

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment

I have been doing these commentaries for over twenty years. Through sickness, surgeries, vacations and family events and tragedies, I have never failed to record a comment. There was only once that my slot was filled by someone else. I sent in a recording electronically and it was in a format that couldn't be used. Through these twenty plus years Humboldt County has changed dramatically. We were a vibrant resource based economy that seldom felt the full impact of economic downturns. Our public employees served the community, not themselves. Potholes in the streets were filled promptly and when needed streets were repaved. The criminals were afraid of prosecution and when convicted served a majority of their sentence. Local businesses were applauded for their investment into the community. Heck, we used to name streets after some of these business owners. Now they are somehow the greedy villains who don't pay enough taxes. There are more people collecting government benefits than people working. These unemployed get just enough free money, food and services to get by without ever looking for a job. I don't think they even comprehend that these resources are paid for with money taken out of the paycheck of someone who is hard at work everyday. Somehow Humboldt County has evolved into something that I don't recognize or understand. Good hard-working people decide to run for public office and once elected get absorbed into the system. If they stay true to their beliefs and try to change this system, they find themselves losing their next election. They end up conforming to a tax and spend mentality that caters to the highly compensated department heads and the unions who represent government employees. Humboldt County spends over \$150,000,000 a year on social services. What do we have to show

for this? Are more people working? Are there fewer transients wandering our streets? If spending hundreds of millions of dollars in Humboldt County solved social issues, then why do we have more children in Foster Care? Since I started speaking on the radio over twenty years ago, Humboldt County has spent over \$1,000,000,000 on Social Services. Spending money is not the solution. We need to try a conservative approach to solving these social issues. Abusive drugs are at the center of the entire problem, yet for some reason making someone pass a drug test before they receive benefits is violating their rights. What rights? Since when is it a "right" to get something for free? Our goal should be to get these people off drugs and back into the workforce. They have to pass a drug test to get a job, so why isn't that a violation of their rights? If the person fails a drug test, we should pay for them to get treatment. If they refuse to go into the rehab program, they will be denied benefits. I want my tax dollar to go to help the poor, not enable them. The Humboldt County Social Services Department spends about \$3,000,000 of our taxes every single week. Again, what are the benefits the taxpayer sees from this expense? Are the down-and-out of our society getting better? Are there fewer of these people receiving benefits? Are the streets safer today than yesterday? I could go on and on and on and the answer to all of these questions, and similar questions, is a resounding NO. Humboldt County is disintegrating because of drugs. Drugs are at the center of a majority of every situation from Foster Care to homicides. Status quo isn't working, we need to spend our tax dollars on solutions that produce results, not just another fat paycheck for a government worker.

This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment