

# Commissioner candidates differ on economic issues

By Paul Ertelt  
Of the Emerald

Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust denied claims that he is responsible for the county's economic problems and said he is not anti-business.

Rust faced his opponent for the commissioner's seat, Tonie Nathan of Eugene, in a debate in the EMU Forum Room Tuesday afternoon. The debate, part of the ASUO political symposium, focused on balancing environmental protection and economic growth in Lane County.

Nathan stressed the need for change in county government and blamed many of its economic problems on the Board of Commissioners and on Rust, who has served on the board for eight years.

"In 1977, Rust removed the best general administrator the county ever had," Nathan claimed. "His attempt to run the county without a general administrator has plunged the county into rudderless chaos."

Nathan also said Rust has continually opposed economic development, citing his opposition to plans for building a resort in the Big Creek area of the Oregon coast and his 1976 suit against Data General, which had plans to build a plant in Eugene.

Nathan blamed this opposition for the high unemployment that is forcing people to leave the area. According to a report by Dunn & Bradstreet, Eugene is the fourth fastest shrinking city



**Tonie Nathan**

in the nation, she said.

"The county is wracked by global economic forces not of our making," Rust replied. He blamed high interest rates and the decline of the timber industry for the area's economic problems.

Nathan said she was not anti-environment, but said Rust has "gone a little bit overboard" in protecting the environment at the expense of economic growth.

"People are sitting with land they can't sell, they can't farm, they can't cut timber on," she said. "They're just sitting there paying taxes."

Rust said his efforts to reform the Lane County Jail are one of his important contributions to the county. A task force of 20 agencies has been working on options to incarceration, and this will forestall the need to add onto the jail, saving taxpayers money, he said.

"We should not lock up people who are not a danger to themselves or society," he said.

As the only woman on the board of commissioners, Nathan said she would make the board more sensitive to issues important to women. Child abuse is one nationwide problem that needs to be addressed on the local level, she said.

But Rust responded that he had always backed women's rights issues, especially comparable worth. His candidacy has been endorsed by the Lane Women's Political Caucus, he said.



**Jerry Rust**

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