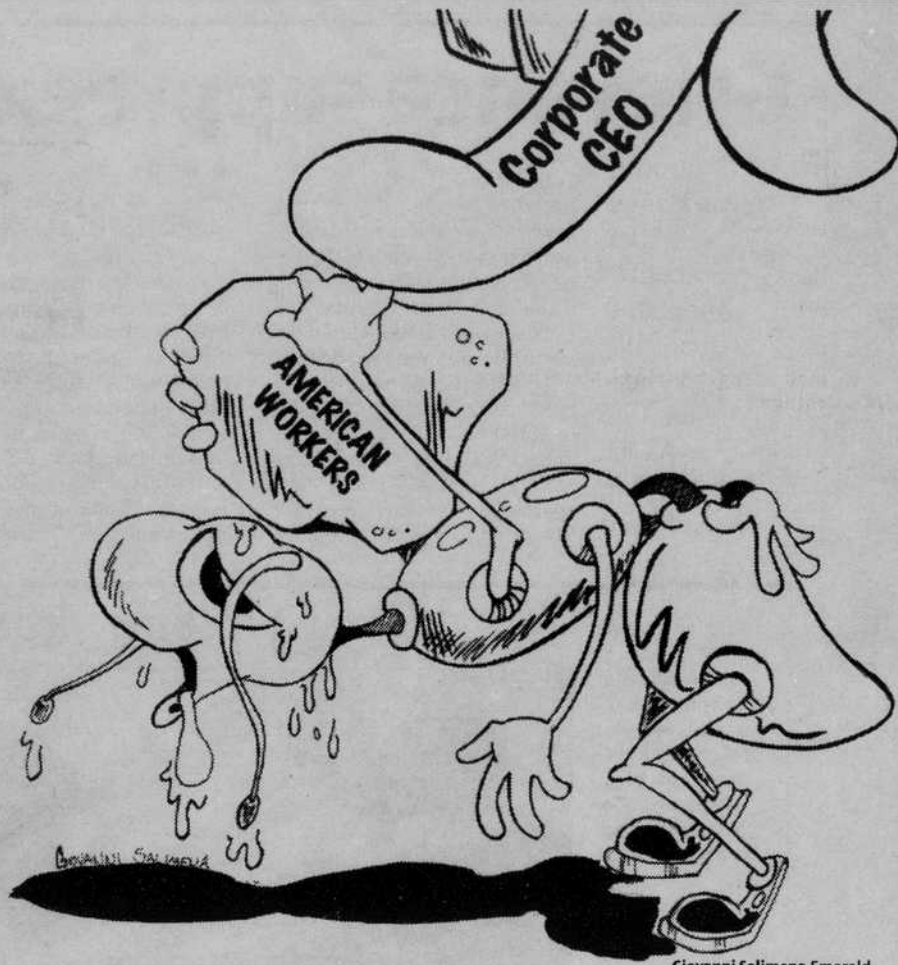


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# Perspectives

Oregon Daily  
**Emerald**

## The crime of innocence



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

There's something reprehensible going on in the American economy and social fabric today. It is spreading families thin; it is creating a gap between people "born equal."

It's not racism.

It's not sexism.

It's not nationalism.

It's poverty, the depreciating value of the American worker.

Let's throw out some facts:

- Since the 1970s, the percentage of taxes that the rich pay has gone from 70 percent of a marginal dollar to 30 percent.

- Since the early 1980s, the richest Americans have gone from paying 50 percent of our taxes to only 28 percent.

- CEO pay is up 481 percent since 1960.

- The average worker makes 10 percent less in real dollars than in the 1970s.

- Sixty percent of gains in post-tax income have gone to the top 1 percent of wage earners.

- And a family of three living off the "minimum wage" is 27 percent below the poverty line.

Do you see a trend?

The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.

You've heard this before, but, as a

college student about to go out into this same workforce, have you really thought about it?

Citizenship and the future of our country rest on investigating, being interested in and caring about our fellow Americans. This means that not talking about child poverty, low wages, attacks on welfare mothers, tax cuts to the rich and the low value of American laborers is like committing a crime against them. We plead innocent to the facts when we really just don't want to hear them. Because if we did know the extent to which poor, working class and middle class people are being cheated out of fair wages, and if we didn't do anything about it, that would be shame as well.

It's easy to look the other way. It's easy to say people can "pick themselves up by their bootstraps," to think that if everyone paid attention in school and worked hard that we would all have an equal chance. But that's simply not true. And it takes guts to say that in a country so bent on personal success, yet so far from developing a community one.

Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes is famous for saying that "America is in a deep moral crisis." Families are less valued, he says. But have we ever thought that maybe low wages were one reason? As Wayne

Morse Chair Frances Fox Piven so bluntly put it in her keynote address at the "Work, Welfare and Politics" conference: Maybe family values are on the decline because mothers are forced to work full-time at K-Mart just to feed the kids for whom the mothers now have no time.

Piven often focuses on the plight of welfare "reform," where roll backs in federal programs and turning over benefits to the states has meant a decrease in the amount of people on welfare. Critics use that statistic to tout success, but Piven reminds us that many, many of those now off welfare are still below the poverty line. It's just that now, they have no safety net.

And some argue that there should be no safety net, that people should be able to take care of themselves, that corporate CEOs earning millions a year at their workers' expense are just being rewarded for making their company's stock rise. Well, it sure shows what value we have placed on American life. In such an age of economic prosperity — prosperity we cannot help but hear about every time we turn on the TV or read a newspaper — why are the people who are really doing the grunt work not sharing in the wealth they have helped create?

The answer is corporate greed.

But we have hope. Look around, college campus activism is alive and well. The Worker's Rights Consortium, anti-sweatshop protests and the like show that people care. Piven herself thinks that support for unions and labor is on the upswing after nearly 20 years of frustration. Local community activist groups work hard — behind the scenes every day so that we just take their diligent work for granted — to improve the lives of immigrants, poor people and women right here in Lane County who want to go to college but who don't want to neglect their children in the meantime.

How you can show your support for American families and American labor is by joining community groups or just by paying attention. National media may not always point out the struggles of the poor without judging them to boot; that doesn't mean honest struggles cannot be found. Fight those who advance the stereotypes of the lazy poor person or the ignorant welfare mother who uses her children for cash. Fight the idea that those with the most money are the American ideal.

Most of all, pay attention to the American worker. You're going to be one someday.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

## Letters to the editor

### Get over grievances

In a University setting, one would hope to find students living and participating in life. Instead, we find whiny and complaining "wannabe" politicians. For the second time in the election, C.J. Gabbe and Peter Larson have to face a grievance (ODE, March 1).

Gabbe and Larson must now be thinking, why the heck did we host that coffee hour? Why did we put our candidacy in possible harm? That wasn't the intention. According to both candidates and people who were there, Gabbe and Larson came out of that coffee hour hoping they helped someone to vote. It has been specifically said that they did not tell the

group to vote for them but simply to vote.

The students seem to support Gabbe and Larson. They led the primary with more than 300 votes. They have worked the hardest at getting those votes. They and their crew spent the greater portion of the election in the public eye.

Obviously they jumped on the coffee hour before looking extremely closely at all the rules and guidelines of the ASUO elections. But come on people, they have faced the court and were waived of the first grievance.

In the end, we the students should vote according to what we feel is right. Take a good look at the running candidates' issues and what they hope to get done if they make it to office. This election should be about what is best for the students and the

University, not a coffee hour that happened a month ago.

Michael T. Dippal  
 sophomore

### Gabbe, Larson play fair

At a time when petty accusations and grievances rule campus politics, I'm glad that there are two candidates who have remained fair and honest through the elections process. Despite accusations and misrepresentations, C.J. Gabbe and Peter Larson have stayed true to their issues and have played a fair game in this election.

Throughout the past weeks, they have reminded us that there are some serious issues on the campus, state and national levels that need to be addressed in order to have a safe and accessible education. Gabbe and Lar-

son are the best candidates for the ASUO Executive because they have years of experience working on these issues that pertain to students. I am confident that they will accomplish a lot next year for the student body because they are qualified, dedicated and sincere. They're ready to tackle these issues and reach out to the student body to make a change.

Already, they have worked on such issues as keeping our tuition frozen, increasing diversity on campus and educating students on their rights with the police. Still, these are issues that are prevalent today and University students need leaders who are experienced and dedicated to tackle these issues and make change.

Jennifer Burns  
 sophomore, undeclared

## THE WEEK IN THUMBS



**To more Internet conveniences**  
 The Census Bureau will allow responses to this year's census short form to be completed over the Web, with hopes that more people will fill out the once-a-decade survey of the face of America.

**To good measuring**  
 The Eugene City Council opted to place two good measures on the ballot for May. One would give councilors a long-overdue salary stipend, and the other would move the location of the downtown Eugene Police Department and fire stations. The current locations are not earthquake-proof, and we want to be safe just in case.



**To droopy elephants**  
 It appears that elephants in south Africa are developing a problem with their trunks where their appendages have become paralyzed and cannot support themselves. Floppy trunk disease, as the blight is technically named, has affected scores of elephants in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

**To not leaping over the problem**  
 Reagan National Airport in New York City experienced some annoying Feb2K problems when skycaps' check-in computers became confused about displaying Feb. 29. Good thing we spent all that money... New Year's Eve went fine, but we can't handle an extra day in February?