

LETTERS

Hail Gayle!

I find it rather surprising that Brian Womack and Gayle Forman are both staff members at the same publication. Actually, given the abysmal quality of writing in the *Emerald* in recent months, Womack's presence is not at all surprising.

While Forman offers intelligent discourse about real issues, Womack seems content to spew forth Limbaugh-esque platitudes without a speck of factual information to support his opinions — and they are nothing more than opinions.

And why does Womack let Gingrich and company off the hook when he hurls his big government accusations? They want to break up families and put children in government orphanages. They want the government to stick its nose in the uterus of every woman in America. They want the government to come into public school classrooms and force children to pray to a foul-tempered God who probably doesn't even exist. Sounds like big government to me!

I hope Forman will pursue a career in journalism. In a profession dominated by the likes of Connie Chung and George Will, her integrity and compassion will be a breath of fresh air.

Womack, on the other hand, should consider dropping out of school and starting a company to manufacture bumper stickers. With his extensive repertoire of empty-headed right wing slogans, he should be able to make a fortune off of Jesse Helms' supporters and other chuckle-heads.

Bob Parker
Education

Editorial smug

I wasn't surprised to read Joe Harwood's macho and unimaginative opinion about what he called the "gaggle of losers" (*ODE*, Jan. 27) panhandling around this University. I was, however, surprised to see the *Emerald's* own smug editorial on the same subject, complete with a suggested list of scathing responses designed to further humiliate street people (*ODE*, Jan. 30).

Your editorial employs the same obscuring smokescreens used by the Gingrich/Limbaugh axis, namely that the poor and disadvantaged are that way due to personal shortcomings, and by simply taking personal responsibility they can enjoy the same comforts and privileges as anyone in "their" great color- and class-blind democracy.

Your stale and haughty reasoning is reminiscent of the imaginary "welfare queens" described by (pre?)-Alzheimer's ex-president Ronald Reagan to justify the conservative-driven dismantling of the social service safety net.

Have you never considered that the poor are the result of structural inequalities in our

free-market system? Don't you understand to whose advantage it is to minimize the suffering of society's marginalized? Can you fail to comprehend that the "beggars" you observe are statistically likely to have come from homes full of substance abuse and domestic and sexual violence?

Neo-con must be more in vogue than I thought. Your editorial just confirms my opinion that the *Emerald* has more interest in competing with the *Commentator* to see who can provoke the most cheap laughs at the expense of those less fortunate, rather than engaging in that tough work of finding and promoting solutions.

Guy Burton
Psychology

Anne: editor?

Anne Moser-Kornfeld. I first noticed her last summer, when she made her editorial debut in the *Emerald*. Since then, her reputation as a first rate journalist has been firmly established, as she has unflinchingly taken on the biggest issues facing us today.

There was her hard hitting piece on the Susan Smith case, which cut a swath through the journalistic jungle surrounding the story and found at its core that killing one's own children is a very bad thing.

Next there was her comprehensive treatise on the Internet: "Keep it Clean." More recently, Moser-Kornfeld bravely argued that everybody can and should be judged entirely on their outward appearance.

And as I finish reading her latest creation, "Year of the Pig Offers Acceptance" (*ODE*, Jan. 30), I am literally stunned at the depth of her insight.

After going over the Moser-Kornfeld library, I'm left with just one question. How can a writer of Moser-Kornfeld's stature still be listed as just a columnist of the *Emerald*? The editor had better take a break from perusing *Mein Kampf* for solutions to Eugene's homeless problem and make room for a Moser-Kornfeld at the top.

Brian Reid
Biochemistry

OSPIRG great

I would like to respond to Primo Fontana's opinion that "...OSPIRG's main purpose is not to directly serve students, but the environment" (*ODE*, Jan. 25).

I believe the two (students and environment) go hand in hand at OSPIRG. Some groups focus on the environment, consumer rights, religion, gender, sexuality, etc. This is what student groups do, create organizations that students can relate to and become involved in.

Last term, I did an internship with OSPIRG for my environmental studies minor. I learned so much more through OSPIRG about environmental issues in

Oregon and on campus than through all my undergraduate courses.

I'm specifically interested in recycling issues and solid waste management. Through OSPIRG, I learned what other students were doing on their campuses across the country and got some good ideas on how to improve the University and Lane County's buy-recycled program. The state advocates in Portland helped me, and the other recycling group members, research information. They were great contacts.

Last term, among other things, we worked on developing an apartment recycling program around the University and a plastic watch campaign. We had weekly tables in the EMU, which taught students how to shop for the environment and where plastic goes after you put it out on the curb. And the list goes on and on.

Other OSPIRG groups, like hunger and homelessness, had events on campus that explained local and national situations. They held a panel discussion on campus with local representatives, and a sleep-out to save Amazon housing. All this was done in the interest of students.

I would also like to point out that never once did I get the feeling OSPIRG disregards the rights of businesses over the environment (Fontana's opinion). OSPIRG just tries to represent the common good of students and the citizens in our state. One way they do this is by informing the public yearly on toy safety and other consumer awareness issues.

I believe the actions of today will directly affect us tomorrow. OSPIRG focuses on the environmental and consumer impacts of today and tries to help tomorrow.

By the way, students decide what issues to work on. So if you're not happy, get involved!

Kahlil Najjar
Pre-Business
Administration

Deal with debt

Despite the fact that I disagree with him on nearly every other topic, Brian Womack is right in saying that it is impossible to deal with the national budget in a responsible way without dealing with entitlements (*ODE*, Jan. 19).

Entitlements eat up over half the U.S. federal budget and serve a far different purpose than any other part of government. The people receiving a vast majority of entitlements, the elderly, are the best off. Only five percent of the people living in poverty are elderly; meanwhile, 25 percent of all children in the United States are living in poverty and an estimated 40 million Americans are functionally illiterate. Where are our national priorities?

For a moment I would like to consider what could be done with the entitlement money. With this money the U.S. government could build a supercollider, 10 space shuttles, a space station, finance a manned mission to Mars, build the information superhighway, increase defense spending, education spending and finance the health care reform the Clintons have been talking so much about. All in one year, without raising taxes and have a budget surplus! Most of these projects are things spread out over several years.

The advantages gained by cutting entitlement spending far outweigh any disadvantages. As well, if we don't do anything about entitlements, in about 30-40 years the entitlements will disappear. I won't be nearly old enough to collect a dime on Social Security by that time and neither will a lot more people who put a lot of money into the entitlement program through taxes.

Some people say that the recipients of entitlement programs receive only what they previously put in, but that is not true. The average person receiving Social Security receives five times as much money as he or she put in. I think the whole of government needs to be redesigned with more of an emphasis on results than on just throwing money at a problem.

Entitlements need to be cut

back; every federal agency needs to be reworked and redesigned so that it does what it needs to do. The recent problems with military readiness are not the result of a military budget cut to the bone. They are the result of an organization that is not oriented toward protecting the country or having a good military.

Also, I believe that the decisions about where the money goes in science and space should not be left in the hands of bureaucratic congresspersons. If the military, headed by people with little more than high school educations, can decide for itself where its money goes, why can't the scientific community, headed by people with Ph.D.s, be trusted to make the right decisions?

The only thing that Congress should do is decide how much to give. Without a massive change in the way the government works, this nation will almost certainly end up with big problems. Already the \$4 trillion national debt is eating up \$200 billion a year in interest payments out of the national budget that does nothing more than keep the debt from exploding.

In the long run this debt could become a super, huge problem. We need to start paying off the national debt and begin planning for our future.

Chris Jones
Mathematics

LETTERS POLICY

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