

sally hodgkinson

even editors get the blues

The state prosecutor wandered in during a break in the Ron Billingslea trial, gravitated to the small pack of journalists and launched into a tirade on the criminal justice system that pays his salary.

Criminals get too many breaks — in the courtroom and out, he said.

"People aren't safe in the streets or in their homes anymore. The law is supposed to protect people. When it doesn't, that's when people take the law into their own hands."

Law-abiding citizens are angry at the "soft" treatment lawbreakers get and scared of the growing crime rate, he added.

"Where are they safe? In here?" he asked, his hand sweeping past the empty jury box and the court reporter staring into space, waiting for the trial to resume.

"The jury doesn't hear the truth. They only

hear selected little bits that people tell them."

He told of the time a jury foreman slammed a defendant up against the bricks of the courtroom and told him, "We knew you were guilty, but we didn't want to punish you. If we ever catch you again . . ."

"That foreman took an oath!" the prosecutor said. "He's as guilty as the defendant."

The journalists nodded, used to the camaraderie that develops when covering a beat. The Register-Guard's investigative reporter Jerry Uhrhammer wore his perpetual smile.

"Well that's our justice system," Uhrhammer said. "It's what we have to work with."

During a recent speech to the state chapter of the National Organization of Women, U.S. Judge Helen Frye said criminals are the product of childhood abuse. They are victims turned victimizers. One of the answers is better state

regulation of home life, she said.

If you want to change the crime rate, begin at home, Frye suggested.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh says the state prison is as comfy as his son's dorm room. The citizens of the state balk at building more prisons to relieve overcrowding, and scream when the parole board releases a prisoner who commits another crime.

The solution is to punish the criminals, not coddle them, some say.

And the criminals seethe with bitterness and anger at the justice meted them.

A convict in the state pen writes, "The people in here are, for the most part, angry because they got caught. This prison is the con's 'institution of higher learning.' They learn to become better at the criminal activity that got them here."

The justice of the criminal justice system. Lots of opinions. Few answers.

YOURS

Details missing

In your article April 14, about two "revolutionary internationalists," you could have mentioned that city police attempted to enter the Guchans' home illegally before returning to haul them off to jail, and that only the key chain lock stopped them.

Also, Mr. Guchan himself called us from the jailhouse to inform us that the bail has been set at \$5,000 apiece, cash. The Immigration and Naturalization Service would confirm this fact.

You mentioned that Ismet "allegedly attacked police" during the yellow ribbon-burning incident, when two of his friends in the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade were arrested. As most witnesses could state, he did no such thing. He was only revealing his feelings and stating the facts inherent in what happened.

Thank you.

Nancy Whitley
475 East 15th Street

Write your Rep.

About 200 people took the bus ride to Salem Monday, to talk to their representatives. I was kind of surprised that out of the thousands of people here, so few were able to fit the trip into their schedules. As long as we got most of the classes we want and have enough money for some beer, it's easy to ignore what's going on on the outside. But just wait. Unless we start acting we aren't going to get those classes, and just now there aren't a lot of jobs out there.

Higher education is an important tool in solving our problems. Oregon was built on the sweat of its loggers and millworkers, but now that's not enough. We have to broaden our economic base and that means educating or re-educating people into socially beneficial occupations. If we let the Legislature cut education too much, they'll just be wasting the money they do appropriate.

If you are concerned about what you'll be doing in the next couple years or about the future of Oregon, you should write the state representative and senator from your hometown, and write the members of the revenue and appropriations committees. Don't put off till tomorrow what you better do today. Those people need our input.

Martin Lenk
Senior, history

'Walk a mile...'

This letter is written in response to an opinion printed in the Register-Guard on April 8, by Mr. David Peters, stating how

minorities always file discrimination suits when they do not achieve a desired goal. While I recognize Mr. Peter's First Amendment right to freedom of expression, I am sincerely offended by his inferences, his misreporting of the basis of Ms. Sweet's suit, and his error as to the number of suits brought by minority students at the U of O Law School.

First of all, Ms. Sweet's suit was not instituted because she was academically suspended, but because a non-minority male with comparable academic standing was readmitted while she was not. Secondly, other than Ms. Sweet, no other minority student has ever brought legal action against any professor or administrator at the law school.

Mr. Peters, a white male, states that no discrimination exists at the law school. Perhaps Mr. Peters should have the opportunity to step into the shoes of a minority individual and see if he could still make that remark. I only wish that Mr. Peters could know what it feels like to have to fight for the same opportunities non-minorities have received as a matter of due course. Equality, in its limited form, was not a gift to the minorities but a hard fought battle.

Mr. Peters' sweeping generalizations and inaccuracies simply do not support his inferences that minorities are litigation-oriented individuals that yell discrimination every time they do not achieve a desired goal.

Brenda Lee Brainard
President
Minority Law
Student Association

Greatest country

A letter in the April 13 Emerald, in which Cathi Beavers condemns James Miller for daring to speak out against the vociferous liberal element which pervades this campus, bears responding to.

Beavers berates Miller for speaking in favor of the high standard of living which we Americans enjoy. She assumes that Mr. Miller has never worked for a living because he states that Americans are well off. Well, Cathi Beavers, the last 14 years I've spent working in plywood and lumber mills: pulling greenchain, pushing 50-foot logs around a pond, wrestling 3/4-inch by 10-foot sheets of plywood and various other enjoyable jobs. Even before that, while still in high school, I spent much of my time working in restaurants, pear orchards and lumber yards.

As you can see, I come from a working class background and I still believe that "we live better than people anywhere in the world . . ." to use your quotes. One thing I have found is that the people who

believe in our American free enterprise system the most are those who have had to work and save the hardest to get anything. On the other hand, I've noticed that those who are the quickest to condemn our capitalistic society are those who have had everything handed to them, either from their families or from the Democratic "free lunch" system. In short, the Dave Isenberg types who don't know what it's like to have to work for a living and would rather try and bring our American system down to their level rather than work to see that it stays the greatest country in the world.

Jerry L. Peyton
Senior, finance
I.W.A. Local 2750 member

Quit complaining

Most of us are aware of the financial problems of this University; we gripe about it with our friends, bitch about it over a cup of coffee and mumble and swear every time we pay tuition and fees. We wondered why nobody would do anything to lower the sky-rocketing costs of higher education.

Well, we got what we wanted, only now, instead of supporting the people that are wanting to help us, we are

bitching, grumbling, and complaining not just about the soaring costs, but about the administration as well.

Can't we quit complaining and do something constructive, like think of an alternative proposal rather than letting them drastically increase the cost of the education we want?

Congress will listen to our suggestions; it is the complaints they are tired of. Quit complaining and think of something!

Jami Lee Larsen
Junior, journalism/telecommunications

letters policy

The Emerald will accept and try to print all letters containing fair comment on ideas and topics of interest to the University community. Letters must be typewritten and no longer than 250 words.

Letters must be signed, the author's field of study or faculty status noted and must include address and phone number for verification.

