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Love animals, don't eat them

Thank you for the December 2007 article, "The Ethics of Eating—Local non-profit promotes compassion at the dining table." This article about the local group Compassion Over Killing really embodies the ethics of Takoma Park in that it's a small group of individuals working for great change.

I applaud the Takoma Voice for not only reporting the progressive, humanitarian causes that the residents of Takoma Park support but also spotlighting the work of those who extend their compassion beyond their own species. Non-Violence is a clear theme in the hearts of the people who live and work in Takoma Park and this is reflected in the city council's actions throughout the years: declaring Takoma Park a nuclear-free zone, establishing an immigrant sanctuary law, and opposing the confining of egg-laying hens to wire cages.

The more we learn about how animals are raised and killed for our food the more we realize its impact on the environment, our health, workers' rights, and our own humanity.

— Rose Nealon
Takoma Park, MD

Good and bad in climate change

Rick Docksai and Mike Tidwell have contributed excellent articles ("Maryland could pay heavy price for global warming," November 2007 and "Enough with the bloody light bulbs," November 2007). I agree entirely with Mike's content and I do have supplementary action proposals.

Herewith I present an outline which might be considered the next phase of the discussion.

1. There is some good and some bad

climate change coming fast.

2. We will have a larger bay and a shorter coast.

3. We will have a warmer and wetter climate for the next 50 years or so, and probably drier after that.

4. We will have a greener environment.

These assertions are based on equally reliable research to that cited, and perhaps more specific in some aspects.

A larger bay may be good for both fishing and the aquaculture industries. It will also be good for recreation. If we clean it up in time.

We may have less coastal tourism and more tourism on our larger rivers and greener hills. Too, other North American regions will have greater negative climate change impacts and send tourists to us. If we plan and program our advantage.

A warmer and wetter climate will allow us to have more productive agriculture. If we are quick to convert our farming to the climate and the market. Our farmers are already producing more and longer.

A greener environment means we will have cleaner air and water. And we will be sequestering more CO2 and NO2. Our parks, streetscapes, school grounds, and the National Mall will be enhanced. The Earth is considerably greener today than it was 10 and 20 years ago.

Today, not tomorrow, we need to plan and program to take advantage of the good and mitigate the bad of climate change in our climate zone. It won't be easy or cheap.

Jac Smit
Silver Spring, MD

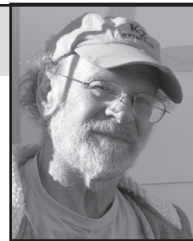
Anti-gambling orthodoxy is at odds with liberal values

Setting aside for the moment the baffling liberal orthodoxy against gambling (I'll get to that) I have to take exception to Michael Tabor's attacks on Maryland Secretary of Labor and fellow Takoma Parker Tom Perez. (Tots for Slots December 07)

Tabor first accuses Perez of selling us out by supporting slots. Later he cites a local "activist" who also accuses him of being a sell out, and not serving those he represents. A charge of selling out implies a change of position taken for personal gain that creates problems for those you are supposed to help. As Tabor himself points out, Perez's refusal to condemn gambling is hardly a new position for him.

Moreover, Perez was not elected by a particular constituency—ideological, economic or geographic. Perez was appointed to statewide office, meaning that in fact he represents all the citizens of Maryland—the conservative poor Western Marylander, the retiree from Baltimore City as well as Takoma Park progressives, many of whom actually gamble, or at least have no problem with others gambling.

continued on page 55



PROGRESSIVELY SPEAKING

Omnivore's democracy

BY MICHAEL TABOR

My family just saw "Charlie Wilson's War" and left with the sinking feeling of how difficult it is to achieve the democratic ideal in our government. From my perspective, the federal government has always been more about insiders and special interests, wheeling and dealing, and cynical reasoning than about democracy. What most of us who want positive change know is that we're more likely to experience representative democracy locally than nationally. (Although even at this level our representatives—even the best of them—are under intense pressure from special interests, which is why we need to stay informed and involved.) This brings me around to mentioning an upcoming panel discussion on Sunday January 13.

As most of us are aware, the Maryland General Assembly just concluded a special session to address the state's budget crisis. The session made major changes in state income, corporate, and sales taxes, and in funding for social programs. It also approved a referendum in 2008 to decide whether slots should be legalized in Maryland.

How did we fare? Despite the rhetoric and pronouncements, did the burden fall on working and middle class Marylanders? Did progressives or special interests win the day in Annapolis? Why was the income tax not made more progressive—even as progressive as Governor O'Malley had proposed? Was part of the Montgomery County delegation responsible? Why was there not an increase in the tax on alcohol and many services while the Legislature saw fit to raise the sales tax making the whole package less progressive? And what about slots? Who exactly is leading the charge for legalization?

These are some of the interesting questions that will be addressed at this meeting sponsored by Progressive Neighbors. Among the panelists will be State Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez, American University professor and political commentator Allan Lichtman, Roll Call Political Editor Josh Kurtz, community activist Elbridge James, and Aaron Meisner from StopSlotsMaryland.

There will also be time for general discussion. The meeting takes place at the Argyle Park Rec. Center, 1030

Forest Glen Road in Silver Spring at 1:30 p.m. For further information, call Wally Malakoff at 301-587-5559.

I am currently reading *Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan about how we market, process and enjoy the foods we eat. It focuses on our national eating disorder in which we eat seemingly tasty food that might, in the long run, be killing us and poisoning the planet. Take that one-pound bag of washed lettuce or spring greens you just bought at the store. It contains 80 calories of food energy. However, the growing, chilling, washing, packaging, shipping and selling of it takes more than 4,600 calories of fossil fuel energy! That's 57 calories of energy for every calorie consumed. And this is a fairly elemental product—one that brings us closest to our animal relatives who graze grass or nibble on tree leaves.

Then there's the impact of growing and eating meat. If you eat corn directly—as some cultures do—you consume all the energy. But when you feed it to cattle or chickens, 90% of its calories are lost on bones, feathers, fur and metabolism.

When you look at fast foods after reading this book, you become more aware of all the synthetic food additives that originate in a petroleum refinery or chemical plant including suspected carcinogens like dimethylsiloxane (also a mutagen) and, tumorigen and a reproductive effector. And a listed ingredient in Chicken McNuggets called tertiary butylhydroquinone (a form of lighter fluid) is sprayed on a nugget or the inside of the box to "help preserve freshness." Is anyone reassured that the FDA permits this petroleum byproduct to be used on our food?

When I hear FDA, I think of those bureaucrats and Feds in Charlie Wilson's world who can be pressured, cajoled and wined and dined by special interests and otherwise made not to act to protect us—after all, we're only individuals in a government more responsive to special interests.

Looking for some good New Year resolutions? Read and discuss the book. Think about the food we eat, how it's grown and where we buy it. Don't be cynical—become informed, involved, and vote. Vow to raise your voice in 2008! And, on the local level, come to the January 13th meeting.

Have a hopeful and vocal New Year!

Local First! See Hometown Resources on pages 43- 49