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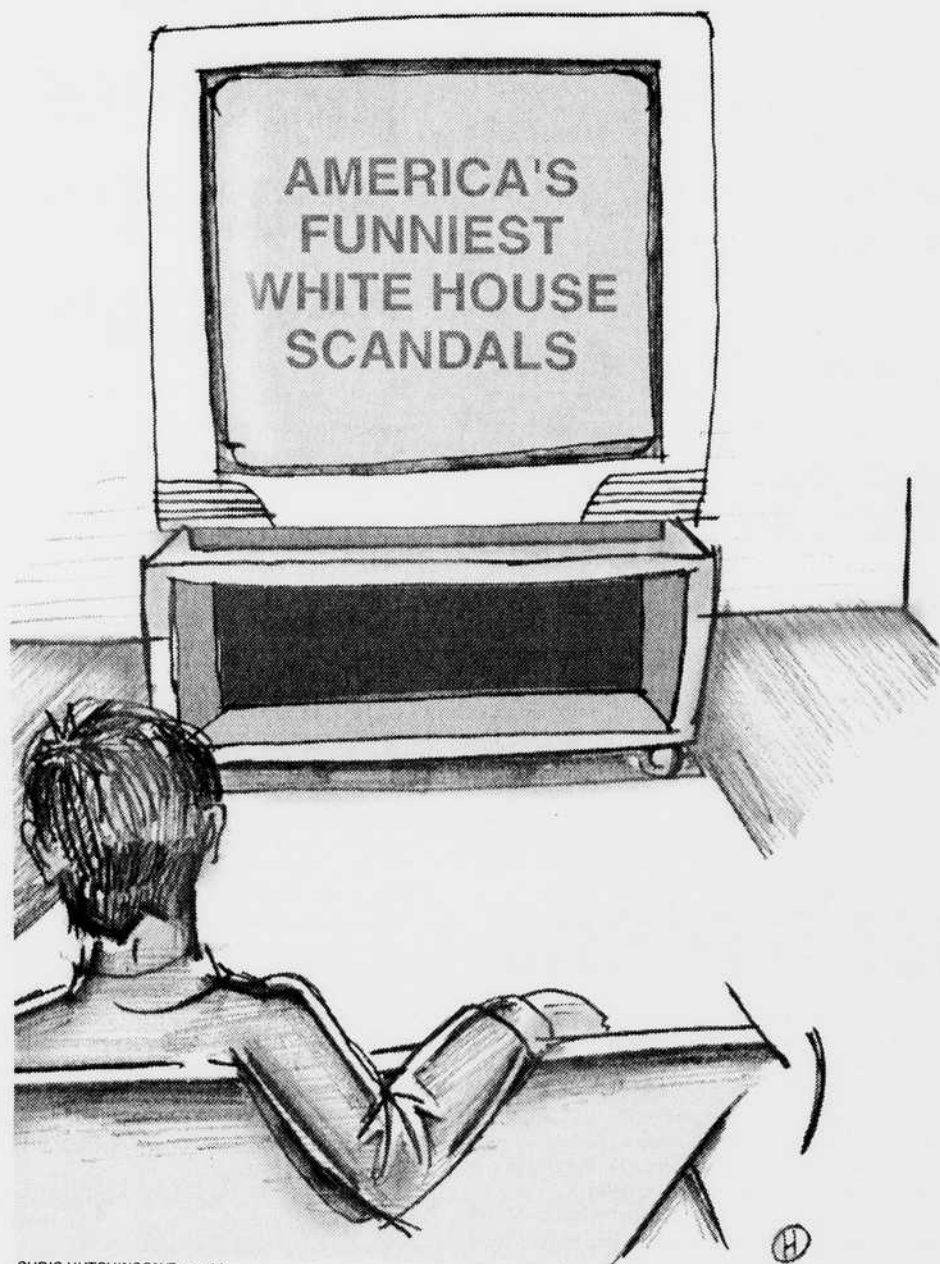
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PERSPECTIVES

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Schadenfreude: It's all-American

The media's supposed objectivity has been surpassed by their joy in reporting on the White House scandal



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

You've got to hand it to the Germans; they've got a word for everything. One of the best is *schadenfreude*, which, loosely translated, refers to the malicious enjoyment of the misery of others. Great, huh? Go ahead, read it again. Better yet, say it aloud.

Now think about what it means.

Schadenfreude may be a German word, but it's a very American concept. This is, after all, the country that created "America's Funniest Home Videos," where a man getting hit in the groin with a shovel merits a belly laugh. And we so voraciously partake of offerings like Fox's "When Animals Attack" that the network trips over itself in its rush to issue sequels.

Few of us would admit it, but we've all felt at least a tiny thrill at the mis-

fortune of someone else. Sometimes it's because we want to see someone get what's coming to him. Most of the time, we're just glad it's not us.

OPINION



Kameron Cole

Okay, so let's talk about this Clinton thing now.

But not about whether he did or didn't sleep with an intern. Or whether he did or didn't suborn perjury and obstruct justice. Or whether or not anyone can say the phrase "President Al Gore" with a straight face. Instead, let's talk about it as it relates to that wonderful little German word.

Who would you suppose is deriving the most pleasure from the president's current political crisis?

One's initial reaction to that question might be to point the finger at Clinton's political opponents. But while it is not difficult to conjure up an image of Newt Gingrich and Strom Thurmond sharing mint juleps and chuckles over "Nightline," they aren't overtly basking in Clinton's troubles. Actually, the group getting the most jollies at the president's expense isn't the Republicans — it's the media.

Like many Americans, I watched the first day of coverage with a critical

eye, listening to the carefully measured words of the president and his press secretary, and looking for something on their faces that might betray those words. But I found myself taking more notice of how much fun the reporters who had descended upon Washington D.C. seemed to be having. Even the likes of CNN's Wolf Blitzer, who usually looks like he hasn't had any fun for years, had a twinkle in his eye.

And while reporters have stopped short of cackling into the camera while rubbing their hands together in Machiavellian glee, it's still easy to see that the press hasn't even made the usual half-ass attempt to disguise its bias in this case.

Sometimes it's been clever, such as Time magazine's declaration that the president has a passion for "cunning linguistics" in a story that discusses his alleged belief that oral sex doesn't constitute sex. And sometimes it's been subtle, like a usually dour "Headline News" correspondent who grins throughout a report on Clinton's trouble.

While such practices seem benign, they will ultimately serve to further undermine press credibility in the eyes of the people, many of whom don't trust reporters anyway.

Whenever they are accused of impropriety, the media tend to farm the blame out to the public by claiming that they are simply giving the people what they want. In the Clinton-Lewinsky matter, the argument is likely to be that the people wanted to see someone get nailed to the wall.

Odds are, however, that these same people will turn on the press like a pack of hungry coyotes if Clinton is ultimately cleared of wrongdoing.

If the president is to be held to a higher moral standard than the rest of the American people by virtue of his position, then journalists charged with reporting and analyzing facts should be held to a higher standard of conduct than innuendo and smarmy wisecracks.

Kameron Cole is a columnist for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Zerzan not worthy

We notice, with amusement, that the front page of the ODE for Jan. 26 features an article about John Zerzan, the so-called anarchist, visiting campus. Several points beg for comment.

The obvious one is that this confirms our long-held opinion of both the ODE and other mainstream media. They cover radicals only when they are weird, reactionary or support violence.

This is sad because there are many sincere and much more rational anarchists in Eugene who are engaged in real and constructive work. Maybe someday the ODE will cover efforts such as The Student Insurgent on campus and groups like the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World, a radical labor union) and Food Not Bombs in the community. Perhaps, though, we will have to come out in support of the Unabomber, like Zerzan, in order to

get noticed by the Emerald.

Zerzan seems to find the recent trial of admitted Unabomber Ted Kaczynski a boon to his career. Unlike Zerzan, most anarchists do not find the idea of dropping out of society, digging a hole in Montana and mailing bombs a particularly useful method of achieving social change. The glorification of this kind of deranged, self-indulgent nihilism is offensive to many of us. We believe in collective action, not delusional and violent individual action.

Another point of difficulty for us was the quote that ran next to the article: "There is no real anarchist voice on campus," by Roger Adkins, UO Cultural Forum rep. Apparently, Adkins and the ODE are unaware or dismissive of the fact that the University is home to The Student Insurgent, a newspaper that consistently provides a forum for anarchist ideas.

Why have both the ODE and

Eugene Weekly done cover stories on Zerzan but never a story on activist anarchist? Is the mainstream media so enamored with violence and libertarian individualism that these fake anarchists are now appealing? We certainly hope that people do not find this coverage persuasive. Remember that radicals created things like labor unions and feminism, hence weekends and women's suffrage.

Emily Golden-Fields
Jason Moore
Tristan Masat

Editors, The Student Insurgent

Need to cooperate

There seems to be some confusion that needs clearing up.

It's first important to note that students and faculty should be on the same page. Students and faculty are sinking in the same boat; student tuition has nearly doubled in the '90s, while faculty salaries in the Oregon University

System are slipping down toward the worst in the nation. We're both falling into a rather large sinkhole. It's downright silly to allow a little puddle like the add-drop deadline to get in the way. The rift that has artificially arisen through Emerald opinions and Senate-wide e-mails needs closure.

By offering the opportunity to extend the deadline with which students add and drop classes, the ASUO thought it was helping come up with a solution. In round one, faculty decided not to take that opportunity. That's fine; they'll still ring the bell for round two. What's not fine — actually, what's really frustrating — is that in defeating the add-drop motion, no other solution emerged. Students need more information about their classes before they're forced to take them. We don't care how we solve that, we just need to get it solved. If not an add-drop extension, then some-

thing.

All students want is a solution, and the quicker we get there, the better. It's one thing to disagree with an idea; it's something completely different to ignore a problem. There might not be a simple solution, but there's something out there that can make things better. The last thing that we should be doing is throwing jabs between Emerald editions. Right now, faculty and students are bickering, and the problem is no closer to resolution. It's as if we are shooting ourselves in the foot, and to solve the problem we are turning around and shooting ourselves in the head.

This is simply a request to return to business as usual. The sooner we start solving problems, the sooner things can start getting better. Both faculty and students want the same things. We can work it out.

Ben Unger
ASUO Vice President