

Why Clinton's welfare isn't working

■ OUR OPINION: Relying on private businesses to hire welfare recipients is an unrealistic solution to getting people off welfare.

When Bill Clinton vowed to "end welfare as we know it" in 1992, he knew he wouldn't be able to do it by himself. So when he finally passed his welfare reform bill limiting recipients to two years of benefits, he asked the top 100 businesses in the country to help his program by creating jobs for those currently on welfare.

Now, over a year after the creation of the original welfare reform bill, 75 percent of the top 100 businesses still have no plan to hire welfare recipients. This may be disappointing news for Clinton, but it shouldn't be surprising.

The idea that businesses would simply hire welfare recipients because the president asked them to is a little naive, to say the least. For one thing, businesses have absolutely no reason to actively seek welfare recipients. After all, welfare recipients are likely to be the least skilled, least job-ready of all available workers.

A representative at IBM said that while he supported the president's goals, most of the jobs at IBM require more skills than welfare recipients have. In addition, most of the top companies are downsizing as it is. With not enough jobs for qualified applicants, it is a little unrealistic to expect businesses to create jobs for unqualified welfare recipients.

While the idea of getting welfare recipients working is admirable, relying on businesses to get people off welfare isn't the best way to go. Some programs currently give companies incentives to hire welfare recipients by subsidizing their wages and allowing the companies to pay "training wages" well below minimum wage. This gives businesses a source of cheap labor and those on welfare a job.

Everyone wins — everyone, that is, except those people whose jobs are lost because they are replaced by welfare workers. Not only does this put low income workers out of work, it ends up lowering everyone's wages. In the end, the very programs that try to get people off the welfare roles often end up putting new people on them.

Businesses certainly have a role to play in getting people from welfare to work. But to completely rely on them to create jobs for welfare recipients is both unrealistic and unfair. If Clinton really wants to "end welfare as we know it," the government is going to have to get involved.

Passing the buck off to private businesses simply won't work. If Clinton wants businesses to hire

JOB APPLICATION

POSITION DESIRED: CEO

EXPERIENCE: None

CURRENT OCCUPATION: Welfare line member

REFERENCES: 

SALARY DESIRED: \$80,000/year

welfare recipients, he must create adequate job training programs that will make recipients job ready. Businesses have no responsibility to hire unqualified workers just to make Clinton's two-year time limit practical.

Clinton and Congress created the welfare reform bill. Now it is their responsibility to try and make it work. If welfare recipients need jobs and training before they can get off welfare, it is the govern-

ment's, not private businesses', responsibility to provide them.

Private companies are in the business of making profits, not helping politicians implement their political agendas.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

LETTERS

Community contribution

In the May 20 article on the riverfront research park, Diane Wiley was said to have stated that the riverbank property was not acquired by the University so that it could become a public park.

I have three responses to Wiley's comment. 1) Students, faculty and staff make up the majority of recreational users of that area. 2) The riverbank, according to the University's own master plan, was to be used for recreation and nature study, and an additional playing field was to be built there. 3) Wiley's attitude may be one reason why community members not associated with the University feel so alienated by the University.

How exactly does the research park benefit the University? By drawing faculty into entrepreneurial ventures so that they can keep secrets from their students and peers while supplementing their salaries? The stu-

dents will end up paying part of the bill for the research that goes on there, and in return the quality of their education will be degraded.

As I recall, the administration's initial justification for supporting the research park was that it was an opportunity for the University to contribute to the community by stimulating the economy. I assert that providing open space for recreation and wildlife habitat is a much greater contribution to the community.

The research complex was conceived at a time when Eugene's economy was faltering. Now, in this time of unprecedented growth that 90 percent of Eugene residents disapprove of, it doesn't make sense to sacrifice our best place to the corporate gods.

To all who want to help clean up the riverbank as a first step to preserving it, please show up at the bicycle/pedestrian railroad underpass on Sunday, June 8, at 2 pm. Bring gloves

and a snack.

Ann Hagemann
Biology

Riverfront scam

Contrary to inaccurate statements made to the ODE by Riverfront Research Park Complex supporters (May 21, ODE), that project is directly costing Eugene taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

This is how urban renewal funding, also known as tax increment financing, works: Annually, an increasing percentage of the property taxes paid by property owners in the Riverfront Urban Renewal District is diverted into a sheltered account instead of into the general fund, where everybody else's property taxes go.

This sheltered money, which otherwise would have helped fund city services in a tight budget climate, is instead used to promote and finance wasteful and environmentally destructive riverfront projects.

Last year, \$650,000 was diverted in this manner to help pay for the unwanted auto underpass at the north end of Agate Street and that ridiculous \$350,000 traffic circle at the approach to the Autzen Footbridge. At the same time, the library had to close an extra evening each week to save a meager \$5,000.

If the Riverfront Urban Renewal District is abolished, as required by the "We Want It Back Initiative," the city's general fund will receive an annual wind fall of \$650,000, which will keep the library open a lot of evenings.

The inaccurate and misleading statements concerning financing made by promoters of the Research Park Complex are one more illustration of their lack of credibility on any question relating to Eugene's greatest scandal — the riverfront boondoggle.

Junior Robertson
Alumnus

All thumbs



SUPREME COURT

The recent decision by the highest court in the land to continue with litigation against President Clinton in the Paula Jones case is promising. The position of president may be held in high regard, but it should not be above the law.

HB 3644

The bill to limit incidental fees to "non-political" groups died a much-needed death in the state House on Wednesday. A potential disaster is averted.



DEX

The new "directory expert" phone book from US West is nothing new. After pre-release hype, we're now stuck with the same ol' white and yellow.

EMU CONSTRUCTION

The recent jackhammering and destruction around the Fishbowl has both students and faculty up in arms. Many have asked the question: Why couldn't they have waited until summer?

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