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(Classifieds continued from Page 11A)

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Weaver: senior aid lacking

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of The Emerald

America may be the richest country in the history of the world, but there are still inequities that keep some groups of people from living as they should, Congressman Jim Weaver said Friday.

Weaver told the audience of nearly 100 senior citizens he considers them to be members of one of the groups most lacking in support.

"We live in the greatest and the richest country in the history of the world. And I believe we can afford, without a doubt, to make sure that our senior citizens can have a fruitful and abundant life for

many years past their retirement," he said.

Weaver's speech was in conjunction with a meeting of two Lane County senior employment programs that aid people over the age of 55 find employment within the community. The programs, the Senior Companion Program and the Senior Community Service Program, work to find employable senior citizens public service jobs and find aid for those isolated seniors in need of help.

Outlining several bills that are of importance to the senior groups, Weaver pointed out not all legislation introduced to aid the elderly has been passed.

"I'm an optimist, but I'm also outraged by some of the actions of Congress in recent weeks," Weaver said. Citing an example of a recently defeated bill that would have given private citizens representation at every government hearing or meeting, Weaver explained: "Every American citizen should have been lobbying for that bill, but instead only one group — the Senior Citizen Lobby — worked for its passage."

The Consumer Representation Bill, he said, would have given every citizen a voice in governmental affairs that affect

utility rates, food prices and other essential costs, but was defeated last week.

Turning the discussion toward issues of concern to the senior citizens, Weaver explained he would work to end mandatory retirement and discrimination in hiring because of age, improve the present social security system and fight rising utility costs in the Pacific Northwest.

Although he had some "misgivings" about the new social security bill, Weaver explained that after changes in the social security system placing Medicare and disability payments in the federal general budget, the social security program "would become the retirement program it was meant to be, and should be."

Rising utility costs in the Northwest take a large amount of a retired person's budget, Weaver said, and rate increases should be

kept to a minimum through the legislature if necessary.

Weaver has co-sponsored several bills in the House of Representatives that would aid the elderly by providing better health care, lower hospital costs and more equity in pensions, he explained, but not all the legislation is being passed.

Much of the opposition to those bills has been coming from wealthy corporations and the top 20 percent of the nation's population that holds nearly 52 percent of the income, Weaver said.

"They are the people who are fighting the new social security bill, fighting the Consumer Representation Bill and fighting decent utility rates that people have to pay. If I ever meet these people I'm going to ask them why they are so greedy," he explained.

Council's gold coin decision due tonight

Krugerrands, the Equal Rights Amendment and a civic center complex will be discussed by the Eugene City Council at 7:30 tonight.

The meeting will be held in the council chambers at City Hall, 777 Pearl St.

The council will vote on a resolution opposing the sale of the Krugerrand, a South African gold coin. The minorities commission has recommended that the council adopt the resolution.

In previous discussion on the Krugerrand issue, the council has agreed it does not approve of apartheid, but members are split on whether it is the city's place to become involved in an international issue, says Alice Rutter, Eugene's community relations officer.

The council also will conduct a public hearing on a proposal banning city officials from attending meetings in states that have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. The request was made by the Eugene Women's Commission.

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