

# Homelessness and hunger issues real

Most people have long associated hunger and homelessness with a select group of folks easily labeled everything from lazy to incapable. "It's their own fault they're hungry and/or homeless," is this line of thought, making the parasitic group and all their self-induced problems pretty easy to shrug off.

Well, these righteous people better take note; the hunger/homelessness issue is now growing by leaps and bounds, and they may even taste a bit of it themselves before too long.

The term "working poor" is becoming increasingly familiar, characterizing those who work, but remain below the poverty line. Bootstrap ideology chimes that if people work hard, they will realize the American dream is proving evermore false.

Working hard guarantees less and less nowadays. The biggest poverty-rate jump in the last 20 years was in 1989, which boasted consequences like 16 million families who paid over 35 percent of their incomes for rent, and 8 million who paid over 60 percent.

As housing becomes increasingly hard for average working Americans to afford, we may begin seeing more of them joining the ranks of the homeless.

Something they thought they'd never see. These dutiful citizens would no doubt be bewildered, muttering as they packed their things, "but I did all I was supposed to do — worked, married, had 2.5 kids; I can't be 'homeless.'"

The issue of affordable housing and homelessness affects everyone, as does hunger.

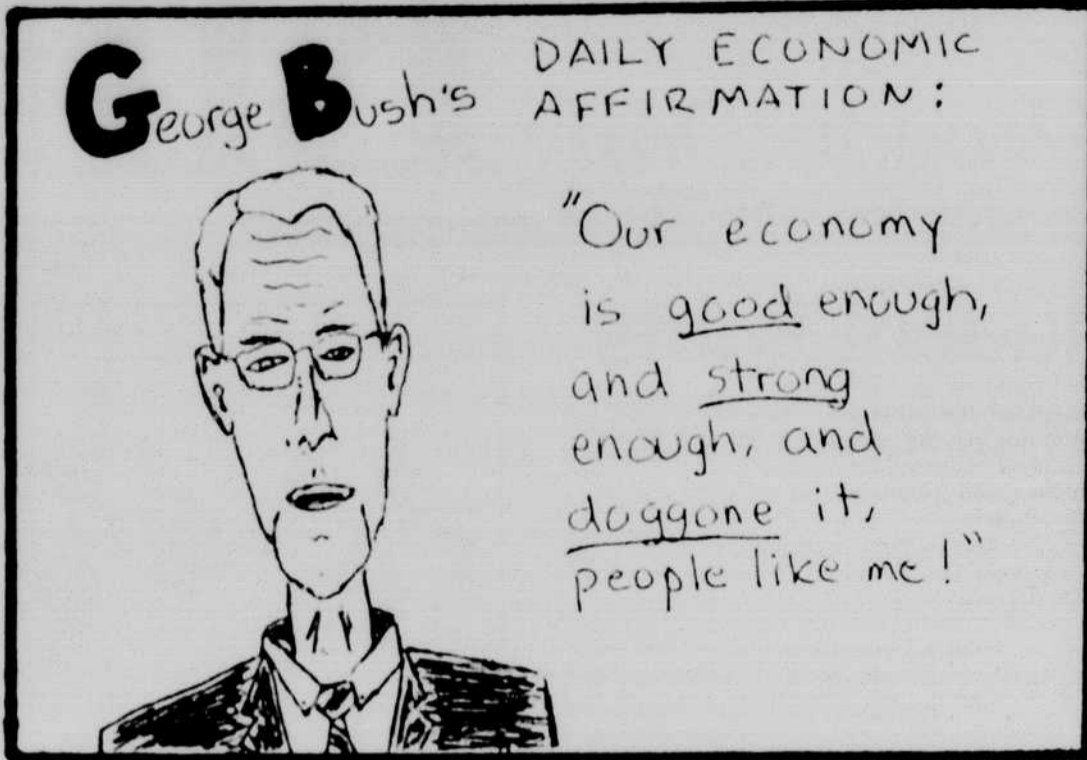
Not surprisingly, people are going hungry in America and the rest of the world because of economic dynamics, and not because of overpopulation or lack of production capabilities. Enough food is now produced to provide every world citizen with 3,600 calories per day.

Distribution is the culprit, because it naturally follows the monetary path. Eating is dictated by who can afford it — not who's hungry. And never mind that the United States was the top food exporter during the '80s; millions of poor Americans still went hungry in favor of importers who could afford the goods.

The market system at work. A good thing, right? Well sure! But we need to pay attention to our priorities. It may not be long before those people who stare down at the hungry and homeless are asking for soup kitchen directions and a place to put down their own blankets.

A bit drastic? Never happen to me? Maybe it won't. But it's time to realize these problems aren't as far away as they seem. They affect all of us in one way or another, sooner or later.

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## LETTERS

### Climb

Upon arriving at the Knight Library this past Sunday around 2 p.m., I found myself in an unusual situation. I was standing in the lobby with no less than 40, perhaps 50, of my fellow students waiting for the rather large, intimidating, undeniably gaudy iron gates to be unlocked so we could gain admittance to the facility. Yes indeed, some mutterings of irritation were expressed about the recent cutback in the library's hours.

In a highly stressed state of mind (I had a paper due the previous Friday, which I hadn't started yet), I tossed my backpack over the gate and proceeded to climb. I had research to do and little time to do it in. I successfully landed on the other side. I was expecting some reaction, but nothing happened. There was no pain involved, I was not arrested for trespassing, and no one asked me to leave. In fact, the librarian at the front desk simply watched me walk by.

My suggestion to my fellow students is this: If you do not like the new library hours, if you feel it is your right to have access to the materials in the library, if you think building a multimillion-dollar addition to the facility and then cutting access to it is hypocritical, if you know you are paying too much money to have to put up with this crap, don't just stand there, climb over the damn gate! The library is there for our benefit; we shouldn't let anyone say we can't use it when we need to.

I have another paper due next week, so I'm sure I'll be visiting the library again next Sunday. I might have to go over the gate again or through a window, but I'm going to get in. The information in the Knight Library is put there for me to use, and I intend to use it.

**Jerry Alicki  
Student**

### Stirring up

Regarding Brian Hoop's letter to the Nov. 13 *Emerald*, I must say nothing stirs up controversy quite like the issue of race. Labeling the recall effort "a vicious racist attack" is ludicrous. As for Hoop's never having been caught because he has the "privilege" of being white,

no one has the "privilege" of being white, black or any other race; that apology is determined by genetics.

The fact is Jo Sonja Watson was cited for shoplifting from the University Bookstore, not because of her race, but because she was trying to steal. Does this have anything to do with her ability to lead in her position as ASUO vice president? That's what the student body of the University is being asked to decide through a petition and recall effort.

As for being politically motivated, those on this campus who choose to vote, have a right to know about their elected officials, just as we were "informed" about Mike Colson's alleged note-tampering before last spring's elections. Despite this recall effort and those opposed to it, politically savvy leadership realize that to recall an official is much more difficult than getting them elected in the first place.

**Clark Smith  
Student**

### Radical change

To everyone: All right, listen up folks. You're going to hear this until we all get it right. One: Our economic system is addicted to growth. This means we keep using more and more of everything. Infinitely. Two: Our planet is finite, with a limited (albeit large) resource base. Three: We are increasing, not reducing, pollution levels.

Add it up. Our consumerism, our dependence on material things to make us happy, is going to make our children very, very unhappy.

Recycling is not enough. Nice, but not enough. Reformism is not enough. We need a radical change in the way we live our lives and in what we value. We need a society that conserves. Tell the political "leaders" what it is you want. Think about the drain on the planet every time you buy something you don't need, or drive instead of biking, walking or bussing. Do you want to tell your children, "Gee, I'm sorry we left you with a toxic, wasted, barren planet. Let me tell you how nice it was in the old days..." I don't think so.

**Jeff Heiman  
International Studies**

### Kudos

Please accept my commendation for your excellent editorial "Marketing technique" was just simple fraud," (*ODE*, Nov. 1) on State Sen. Peg Jolin's shortcomings.

It's bad enough to lie to raise campaign funds, but it's worse yet to admit it publicly and to show no shame. And still worse when the person who does that is an elected official as Jolin has been for more than 12 years.

The facts about her lying to assert that she had a deficit in order to raise money are not in dispute. The investigation established that her pickup truck was repaired, but wasn't used for a campaign purpose, directly or indirectly, at the time of the accident.

All that's left, because Jolin won't consider resigning, is to have her recalled. That means gathering a large number of signatures from voters in her district; a big job, but it needs to be done and will be done. Call 687-2111 if you want to help.

**Charles Porter  
Eugene**

### Stealing

Jo Sonja Watson stole from the University Bookstore. But she didn't really steal from the store, she stole from each and every one of us. What she did affects us all, either directly in that her shoplifting raises the prices we pay, or indirectly in that she promotes the notion that stealing is OK and something that all of us do.

Watson stole and then failed to appear in court. She didn't serve her sentence, and now she doesn't seem the least bit penitent for her crime. I would say this string of events illustrates a severe character disorder. A glaring absence of morality and decency.

To my knowledge, the ASUO is responsible for appropriating certain funds. I seriously question the ability of Watson to perform this task fairly in light of her behavior.

This is not a race or gender issue, but simply a matter of ethics. Recall Watson.

**Cory Larvik  
English**

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