

Commentary Michael Costello Pestocrats won one more round

Michael Costello The Lewiston Tribune

This dismantling of two cranes in Lewiston last week and the dismantling of jobs make a fine metaphor for the state of the economy in the Age of Obama.

Megaload opponents celebrated a victory last week, which is another way of saying that the local economy lost. The last megaload heading up U.S. Highway 95 passed through Moscow Tuesday. And environmentalist puritans were celebrating.

Login or Subscribe to view this article.
LoginorSubscribe

Not so long ago, the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley was eagerly looking forward to handling hundreds of "megaloads," that would be shipped up the Snake River, unloaded at the Port of Lewiston and transported over Lolo Pass on U.S. Highway 12. Today they're hoping for six.

Regardless of what route the megaloads take, the ultimate destination of all this oil extraction equipment will be the Canadian tar sands. But who needs oil?

At a time when twitchy Democrats, fearing for their political careers, are pleading for President Obama to open the Strategic Oil Reserves, the Canadian tar sands could supply the United States with 700,000 barrels of oil per day. Standing in the way of all that oil and all that progress are the

Pestocrats.

This all could have worked out so well for the area. The fortunate coincidence of good luck and good geography made Lewiston the perfect place for the megaloads. The intersection of the most inland port in the western United States and the only road over the Rocky Mountains without overpasses made this possible. What made it impossible was an unfortunate coincidence of environmental puritans sharing this same geography.

Now the Port of Pasco is as far upriver as the megaloads will travel. There they will be broken down into smaller units that can make the trek over the mountains without being blocked by overpasses. It turned out that overpasses were less of an obstruction than Pestocrats.

It has been a very good week for environmentalist puritans. More jobs have been destroyed, gas prices will remain painfully high and the United States remains the hostage of hostile oil-producing dictatorships. What could be better than that?

Local environmentalist puritans, whom this paper ironically described as "ordinary citizens," were celebrating that last megaload. These puritans found the idea of mega-loads passing through the area as they slept "intolerable."

A joke that gets opportunistically circulated defines a Puritan as someone who loses sleep every night because he's worried that someone, somewhere might be enjoying himself. We might amend that to redefine environmentalist as a person who can't sleep at night because he worries that someone, somewhere might be earning an honest living.

And in this area, that's the literal truth. The megaloads only traveled during the very darkest hours of

the night. The complainers had to set their alarms to be troubled by the megaloads, because the megaloads only traveled when ordinary citizens slept. The megaload transits were intentionally scheduled during those hours so that they would not trouble genuinely ordinary people. Ordinary citizens sleep at night so they can get up refreshed and go to work in the morning.

Considering that there were never more than a tiny handful of these noisy troublemakers who were sufficiently troubled by these nocturnal transits to alter their sleep habits, I would define ordinary citizens as those who elected not to make a stink. Were the people who owe their lost jobs to environmentalist wackoism not ordinary citizens?

The ordinary citizen would like to make an honest living and appreciates it when jobs come into his area. Four-dollar-per-gallon gasoline does violence to the household budgets of the ordinary citizen. And he understands that the price of commodities, such as crude oil, is determined by supply and demand. When demand strains supply, the price goes up. When supply increases, prices go down. He knows that the 700,000 barrels per day that the Canadian tars sands would provide will make his life better.

The Canadian tar sands have become a battleground for the environmental puritans. When Republicans tried to push an amendment through Congress forcing the construction of a pipeline that would bring Canadian oil into this country, Barack Obama personally lobbied for its defeat.

China has expressed its eagerness to burn any Canadian oil that the U.S. doesn't want. So, while China's industrial engine is fueled by Canadian oil and you're paying \$5 per gallon or more, take time to thank the environmental puritans who just couldn't sleep at night, worrying that megaloads might be passing nearby.

Costello is a research technician at Washington State University. His email address is kozmozcostello@hotmail.com.