

Hall Monitor

Down the P-Hole

by [Matt Davis](#)

Portland is a nice place to live—as anyone (white) (and employed) here will happily tell you. But my God, we can be smug about it sometimes. Smug to the point of devaluing many of the good things about the city we're all so smug about in the first place.

Last week, our town's smug smog engulfed me to the point where I wondered if we could ever collectively emerge from what I'm christening "the P-hole." No, not your urethra—the P-hole is like the "k-hole" often experienced by club kids doing too much ketamine. Except in Portland's case, a descent into the P-hole is triggered by an overdose on Rose City propaganda, not dance drugs. What are some vocal symptoms of a descent into the P-hole? "I can't hear you! Portland is utopia! Sustaina-bicycli-creative-organics!" Etc. All yelled between chewing aggressively at the inside of one's own cheeks.

We've been ignoring the signs for a while. Back in May, City Commissioner Nick Fish said Portland might one day be known as "Jesus' Favorite City," a week after *Oregonian* arts writer Barry Johnson quoted a local architect comparing our overgrown trading post on the Willamette to "Florence [circa] 1400." Then last Wednesday, September 30, City Commissioner Randy Leonard brought forward a council resolution urging congress to support single-payer health care.

Watch out, congress, Portland City Council is laying down the law! Wait. The resolution, which took over an hour to pass, with lengthy public comment and of course epic speeches by our city commissioners, was completely pointless.

"Council might like to turn on C-SPAN and see where the actual debate is going," said Willie Smith, senior aide to Congressman Earl Blumenauer, when I asked him if he knew about the resolution. Ya burnt.

But the furthest trip down the P-hole came during last Wednesday night's panel discussion at the Bagdad Theater, led by former Talking Heads singer David Byrne.

Byrne got 15 minutes to talk about his new book on bicycling, leaving Portland State University professor Mia Birk, Jonathan Maus of Bike Portland, and Bureau of Transportation geek Timo Forsberg almost 90 minutes to tell him how GREAT. PORTLAND. IS.

"I think we've gone a little longer than we expected, we're not going to do questions and answers," said Byrne, at the end. Translation: "Taxi!"

I was so embarrassed on behalf of our city. Let's drag ourselves out of this P-hole before another international authority stumbles into town.