

Larson, Douglas W. "Technological Promises, Scientific Disputes." National Forum 81.2 (Spring 2001): 2. (Reviewed by Jessica Miller)

"Technological Promises, Scientific Disputes," written by Douglas W. Larson and published in the 2001 Spring issue of the National Forum, discusses the growing pollution in the Willamette River and the city of Wilsonville's choice to use the river as their source of water. The article outlines the causes for diminished drinking water sources in the Willamette Valley, the types of pollutants in the Willamette River, and mostly, the controversy over the safety of using the river rather than other local sources of water for the residents of Wilsonville.

Larson argues that despite the heavy rainfall in the Northwest, the demand for drinking water has greatly increased due to large population increases. He especially attributes this to Wilsonville which he labels "the fastest-growing city in Oregon." Wilsonville, once dependent on wells for drinking water, now needs a new and improved source of water. After weighing different options, Wilsonville officials decided to build a state of the art treatment facility (costing \$50 million to complete) which will make the water of the Willamette clean and safe enough to drink.

The article discusses specific pollutants in the water and the effect on local wildlife as a warning of the potential human health risks. Larson is also critical of the Wilsonville's decision to choose the Willamette over the Bull Run Watershed which provides exceptional water to Portland and surrounding areas.

Larson closes with the varying views of respected scientists on the possibility of this Willamette water to serve as a safe source for Wilsonville residents. He mocks the city's choice of the Willamette as he closes by quoting Vera Katz as she explains the abuse that the river has been subjected to.

Critique

Larson's article is clearly an editorial piece. While laying down the facts about the Willamette Valley and the diminished water supply, Larson focuses his efforts on being critical of Wilsonville officials for choosing the Willamette River as their city's source of water.

Larson outlines the population growth in the Northwest and specifically in Wilsonville and claims this is the reason for an increased demand in water supply. Noting that the wells that have previously been used will no longer suffice, Larson begins his attack on the city's chosen alternative.

Bull Run, the main water source for Portland and surrounding areas, is built up as a dependent, exceptionally clean, and comparably inexpensive water choice. Larson questions the officials' choice to turn down the obvious and safest choice for one that seems too expensive, too unpredictable, and too unhealthy. While Larson does list Wilsonville's reasons for choosing the Willamette, he prefaces the list with "Wilsonville officials and other proponents of the Willamette Option have made several

unsubstantiated claims to support this decision.”

The article continues to quote scientists on the likely negative effects of the water treatment and does not give arguments to the contrary. Thus, while this article is a great source to learn about the increased need for water, it does not use facts to truly outline the potential health risks of the water. Larson simply negates the choice of the Willamette over Bull Run. He does imply that there will be human health problems due to the water source, but he fails to use specific examples of such risks.

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