

Bridge plan costly but needed expense

Forget the old adage about bridges over troubled water — now, troubled bridges are getting us in hot water. But Eugeniens are taking steps to fix the problem.

Last week, the Lane County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a \$9 million program to replace 54 bridges in the county over the next eight years. The plan, once completed by 1996, will mean that none of the county's 427 bridges will be rated in poor condition.

The \$9 million program was chosen over an alternate proposal, which would have cost \$6.7 million and replaced only 36 bridges. While some may argue that the less costly proposal would have allowed more money for other concerns in the county, in this case the more costly plan is needed.

For one reason, the money to fund the plan is coming from federal timber receipts, which is in a surplus at the moment. Since we have the money now, the board reasoned that we should use it now before the money runs out, which is likely.

Another reason for the more expensive plan is that we need these repairs. Some 15 percent of the system's bridges now fall beneath the rating of OK or better. That means this 15 percent are potentially unsafe to be driving across, but people do it every day, unaware of the risks they're taking.

That's a terrible thought. Any one of us may be driving to and fro every day on a bridge that's functionally obsolete. It's almost enough to make you paranoid about crossing *any* bridge.

As the board has decided to spend the money for repairs, it should ensure the work done is of top quality. Some of the bridges that have to be fixed now are only 15 years old. They should have lasted at least 30 to 40 years before needing repairs, according to national bridge experts. The reasons for the fast decay of these bridges include the use of old, salvaged materials from older bridges.

If these structures had been built with quality in mind they would have lasted twice as long. We could have used this \$9 million for other crucial problems in the county, such as the homeless situation.

We should be careful not to make the same costly error this time by building the bridges with quality materials and paying close attention to detail. By doing a sloppy job the first time around, we've basically burned our bridges behind us.



Commission will bring better recognition

This past week, we received a welcome bit of news from across the highway: Springfield will get its own human rights commission.

We're glad for Springfield. Our twin city has always gotten a bad rap, often playing the poor sister to Eugene. Partly because of the University, Eugene has the better programs, better services and better public relations.

But many University students live in Springfield, and the formation of the commission will go a long way toward establishing equality between the two cities.

Eugene already has a human rights commission, composed of five different sections. Springfield's commission will be composed of a single body, but will perform similar tasks to Eugene's.

The commission is designed to promote educational and multi-cultural activities, and lead the fight against discrimination. One of its roles will be to act as a mediator in discrimination problems.

In reality, every city needs a human rights commission, and Springfield is no different. The need for such a commission in Springfield has been there for a long time, but city government has not supported one.

Much of the congratulations for the formation of the committee should go to Springfield Mayor Bill Morrisette. He formed the initial task force, back in March, that investigated the need for the commission. He also served on the task force.

Morrisette and 21 city residents studied the human rights problems in Springfield and determined the need for a commission. Six months later, they produced a final report detailing the structure of the new committee.

Applications for the commission are now being accepted. We urge any people who feel they are qualified to respond before the Dec. 8 deadline. The growing-up period will be the hardest for the commission: it will need the best people for the job.

Letters

Zealous

Tom Ribe's letter (*ODE*, Nov. 17) illustrates a serious contradiction. Ribe advocates private abortion (with public funds, no less) at the mother's free option.

He proceeds with concern for the environment, peace, disease research, issues, and others as well: ancient forests, animal rights, unrestricted freedom of protest and concern for the homeless.

Such zealous concern for so many animals and people and plants should include unborn children. Instead, the child is an inconvenience, so it is reduced to a "fetus," or "tissue." The value of the child is replaced by a clinical description of its state of development.

Something should change. Either we should include the unborn children in our zeal of preservation, or dispense with the zeal altogether and find something else to worry over.

Or, perhaps, we could find good reason for what we value and believe. The arguments over social and political issues lack sufficient philosophical groundwork, factual observation, thoroughly supported assumptions, and carefully devel-

oped reasoning. This too is consistent, however: It's much easier to use empty rhetoric, zealous presumption, and one-sided caricatures of our opponents.

A.M. Sauerwein
Music

Misquoted

I am pleased by the coverage you gave the forum about homeless women and children at the Hult Center (*ODE*, Nov. 15). However, I was misquoted as saying the city and county should not deal with the obvious problems of providing housing and should address the other factors involved in homelessness.

I am appalled at this error. I began my presentation with a five-minute explanation of why we must provide shelter for the homeless, and then explained that it was not the only service which was needed to successfully address the problem. I emphasized that other needs included putting an end to domestic violence.

Marsha Ritzdorf
Associate professor, PPPM

Like news

An inventory of the Nov. 20 issue of the *Emerald*:

Two news stories, three sports subjects, two editorials on sports-related topics, three letters, one meeting announcement column, one political cartoon, three comic strips, seven photographs, one contact strip with photos on it, one masthead, 42 display ads and 94 classified ads.

I don't pick up the *Emerald* to read advertising. I pick it up to read campus-related news that I don't get in the *Register-Guard*. The two news stories had little to do with campus issues and one of the editorials lacked some important information that would have made the entire piece different. The sports stories were old news that I didn't want to read again.

Many of us like to read news instead of advertising; isn't that why you're called a newspaper?

Patrick Perkins
Journalism

Observant

With one hand, I applaud the

long-overdue increase in parking meter rates on University between 15th and 18th. With the other hand, I must point out the 98 empty parking spaces I counted at 9 a.m. on a normal Thursday morning.

For years the five-hour meters near Mac Court have been five cents per hour. Every space was filled before 8 a.m. During the day, cars like mine often circled like buzzards, waiting for the next available space. Now, since I don't want to spend \$4 every day, I take the time to walk, smell the roses, and count the empty parking spaces.

I presume that in light of (shadow of?) the University's planned parking structure and its required funding, someone interpreted these underpriced meters as a source of additional revenue. Bravo! But who decided on a rate so high that few

will pay?

An observant parker might have noticed that under the old systems, tickets were timed at just after 1 p.m., and rarely issued after that. The University should have collected far more than it did.

The new system certainly brings in more money, but the immediate parking problem is far more severe. Surely our able faculty in marketing, economics, finance and decision sciences could determine the demand for parking meters and maximize profits over the appropriate time period subject to the constraint of using every possible space.

But then, maybe they don't have the time because they're still hunting for parking spaces of their own.

Bruce Cooley
Management

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.