

4-1-2000

The True Truth About KGI and the Field Station

Paul Faulstich
Pitzer College

Recommended Citation

Faulstich, Paul. The True Truth About KGI and the Field Station. The Other Side. 4/00:10-11.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Pitzer Faculty Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pitzer Faculty Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

The True Truth about KGI and the Field Station



By Paul Faulstich

10 **T**here are multiple truths. One is the true truth. This truth remains the same no matter what anyone thinks or says about it. For example, it is true that we need oxygen, and that trees provide it. No matter what we think or say about it, this is the way it is. And, the Bernard Biological Field Station is habitat to threatened and endangered plants and animals. This, too, we know to be true.

Another truth is truth-by-repetition. This kind of pseudo truth is the stock-in-trade of PR people, politicians, and certain college presidents. This (so-called) truth is more likely to become true the more you say it. For example, the more we acquiesce, and believe that the building of the Keck Graduate Institute (KGI) on the Field Station is a done deal, the more likely it is that we will actualize this truth. Here is another one: We have enough open space in Claremont. Say it often enough, however absurd it is, and you might be able to create it as some kind of pathetic shared belief.

The truth is, we need wild nature. Self-willed nature is not a luxury; it is a requirement for life as we know it. Nature created and sustains the genetic information for all life. And, there is no greater truth than nature. Biotechnology, in all of its arrogance, can never provide a substitute for biodiversity.

Don't be fooled by the smokescreen of biotech dogoodism. KGI is a business venture. It will not stamp out injustice. It will make money. It will not find solutions to our environmental crisis. It will make money.

It will not honor diversity. It will make money. It will not make the world a better place. It will make money.

But money is not really what is at stake. What is at stake is nature. There is a hostile economic takeover in motion, and many of us in the community feel that it must be stopped. Critique and analyze the economic language employed to justify rampant development in our town. Start your critique with something you know well; your own hand. A litigation lawyer can tell you the value of your hand in dollars. But what is your hand worth to you?

Consider your mother, or your daughter, or your sister. An insurance company can tell you her value in dollars. What is your home place worth? Your lover's hair? A stream? The vista of Mt. Baldy? The open space of the Field Station? Now, imagine each of these beloved things redescribed in economic language. Then apply a cost-benefit analysis. Then adopt a statement of overriding considerations. Then sell out to the highest bidder.

What results is a loss that is not quantifiable. What results is a loss of the soul. Do not succumb to a language that ignores what matters in your heart.

As I have said before, the elite minority pushing this ignominious KGI project (this includes elected and appointed officials, and CUC administrators) treats the rest of us like mushrooms; they keep us in the dark and shovel in the manure.

Consider the recent backroom dealings between the

City and the Colleges regarding the College's purchase and disposal of 240 acres of land adjacent to the Wilderness Hills Park. Many of us would welcome such a purchase, but the word around town is that the land is to be politicized, commodified, and used as mitigation for developing--eventually--the entire Field Station. Have students and citizens been allowed (let alone encouraged) to weigh in on this? Absolutely not! Where is the democracy in Claremont?

We have witnessed a decline in consensus, and this decline erodes trust. Trust is like glue; it holds things together. When trust erodes, our community delaminates. Let's work together to put our community back in order! It begins by being shown that the City and the Colleges can be responsive to our legitimate concerns.

I want to remind us that the full faculties of four of the five Claremont Colleges voted overwhelmingly not to site the Keck Institute on the Field Station (CMC did not take a vote). Students have rallied in support of the Field Station. The Environmental Impact Report calls the gravel quarry the "environmentally superior site." And, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the California Department of Fish and Game have both objected to the project. Have these voices of reason been listened to? Absolutely not.

The Field Station is invaluable to our community. Don't let them take this away from you!

There is blasphemy affront in Claremont. Get angry about it! Reject it! Refuse to accept it as normal! Do not accept a diminished way of life as the norm. It is time to unleash our anger.

Effective protest is grounded in anger. Anger nourishes hope and fuels rebellion. Anger presumes a caring. Use your anger to effect change. Stand up for truth! Stand up for Nature! Stand up, and make your voices heard!

Will we continue to compromise away our natural heritage until there is nothing left? Not here. Not now. Don't allow it to happen. Stand up for wildness. Refuse the madness. Reject demise. Be an enemy of the State. Be a patriot. Embrace the land. Accept responsibility. Defend nature. Defend yourself. Stand up to intimidation. Stop the Bulldozers. Engage your Rage!

It isn't selfish for us to seek ways to stop unwanted development in our front yard. Indeed, those who try to shove growth down our throats are precisely the

people who profit from it. Are they not permitted to act in their own self-interest? This is a nation in which the pursuit of profit is a respected goal. Is not the pursuit of quality and of justice an equally acceptable goal? A more honorable goal, in fact? No apologies are due for trying to hold the line against disruptive growth and intrusive industrialization. You should stand tall in your political activism. Do not waver in what you know to be true.

This is our community. The view, the open space, the educational opportunities; they belong to all of us. They are not the sole property of CUC. (Mitch Dorger--once CUC's primary spokesperson for developing the Field Station--does not live in Claremont. As far as I know, he never did. He is not even employed at the Colleges anymore. And all of the big money behind this project? It, too, is from outside our community. Do not let our community decisions be made by outside, corporate interests!)

We call on the leaders of our community to show us that our city can be responsive to student and citizen concerns. We implore our politicians to demonstrate that Claremont is awake and responsive. To them we plead: We need you to shift your gaze back to our community. I love our community; that's why I'm fighting for it; to preserve parts of it, and to change others.

Consider, in our struggle, the words of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, in 1831:

"I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as the truth, and as uncompromising as justice...urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present...I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD."

Join the ranks, and become a radical abolitionist. Abolish injustice! Abolish lies! Abolish rampant destruction! Ridicule pomp and pretension! Offer elegant, heart-felt, and far more intelligent visions. Support change for the better. Reject dumb change. Be hopeful! Feel grateful! Take responsibility! Keep contact! Embrace the true truth! Honor diversity! Defend Earth! Resist much! Obey little! Engage the rage! Keep the struggle alive! Save the Field Station!

In an upcoming hearing the Architectural Commission will be voting on the KGI development plan. This will be an important opportunity to let our voices be heard and to show your support for the Field Station. When the meeting time comes, turn out, and help craft a civil society.



11

{ a p r i l 2 0 0 0 }