bug-eating and cosmetic surgery shows.

Experts agreed that more effort needs to be made to pump up the public's enthusiasm with pro-war song contests, interviews with photogenic soldiers, and positive editorials.

"We need to make amputation sexy," stated one expert. "Then we'd really have a chance."

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ASK THE EXPERTS



LENA DEETER knows the answers to everything forwards and backwards.

Dear Lena, what should I do about these cell phone users in the market, on the bus, on the street, everywhere? There's no place to go to get away from them now and they won't listen to requests to desist. What should I do? I had one on either side of me on my last Bart ride.

Dear Reader, as part of the Pepper Spray Times' staff, I heartily recommend pepper spray, which has virtually eliminated the problem in our press room along with several pesky reporters. But if that seems too extreme, lean into the offender's phone and sing a hearty rendition of "By the Light of the Silvery Moon", or just include yourself wholeheartedly in the conversation. The user will no doubt be painstakingly describing their whereabouts, and estimating carefully their anticipated arrival time. You might consider adding what they are wearing, and what you are wearing as well, since you are a full participant in this obviously collective experience. If this has no effect, I recommend my own personal method, which is a quick application of WD40. The resultant criminal charges will be well worth it.

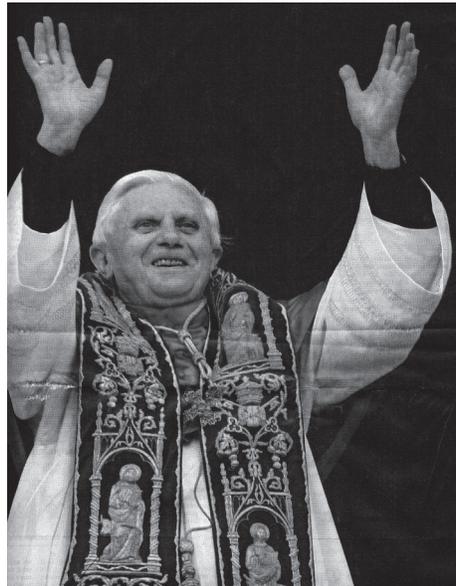
Dear Lena, is the problem of homelessness better now, or worse?

Dear Reader, spoken like a person with no interest-only mortgage! The problem of homelessness is worse, much, much worse, and you're probably to blame. If you voted for anyone who is currently in office and is not in full revolt against state, federal and local policy, you need to spend a couple nights on the street.

Dear Lena, should Derby be closed?

Dear Reader, only if City Hall is closed right along with it.

NEW POPE FLOPS; ACTING LESSONS RECOMMENDED



RATZINGER needs tap lessons, according to religious experts worldwide who determined that not enough 12 year-olds are lining up to kiss his ring.

by Boris A. Dram

The new Pope, Benedict XVI, returned to Rome recently from the Catholic church's 20th world youth summit in Cologne in a hail of recommendations from show business professionals concerned about his lack of charisma.

"It's going to be tough to shore up a dying church with this guy at the helm," acknowledged one Hollywood agent. "He should think about getting pierced."

"He's dull, he's shrill, and he's having trouble carrying off the costume," agreed a local fashion consultant. "He might want to dress down, or get a wacky sidekick."

Critics pointed out that the Pope's initial mistake was allowing other people to set his agenda. His predictable trip to the world youth summit made an invitation to a nearby Jewish synagogue hard to refuse, since the Pope's predecessor had visited a synagogue, and a refusal would have been seen as a step backwards. Observers agreed that the new Pope's unwillingness to open the Vatican's World War II archives as requested by Jewish leaders is seen as a step backward anyway.

"The poor guy can't win," stated one Vatican spokesperson. "Between that and his inability to breakdance, we're seriously considering the green hair."

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Proposed Brower Center Cursed; Blue Ball Blamed

City Refuses to Sacrifice Rich People's Blue Ball at Burning Man

by Caleb Rate

Berkeley's proposed Brower Center has collided with roadblock after roadblock, making local observers wonder if the project isn't cursed by the notorious blue ball sculpture purported to be dedicated to Brower's memory, but which nobody can bear anywhere near them.

Recently rejected by the Ohlone Park neighbors, the as yet unbuilt sculpture commissioned by clueless rich people has been seen rolling from commission to commission, flattening politicians' and environmentalists' suggestions for placement.

Local residents, tired of fighting off the city's threats to situate the ball, considered blight by most, have suggested that the ball be donated to the Black Rock, Nevada, art celebration known as Burning Man, which hosts a week of creative revelry capable of finding either an imaginative use for the blue ball or an interesting way to destroy it.

"Somebody's got to destroy this thing," nodded one local resident. "They're about to kill off the last remaining parking in the downtown area and build another empty shell full of cash-starved pet non-profits at the expense of all economic common sense by abusing the brownfields grant process, something Berkeley once condemned. It has to be a curse."

Supporters of the horrifying alleged memorial point out that the blue ball can hardly be donated to Burning Man without having been built yet, but were swiftly dismissed by demolition proponents.

"All the better," agreed one local art critic. "That will bring down shipping costs considerably, and suit the gathering in Black Rock immeasurably. Burning Man participants can easily rise to the challenge of purely theoretical destruction, and hopefully will at least theoretically destroy the city council and the art commission that accepted this thing as well."

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BUSH FIGHTS OFF ANTI-WAR CRITICS, RENAMES DEATH

by Lucia Footing

The Bush Administration took a page out of the Berkeley City Council's playbook and decided to re-name death, saying the growing toll of dead soldiers was pretty much the only objection the American public seems to have to the war.

"The obscene costs, the illegality of the foreign interference in sovereign states, none of that seems to be causing the alarm caused by the actual loss of life," stated one White House operative. "We think if we develop some more elegant phrasing we can deflect most or all of our criticism, and insure a Republican victory in the next election."

Critics snarled that losing the last election didn't interfere in the least with the last Republican victory, and that the public may be stupid but not stupid enough to swallow "specific existence cessation" or "apparent deprivation of function" as an improvement.

"We'll see," responded one White House spokesperson. "If the Berkeley City Council can re-define affordable housing to exclude the poor, and call what they're doing to the downtown 'revitalization', then, I think we're entitled to play a little fast and loose with language. They've managed to fool an arguably educated public."

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ROUND AND ROUND it goes from commission to commission, while local residents shudder at the possibility that this cursed object might someday become their neighbor.



PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC sometimes has a really bad day, and if you mention the Raker Act of 1913, it just might have another one.

PG&E BOMBS SAN FRANCISCO

by Paco Smokes

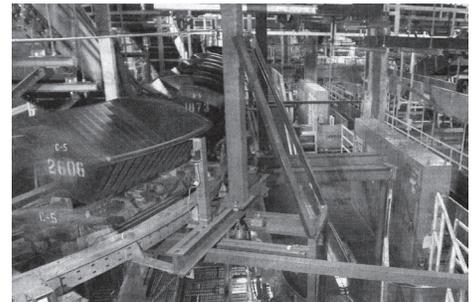
Fed up with incessant references to public power and insulting inferences that it operates an illegal monopoly in the city, PG&E bombed the upscale Galleria shopping center.

"It was terrible, terrible," sobbed Galleria spokeswoman Christine Falvey. "PG&E has been screwing San Franciscans for more than eighty years, but this was so unexpected that it was much worse."

PG&E spokespersons admitted that the underground power transformer in the Financial District had recently been inspected and found to be functioning normally, and that PG&E customers were 44 percent more likely to be affected by an outage than Southern California Edison customers, but insisted that the explosion was an accident and that it needs to reopen its 1988 contract and get more money to insure the public's safety.

"Sure the 1913 Raker Act required the city of San Francisco to run its own public power system, but we've been on cruise control for decades," yawned a PG&E representative. "City Hall eats out of our hand, but we need to make sure the Ralph Lauren Polo store, the Ravits Watches and Jewelry store, and the general public gets the message. After all, life goes on...and off."

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THE DENVER AIRPORT'S once famous but now abandoned baggage handling machine might make a good roller-coaster or jungle gym.

Baggage Machine Bites Dust

by Becka Ng

The Denver International Airport finally gave up its ten year experiment in computerized baggage handling, admitting that the computers were less accurate than human workers, more expensive than even the highest labor costs, and even more surly than people before coffee in the morning.

Denver admits they can never recoup the \$186 million construction costs or the millions more in expensive repair and efforts to modify the failed system. The automation never worked for incoming flights, the system couldn't deal with sharp corners, and the computerized baggage carts were prone to simply tipping over and dropping baggage along the way.

"It looked really good on paper," commented Raymond Neidl, an airline analyst, "but dropping, mishandling and misdirecting bags can actually be accomplished by human beings for much less money."

Experts are unclear about what to do with the 26 miles of track, thousands of conveyor belts, or the defunct telescoping belt loader, which were part of the error-prone technology now sitting uselessly at the airport, which long ago elected to use human beings to handle luggage. The company which designed the system has long since been liquidated.

"It would make a great art piece of some kind if we could ever get it to function," suggested Mr. Neidl. "But even without functioning there are some options we can pursue. If we tell the City of Berkeley that it's the latest in green technology and will preserve open space, I think we can unload it."

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WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL FELT CREATIVE, EDITED REPORTS

Global Warming Described as God's Way of Reducing Need for Sweaters

by Isolde Hat

A former lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute, the largest trade group representing the interests of the oil industry, who now is chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, admitted editing government climate reports on global warming in ways that gave it a kinder, gentler cast.

Michele St. Martin, a White House spokesperson, affirmed the changes, stating that they "were part of normal interagency review" and were also very probably part of God's long-term plan to rid the world of the need for long-johns and thermal underwear.

Critics insinuated that the White House official, Philip Cooney, reflected the Bush administration's attempt to downplay the effects of greenhouse gasses on the environment, and that he was unduly influenced by his years as a lobbyist for the energy industries.

White House officials stressed that while Cooney has no scientific training, his years as a representative of oil and gas industries should not be held against him, and that his efforts to downplay the scientific basis of the effects of global warming were part of

the proof of God's "intelligent design", which the Bush administration has stated should be discussed in public schools.

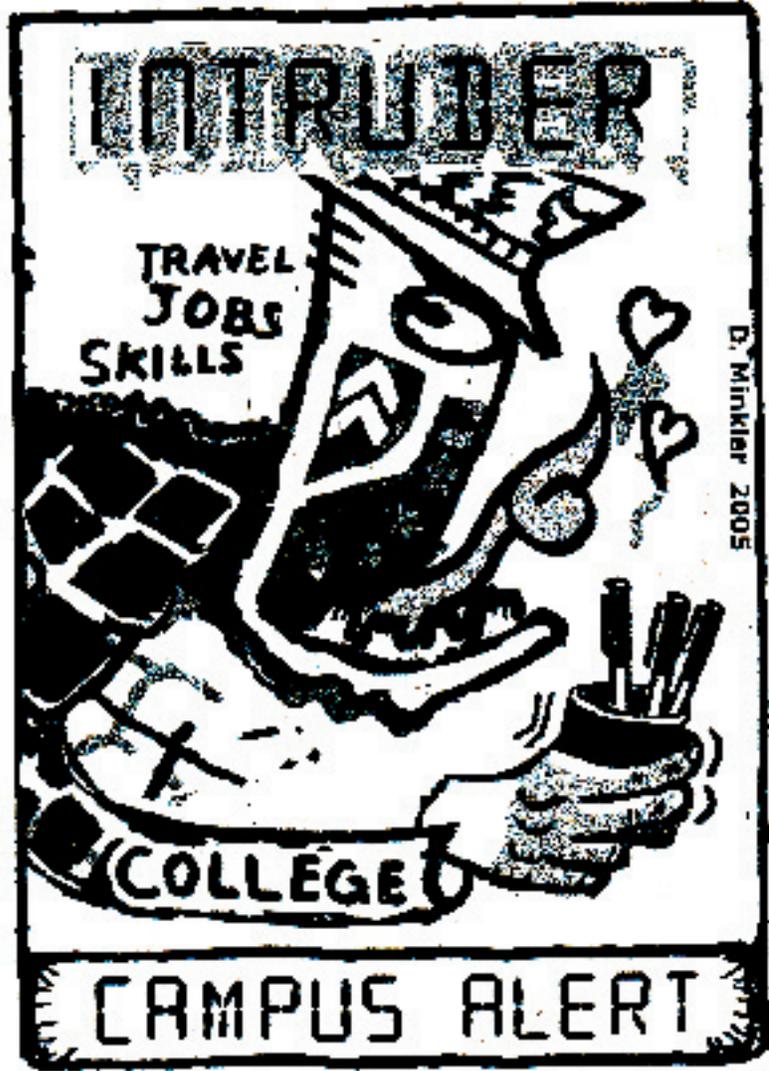
"Why would he have been put in such a sensitive position," pointed out one White House staffer, "unless God intended him to be there?"

Efforts by the Bush administration to highlight uncertainties in science have run afoul of efforts by other nations and scientific groups alarmed by the

mounting evidence of global warming, which has fueled a precipitous drop in the value of beach front property, ice fishing equipment, winter gloves and fuzzy wool sweaters.

"The decline in the value of beach front property is also God's work," remarked one local realtor. "It's really clear that God wants us all to do a lot less skiing and learn to swim."

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



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best exemplified by...



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We appreciate those who understand that satire is serious business.

* Macbeth