

Close University when roads unsafe

When snow began falling over Eugene late Sunday evening, dozens of school children who stayed awake long enough to watch were cheering, gleefully awaiting the next day's promise of snowball fights and sledding.

Watching over their children's shoulders, parents cringed at the thought of braving icy roads on the way to work the next morning, or at the thought of baby-sitting kids kept home by a slew of school closings.

But even when those schools shut down citywide and the freeway system was frozen over, the University decided to remain open, maintaining its longstanding tradition of teaching classes come hell or high water — or, as in this case, come 6-inch drifts of fluffy white stuff.

That's a tradition that needs to change.

In the old days, most University students lived within walking distance of campus. That number has been dwindling steadily over the years, and now only 35 percent of the student body can make it to campus on foot.

That leaves the other 65 to brave the dangerous streets and overpasses and try to make it to school.

As anyone who actually went to class on Monday knows, a good portion of that percentage was not willing to take that risk. And, as it happens, a number of professors weren't exactly willing, either; classes closed down all over campus for lack of an instructor to teach them.

These students and professors knew what the University administration apparently does not — that a day's worth of classes is not worth risking your life, your car or your new Birkenstocks. Two University employees were injured just walking around on campus yesterday, according to the Office of Public Safety — victims of a broken wrist and a broken ankle. Who knows how many students were hurt?

Of course, there are always a few Midwest natives on campus who laugh every time Eugene gets a few inches of snow and, as a result, the whole town shuts down. Four inches, they laugh. You're closing for four inches?!

But the fact is, Eugene isn't prepared to handle even that. The city has only six trucks available to sand the roads, and even working 24 hours a day, they can't get to most of the minor streets and roadways.

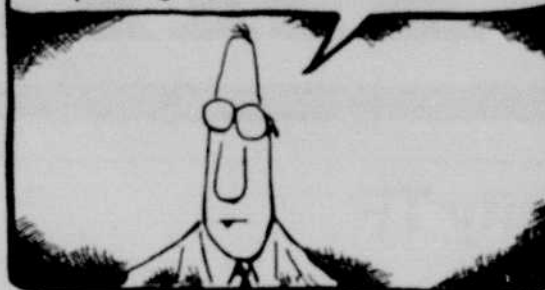
What's more, most Eugene drivers don't have a clue as to how to drive in the snow. We don't get enough snow to be experienced at traveling in it, so four inches of snow will cause as many accidents here as a foot of snow will do in Minnesota.

If this University will start the term a day late to accommodate Rose Bowl travelers, in order to help them get home safely, it ought to be willing to close down the University when so much snow falls.

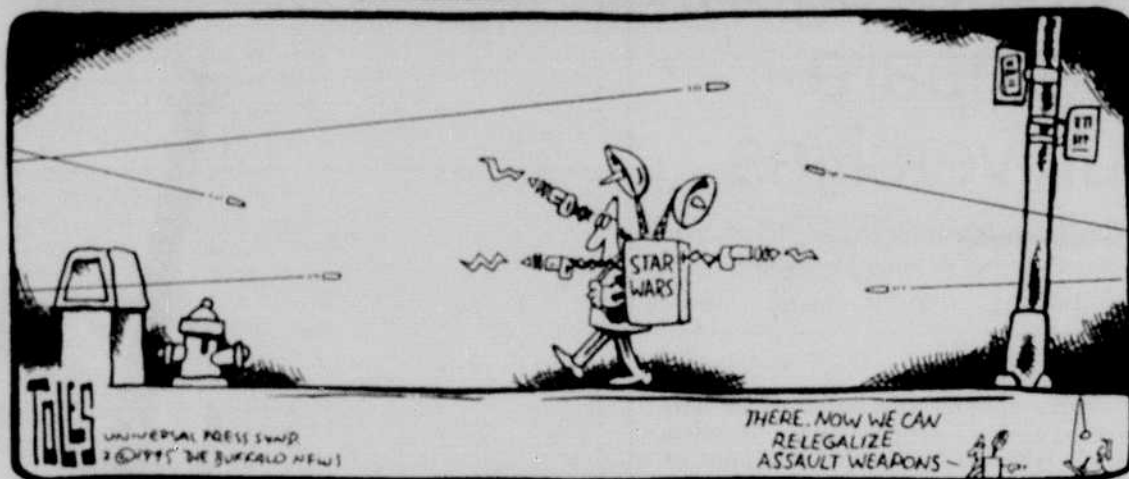
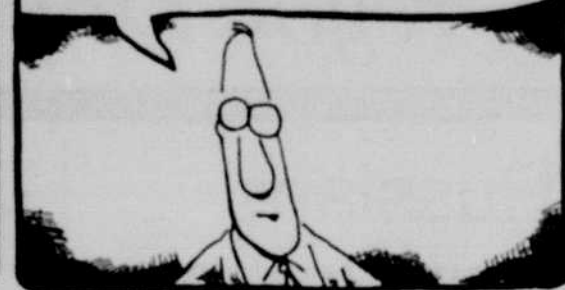
Besides, with so many professors and students staying home anyway, a close-down policy would only make official what's already happening — unofficially.

And, of course, we have a right to snowball fights and sledding, too.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT RESUMING STAR WARS WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE OLD ASTRODOME AGAINST SOVIET MISSILES.



WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A SCALED-DOWN VERSION TO MEET THE THREAT FACED BY AMERICANS TODAY.



OPINION

Orphanages best option for some kids



PAUL VAN SICKLE

It's hard for me to agree with anything Newt Gingrich ever has to say. But he might actually have something in his orphanage concept. Now, before you get all disappointed with "yet another die-hard liberal is making concessions to the other side," maybe I should explain my logic.

Children have long been without rights. Even in our "enlightened" age, we still treat children as if they are property, something undeserving of our respect and social attention.

When adults get a divorce, too often the kids in the marriage suffer just as much, if not more, than the parents seeking separation. Lack of proper medical coverage for poor mothers and the high cost of abortion have created more and more unwanted children and/or children whose parents can't afford them.

With the prospect of the withdrawal of entitlement funding, children and their single parents are going to get the short end of the stick again. Not that the rejection of social funding is going to solve any problems, either.

Despite what Chris Jones, mathematics major, may say in a letter to the *Emerald* (Feb. 5), increasing defense readiness, building a supercollider or sending humans to Mars isn't going to cut down on the illiteracy rate or lift any one American out of poverty. If anything, it will make things worse by taking money from those welfare-dependent parents whose children would starve otherwise.

Therefore, considering the

number of homeless kids and those now surviving in abusive or unloving family situations, something needs to be done to give some structure to these young adults' lives.

Foster care doesn't quite do the job anymore. It is still, for the most part, successful. Children live with parents who are typically screened for criminal records, and interviewed pretty thoroughly for their foster-care ability. These children live with those parents until they are adopted or grow up and move out on their own.

Unfortunately, many children suffer the typical foster-care fate: they are bounced around between sets of foster parents for years until they are of age. Often, this causes behavior in young children that is so unruly that the parents don't know how to handle them and the problem is exacerbated as the foster parents plead for them to be transferred. The problem is even worse with older teenagers for whom the damage may have been irreparably done.

As an adopted child myself, I was spared the pain of multiple foster parents; I was taken in at an extremely young age. And from this perspective, I can see some advantage to an institutionalized orphanage system.

I hope, however, that Newt Gingrich and his House of Representative cronies realize the cost of such a system.

Orphanages would have to be extremely well-funded. Care providers would have to be extensively trained in childcare, both for infants and for older teens. Orphanages would have to be continually monitored for quality of care and standard of living. Overcrowding could not even be considered as a possibility in these houses, and attending school would be mandatory in the extreme.

Contrary to what Bob Parker

fears in his letter (*ODE*, Feb. 5), a well-managed orphanage system would not "break up families," just to put them in "government orphanages." Where do you think children are taken when their parents are arrested for abuse or child neglect? County hospital's child services, probably. If anything would lead to a child's moral corruption, sending them to an institution that fits most kids' conceptions of hell is one of the best ways.

Oliver Twist horror stories are what frighten many people about an orphanage system; children were put into an environment not unlike a work camp. Kids were told to work from the time they were able to walk until they left as adults. The "spare the rod and spoil the child" philosophy was the prevailing rule for the children, presumably to build discipline.

In a modern-day orphanage, children would be given the chance at some stability in their lives. It was that lack of stability and consistent attention and love that caused the failure in both the orphanage and the foster-care system. The consistent environment, the availability of funds for a life equal with at least a middle-class lifestyle, and child-care providers who would actually provide a loving, supportive environment are what would make the orphanages successful homes for the forgotten young members of our society.

Very often, we can't blame children for their bad behavior or attitudes. As much as we would like to feel it is not their fault, parents are responsible for almost everything a child becomes. If a child doesn't have parents who care enough to try and give the best things possible for that child, an orphanage may be the best second-chance for them.

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