SUMMARY OF THE MOUNT HORNBLOWER HEARINGS

The Mount Hornblower hearings were very well attended considering the difficulty of reaching Danktown. The Volcano Service officials, who came by helicopter, were surprised at the turnout, particularly since the only public notices had been in the Congressional Record and the Danktown Weekly Gazette and Shopping News.

The hearings opened on a note of tragedy. A life raft overturned while running the rapids of the Dank River, drowning an entire troop of Boy Scouts. Two Behemoth helicopters collided and crashed in flames. Both pilots, three lawyers and four geologists perished in the catastrophe, and a week's supply of vermouth and olives was lost. The Danktown Public School System, together with all teachers and pupils, also was wiped out.

The first witness was Abraham J. C. Lincoln, former Rhodes Scholar, All-American Quarterback, and one of the nation's Fifty Outstanding Young Men. As chief counsel for Behemoth Corporation Mr. Lincoln briefly sketched the Behemoth plans to tear down Mount Hornblower and sluice it through the Dank River to a pumice block factory in Damp City.

John Slob, representing the Mistville Volcano-Climbing and Bird-Watching Society, spoke in opposition to the proposal—quite briefly, being still out of breath from the thirty-mile hike over Dank Pass.
Arthur Creep, president of the Damp City Smelt-Dippers and Sel-Grabbers Club, stated his fear that pumice would damage the smelt and eel runs. Dr. Chowder, winner of the Nobel Prize for his work on the biology of smelt and eels, testified that pumice stimulates the metabolism of smelt and eels; in every river used for sluicing pumice the smelt and eel runs increase, on the average, 25% a year. Mr. Creep then placed his organization on record as favoring the removal of Mount Hornblower, and immediately boarded a Behemoth helicopter, being in immediate need of medical attention while for devils club wounds incurred by hiking up the Dank River from Damp City.

Max J. F. Magmas, executive secretary of the Committee for the Protection and Extension of Vulcanism, though in considerable pain from riding a burro over Dank Pass, narrated the history of Mount Hornblower. The Indians worshipped the mountain as the raw venison and legend, the Indians used to eat fish and were always sick to their stomachs. Then Hornblower erupted and burned down the forests and boiled the rivers and that's how the Indians learned to roast venison and boil fish, which immediately improved their digestion. The Indian name for the mountain was Komo Kulshan Hama Hama ("Big White Mountain Which Sometimes Smells Very Bad").

Vasco de Gama, first white man to see the peak, called it Sierra Blanca y Bonita de Nuestra Madre ("Our Mother's Pretty White Mountain").
Sir Francis Drake gave the present name, claiming it for Queen Elizabeth. The first ascent of Hornblower was made by Lewis and Clark while lost in the fog. The entry for that day in Clark's journal read, "right smart chance for an early winter in these parts." Lewis, always the practical one, commented, "poor country for corn and small grains." Sacajawea is quoted by Francis Parkman as saying, "heap cold feet by golly."

The second ascent of Hornblower was made by a Buddhist missionary (Zen) who is still there. The third party to reach the summit was led by the Duke of the Calabria trying to forget an unhappy love affair with the heiress apparent to the Holy Roman Empire. His chief cameraman, Vittorio de Sica, sent a photograph of the peak to President Theodore Roosevelt, who is quoted in the memoirs of his barber as crying, "This is a bully mountain!"

Mr. Magma was unable to complete his narrative owing to his painful injuries. Furthermore, the Damp City Chamber of Commerce chose this moment to shower upon Danktown leaflets condemning those who stood in the way of Damp City's Progress. The leaflets told how the pumice factory payroll would enable Damp City to build sewers, close down the card rooms, and provide a heating system for the orphanage. The mayor was quoted as saying, "what does it matter if we can't get all the pumice out of the city water supply? A little roughage never hurt nobody."

Those in the hearing rooms would not have known about the leaflets and not one of the scatter-bombs failed, and crashed through the roof, instantly killing three volcano climbers and
a Volcano Service Ranger. The hearings adjourned briefly for the funeral services.

Sir Humphrey Tinker-Evens-Chance, KBE, Commander RN ret., was the first witness following resumption of hearings. Being still quite seasick from running the Dank Rapids in a foldboat, his message was delivered by his secretary, who looked none too good himself. It was put on record that Her Majesty's Government, though reaffirming the Treaty of 1847, retains a certain interest in Hornblower and its companion volcanos, Nelson, Hawkins, Jellico, Raleigh and Prince Valiant, and urges all who share in the common Anglo-American heritage to remember the historic bonds of friendship that unite our Great Nations.

William Rudolph Burst, publisher of the Danktown Weekly Gazette and Shopping News, then was recognized, and with short recesses for food and sleep, spoke for three days. Mr. Burst recapitulated the major battles of the Revolution and the War of 1812, discussed smart professors and New York City millionaires who want everything their own way, and made many satiric remarks about Mistville dudes who climb volcanos and chase birds. His biggest laugh was earned by an anecdote about the Danktown character who accidentally climbed Hornblower one night while trying to find his way home. Afterwards, whenever the boys were cutting up somebody always asked him "whether he was going to climb ol' Hornblower tonight and he'd look real serious and say, "hope not! I didn't leave nothing up there!" Even the Volcano Service officials had to chuckle at that, though they were trying to be impartial.
When the audience was quiet Mr. xxxxxx Burst resumed his speech — in a very serious mood. After noting that Mount Homblower is in Dank County, he asked the audience what xxx possible concern was it to people in Mist County what Dank County did with Homblower. Pointing a dramatic finger directly at Mr. Slob he cried, "how would you like it if we came down to Mistville and told you how to run your county?" Pacing up and down, he pausing briefly to sneer at Mr. Magnus, he asked the audience in how, in the name of heaven, could these smart professors and New York City millionaires have the gall to interfere in the private affairs of Dank County. After allowing these thoughts to sink in he concluded with a story about the Duke of Calabria. xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx

Mr. Burst told the story in broken Italian which was very amusing, and sat down amid gales of laughter and cheers.

Babbit Yokum, president of the Danktown Boosters, movingly pictured the uninterrupted distress of Danktown since Repeal, which at one fell blow rendered the entire population xxxxxx unemployed. He attacked the Washington Bureaucrats who said that since there was nothing in Dank County xxxx but xxxxxx cinders and rain everybody should move out. He attacked the city dudes from Mistville who ran the state and didn’t give a damn about Danktown. Whenever the welfare officers hiked in over Dank Pass, carrying little dabs of medicine and baby formula, they just told about jobs a person could work at in Mistville. When the leaders of Danktown said it wasn’t right that a trained specialist couldn’t work at his calling the welfare officers only gave them a list of states that still had Prohibition. Mr. Yokum was eulogizing the Behemoth
Corporation for offering to bring new customers to Danktown when he suffered a fainting spell. The Chief Physician for the Behemoth Corporation rendered first aid, and with his staff evacuated Mr. Yokum to a hospital, first warning the audience to refrain from smoking.

While the atmosphere was clearing the Volcano Service officials placed in the record a letter from the Congressman for the 19th District, which includes Danktown. The Congressman stated that he was first and last, to his dying breath, working for Dank County and the American Way.

Mr. Eubie then placed in the record a letter from the Congressman for the 13th District, which includes Mistville. The Congressman stated that he was first and last, to his dying breath, working for Mist County and the American Way.

Arthur Creep, fully recovered from his devil's club wounds, then placed in the record a letter from the Congressman for the 15th District, which includes Damp City. The Congressman stated that he was first and last, to his dying breath, working for Damp County and the American Way.

A joint letter from the two Senators proclaimed their heroic efforts to advance the interests of Our Great State and the American Way. The Governor's letter stated his sincere conviction that everything would work out for the best. The President of the United States wished everyone a Merry Christmas.
A letter from Mr. Magmas was presented. His injuries having become infected, he had been carried out over Bank Pass in a stretcher, face down, during the speech by Dr. Burst. The Mistville Volcano-Climbers and Bird-Hatchers who performed this act of mercy took the opportunity to carry back fresh provisions to Tanktown. It was thus a double act of mercy, since Mr. Slob had been dying of scurvy, all attempts to borrow fresh limes from the Behemoth being thwarted by the armed guards outside the compound. An appeal through the Volcano Service was answered by the Chief Butler for Behemoth with sympathy, and regrets that the crew of geologists had an unexpected fad for a beverage known as "Tankersway", which required an entire lime for each bottle; the Behemoth was, itself, critically short of limes.

Mr. Magmas was not in top form while he dictated his letter, and according to his companions he was out of his head from the fever. After a rather moving introductory paragraph in which he forgave his friend, the burro, for the wounds, and then asked the burro to forgive him, pointing out to the burro that had it not been for the burro steaks the Committee for the Protection and Extension of Vulcanism would have lost an executive secretary, Mr. Magmas sketched the current condition of vulcanism in America and the world.
Statistically, volcanic activity has been declining over the world at an average rate of 8% a year for 17,000 years. Though the Krakatoa Pele's and Krakatoa and Kilauea's and Vesuvius's and Paracutins and Mauna Hi'a's get all the headlines, the plain fact is that for every good, solid eruption, a dozen maximising volcanoes quit smoking altogether.

Nowhere in the world is the situation more desperate than in the United States. The present administration knows the danger, and being unwilling to take any positive action to rehabilitate volcanoes, has attempted to blind the public by admitting Hawaii and Alaska into the union.

Every reputable volcanologist has attacked this maxim as nothing more than a politician's stopgap, a cheap election year trick.

Though this letter was read in even, moderate tone by a Volcano Service secretary, the effect was inflammatory.

Mr. Yokum suddenly dived through a window into the hall and attempted to strangle the pretty young secretary, but several Soenoth company attorneys brought him to his senses, somewhat late, since a Soenoth company Paratrooper had meanwhile impaled him on a bayonet.

Mr. Yokum was carried outside, bleeding profusely, while Mr. Xxxx Burst attacked smart professors and New York City millionaires and Mistville dudes who went the whole country for themselves. He then lapsed into his comical
broken Italian accent for some very cruel and suggestive remarks about volcano-climbers and bird-watchers and King Farouk.

The entire hall was in turmoil, with men punching each other in the nose, women fainting, infants squalling, lawyers clucking, volcano-service officials banging gavels. Then, sensation ally, a mysterious woman appeared in the door, stood there a moment, and threw back her heavy veil. The audience gasped, and fell into cathedral-like silence.

It was none other than the internationally-famous beauty born in Fairtooth Loose, who was a little mafia gang in western Sicily, became the wife of Singapore's richest, most handsome opium smuggler. Later she became the internationally-famous publisher of Strife, the magazine for people who can't read, and Thyme, the magazine for people who can't think. Finally, proving that a woman can find adventure and love even though thirty-five years old, she became the wife of the South Pacific's poorest and ugliest pirate, General Angibl Hakti Ded, and was now his ambassador to the Western Hemisphere. With her internationally-famous biting wit, Salam ambassador General Loose presented a vivid word picture of funny dodgers in pith helmets gaping and drooling into mouths of volcanos, and now and then dashing through the snow, squinting through binoculars at birds. The audience was completely fractured, naturally. When at last the hall had quieted sufficiently for her fluting little voice to carry she arched her brows, turned her hands palm up, and amusingly shrilled, "why can't these people
slobber into, and chase birds over, Mount Nelson, Hawkins, Jellico, Raleigh and Prince Valiant?"

Her helicopter took off amid a storm of laughter.

Mr. Burst jumped up on the table and turned the laughter into a roar of hatred, yelling out that the Mistville dudes and smart professors and New York City millionaires have Nelson and Hawkins and Jellico and Raleigh and Prince Valiant all for their country estate! God knows how many honest hard-working Christians they starved out to get those volcanoes! Now the greedy xxx xxx xxx's are trying to take the food from our kids! The xxx xxx xxx's are marching through Dank County just like they did through Georgia! They! The god-darned Yankees got everything their way and now they want to take Dank County away from us! Why can't the xxx xxx xxx's leave us alone with our volcano?"

Mr. Slob, though still quite weak from his bout with scurvy, shouted that fewer and fewer people are illegally distilling corn liquor, xxx xxx more and more people are climbing volcanoes to relax bomb-and-balloon-building tensions, but the Volcano Service officials scowled the meeting to a xxx xxx a weekend adjournment.
In order to gain a fair and impartial sampling of opinion, the Volcano Service officials announced that the second round of hearings would be held on the opposite bank of the Dank River.

The decision was popular with both sides. The Behemoth helicopters spent the entire weekend moving the company compound to the opposite bank, a very expensive undertaking. The Kistville Fieldboat Club, though concerned about the effect of public on their fieldboat, worked heroically all this time attempting to ferry witnesses over the river. Unfortunately the Dank River was in flood. A fieldboat which had been designated for the occasion HMS Wood In was swamped with the loss of all hands, including Sir Humphrey Tinker-Jones and his secretary and valet. Another fieldboat containing Mr. Slot was carried away and has not been seen since entering the filtration plant.

With all opposing witnesses either drowned or left stranded on the far bank the Volcano Service expected much quieter hearings, particularly since the trail over Dank Pass had been closed due to excessive fire hazard and the flood waters of the Dank River were rising hourly. The Behemoth Helicopter Fleet brought in a fresh team of lawyers and geologists and Nobel Prize Winners to replace those whose lives had gone bad. Hearings reopened in an atmosphere of cheerful friendliness.
Mr. Lincoln delivered a prepared speech, magnanimously praising Mr. Magmas and Mr. Glob and Sir Humphrey Tinker-\textit{van}-
Chance for their public spirit. These, he said, are the men who make democracy work. He announced that Behemoth Corporation was sending flowers to the funerals of all three -- or in the case of Magmas, to the hospital, if he should make it. After a standing ovation he resumed. Though respecting the right of others to disagree with him -- indeed, being ready to die to defend their right to disagree with him -- Mr. Lincoln begged his audience to take the larger view of the public interest. True enough, Hornblower as a volcano had served the public interest many years. It taught the Indians how to roast venison and boil fish, it served as a landmark to pioneer wagon trains, and recently had given a great deal of honest pleasure to volcano climbers and bird watchers. But time is passing, the world is changing. This is the Twentieth Century, the Space Age, and Hornblower has outlived its usefulness as a volcano. But Hornblower will not die, Hornblower can never die. It will live in our memories as a symbol of the great American past, and it will live in our cities as a symbol of the great American future, hundreds of thousands upon thousands of particles of Hornblower all around us as we work, shoulder to shoulder, to build a better America. In large part, the great future of America depends upon the pumice blocks manufactured from Mount Hornblower.

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The audience cheered and hollered and stamped for twenty minutes after Mr. Lincoln sat down, and most had tears in their eyes. William Rudolph Burst, openly scolding, led the audience in "God Bless America" and hearings were adjourned for the day. Babbit Yokum invited the whole crowd to his place in the woods to sample Danktown Dew.

The dismantling of the Behemoth compound next morning indicated the general conviction that the conclusion would come quickly. But the Volcano Service reckoned without the flood. Several years previously a group of Mistville professors and lawyers and engineers and scientists, finding that they were unemployable, had taken to the woods, and established a community near the headwaters of the Dank River. As many had commented, the flood debris sweeping by Danktown contained a surprising number of books. Now the mystery was explained. The settlement of unemployable intellectuals had been totally destroyed by the flood. The only survivor was cast up on a logjam, and staggered into the hearings on that last day, more dead than alive. Behemoth physicians immediately rushed to his aid, and Mr. Lincoln publicly ordered a helicopter to be warmed up. However, Mr. Lincoln rescinded this order when the survivor gasped out his story, and when the mud had been washed from his face. Lincoln also ordered the physicians and nurses to let the man alone. For it was none other than the notorious ex-Congressman...
and anti-Fascist, Thomas Pain.

Despite this embarrassment the Behemoth array of witnesses proceeded briskly through their testimony, geologists and hydraulic engineers and ceramic engineers and civil engineers and mining engineers and sanitary engineers and mechanical engineers and population engineers and sales engineers, all presenting succinct technical information concerning the transformation of Mount Hornblower into pumice blocks.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the back of the hall. Mr. Pain, who had been presumed dead, arose from the floor and asked by what right Behemoth Corporation proposed to tear down one of the most magnificent natural objects in the land, an object which was ancient before men left the trees and became men, an object which belongs to the entire nation as surely as the Mississippi River belongs to the nation -- by what right did a private corporation, dedicated to earning profits for its stockholders, propose to steal a publicly-owned volcano for private profit?

Mr. Lincoln did not deign to answer this asmagorical hysteria. He nodded to a bright young assistant, a former Rhodes Scholar and All-American Quarterback, who reviewed the ownership of Mount Hornblower.

In 1933 Behemoth Corporation absorbed the assets of Great Western Expansion Inc., a bankrupt investment fund, several of whose officers are still in jail. Among the assets of Great Western were a controlling interest in Great Eastern Expansion, another investment fund, also bankrupt, several of
whose officers are still in jail. xixixixixxx xixixixixixixix ixixixixixixixix All that was found in the Great Eastern vault was a stack of defaulted bonds from Consolidated American Railroads, which had been bankrupt for years, all of its former officers having xxxxxxx xxxxx in the New York Social Register, xxxxxxxxxx several having served the nation as senators and Cabinet xxxxx Members. Consolidated American Railroads had no railroads, only residual land grants from railroads that had never been constructed.

One of the railroads, chartered during the administration of Ulysses S. xxxx Grant, was the Miami-Boston-Birmingham Shreveport-Duluth-Dallas-Fargo-Yuma-Helena-Santiago-Bellingham-Tijuana-Sequim-Tokyo-Nome Railroad Inc. Even in that idealistic age when idealism was its own reward there were some members of Congress who doubted any idealists were strong enough to build such an xxxxxx magnificently idealistic railroad. Therefore the charter issued by Congress was xxxxxxxxxxxxxx extremely niggardly. The company was assigned title to every other state or xxx county along the proposed right of way. However, the company must choose whether it wanted states or counties, it could not have both.

The bright young xxxxxx Behemoth attorney concluded with a survey of the Indian treaties. In 1853, following the attack on Danktown by xxxxxx Funny-Boy-With-Crazy-Eye, who walked into town and stared crookedly at a group of Christians peacefully withing in horror xxxxxx during a sermon by their xxxxx, who was xxxxxx describing Hell, the United States Cavalry
over the Pass and demanded that the Indians hand over Fanny-Boy-with-Crazy-Eye. General Dauntless MacCassar gave his personal guarantee of a fair trial. However, the Indians, not understanding the language, threw bits of powder at the Cavalry and were shot dead in defense. The remainder retreated to the summit of Mount Hornblower.

Several weeks later, the US Commissioner’s secretary hiked to the summit, found one Indian still breathing, and with him negotiated the treaty by which all the tribal lands were legally exchanged to the US for a down payment of 300 cans of war surplus corned beef, plus a yearly installment of six pounds of flour for each member of the tribe.

As the Behemoth attorney said, there have been people who thought the price low, but then the Indians did not possess a clear title to the land, and therefore the payments should be considered free gifts to a gang of probable trespassers. In any event, the title to Mount Hornblower rests in the hands of Behemoth Corporation.

Mr. Lincoln then arose and delivered a most impressive analysis of the role of Anglo-Saxon land law in founding American Democracy. He was told about Alfred, the Domesday Book, Magna Carta, and mentioned Justinian and Napoleon. Said he in conclusion, the essence of civilization is law, and from Hammurapi’s Code to the Taft-Hartley Act, the most important laws have concerned the rights of property. Unless property rights are respected there is no liberty, there is no freedom. A man’s home is his castle!
Mr. Lincoln again sat down amid cheers and sobs and women kissing his feet.

Mr. Pain managed to pull himself from the floor and ask Mr. Lincoln if, between his studies of Alexander Hamilton, he had delved into that obscure contemporary who placed human rights above property rights, a fellow named Thomas Jefferson.

Mr. Lincoln, possibly somewhat flustered, arose and delivered the same speech as before, ending with a man's home is his castle!

Mr. Pain, though weakening, again pulled himself from the floor. Apparently his fever was rising, if his testimony is any indication. Said he, "Money stolen in 1830 becomes in 1950, by the statute of limitations, property defended by Magna Carta. But what if I, in 1950, steal the Behemoth Corporation payroll, and bury those hundreds of millions of dollars away in the ground? What if, though publicly suspected and accused of robbery, I am not convicted, and live out my span enjoying the fruits of criminality? Then, in 2020, my wealthy descendants pull out of the family vault, chuckling, the bills I stole in 1950. They are marked bills, of course. Will Behemoth Corporation get its money back? Or will my descendants point out that the statute of limitations and Magna Carta has transformed the loot into property?"
Mr. Lincoln arose, icy and tall, to tell about the American
Frontier, the tough trip over the Allegheny, through the Ohio
County, the Great Plains, the mountains, how there would not
be an America had not the land laws been deliberately
liberalized to provide an incentive for individual enterprise.
Cried Mr. Lincoln, would there have been farms without homestead
laws, would there have been gold without mining claim laws?

Mr. Pain was barely audible in his last statement. He
doubted that frontier land law was applicable when there was no
frontier. He doubted that frontier land law designed to
encourage the flinty pioneer should fairly apply to a fat
corporation. Mr. Pain then fell down dead.

While his corpse was removed to the river and consigned
to the flood, a bright young Behemoth lawyer, Summa cum laud
at Harvard, Eagle Scout, and one-time Squash Champion of
Westchester County, placed in the record a certified copy of the
Trot-Beng Survey which found that 97% of the stock in
Behemoth Corporation is held by aged widows who eke out meager
dividends by scrubbing floors.

A Nobel Prize winner from Harvard summarized his research
into the use of pumice as a cure for cancer and the common
cold.

Mr. Lincoln promised Harvard all the pumice needed,
as a free gift from Behemoth Corporation.
General Falsenecowd, hero of San Juan Hill, and director of Behemoth Corporation, declared pumice blocks were the only possible defense against H-bombs.

Dr. Frankfurter Brown, rehabilitated war xxxx xxxx criminal, testified that unless America has very much much, just lots of much much, pumice, even Fidel Castro will beat us to the Moon.

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The Volcano Service studied all the evidence xxx for several minutes, and then rendered xxxxxx a well-considered, mature decision. It was admittedly a compromise, but democracy might almost be defined as the art of compromising.

The Volcano Service gave to Behemoth Corporation permission to excavate the xxx pumice. However, they could not have the ice. They must pile up all the ice to one side for the Volcano-Climbers and Bird-Watchers.

By one of those weird coincidences no Naturalist can ever explain, when the first Behemoth bulldozer rammed against Hornblower, the volcano erupted. It was a short eruption, but the most violent on record. Indeed, it was so violent the earth broke into three parts, West, East, and Neutral, which sped into outer xxxxx space with xxxxxx a velocity approaching that of light.

The only survivor was a Volcano Service Ranger who had been sent to the Moon to inspect the volcanoes. Once he found the Behemoth Corporation was destroyed, along with Earth, and just before his oxygen tanks ran out, this Ranger allowed his youthful idealism to overcome his mature realism. He scrawled on the face-plate of his space suit that an official
declaration that Mount Hornblower is retroactively a government-protected volcano.

10,000 years later the message was deciphered, and that is why Hornblower is now the Sacred Volcano among we Green Things.