

PERSPECTIVES

Editor in chief: Jack Clifford
 Managing Editor: Jessica Blanchard
 Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

EDITORIAL EDITOR: MICHAEL J. KLECKNER opededitor@journalist.com

Debugging the parasite economy



SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

I promised to be good. Last time we talked, I said I would forge a positive path, easing you toward the radical center. Hold my hand; let's go for a walk.

The special interest lobby has crippled our democracy. Public-interest firms, business lobbies and cultural identity groups are co-conspirators in the parasite economy. Think of it this way: A CEO wants to build her corporate assets, so she invests \$1 million into stocks, new equipment and raising employee benefits. This serves both a social benefit as well as the obvious financial dividends. The money invested into stocks will allow those smaller companies to increase production, while hopefully delivering a positive return for the CEO. The new equipment allows the corporation to raise output. Finally, the investment in worker benefits increases productivity. That's a good economy.

Now, behold the parasite economy. In this scenario, the lobbyist wants to secure a \$1 million tax break or federal subsidy for her respective group. In lobbying, you don't create wealth, you capture it. Therefore, the lobbyists are willing to spend anywhere from \$1 to \$999,999 capturing their share of the pie. Even with only an additional \$1, they still benefit. Unfortunately for the rest of us, up to \$1,999,999 can be drained from a productive economy to serve the exclusive interests of

one organization. Citizens lose. Not only is the lobby self-serving, it thrives by capturing taxpayer money, a form of legal theft. The street beggar can be ignored, you can change the channel on Pat Robertson and you can choose not to buy a company's product; but the lobbyist takes without consent.

If you want a detailed and much more educated version than my 600-word rant, I recommend "Government's End" by Jonathon Rauch. It's both entertaining and enlightening, a rare combination in politics.

So, what can be done about it? Well, a lot, actually.

First, return a large portion of lobbying to the states. Look no further than OSPIRG to see an organization that's structured like a typical lobby, but at the local level. The room for corruption is limited and the possibilities for direct action are large. Love them or hate them, OSPIRG gets work done without being bloated.

Second, enact campaign-finance reform. Closing the loopholes on corporate AND labor contributions would allow these groups to participate, without putting a price tag on democracy. In fact, as much as Republicans have become corporate whores, it was unions who first gave this disease to the American voter.

Back in the 1980 campaign, unions made a \$3 million contribution to Democrats, which was an unprecedented amount. The Republicans cried foul and the unions snickered. So, Reagan hit up the corporations, blowing away Carter and his Democrats in both fundraising and votes. Full disclosure of campaign contributions is essential. Check out the Web site www.opensecrets.org to find out exactly

how much money candidates are receiving and who is giving.

Next, balancing the budget. It's important for more than cosmetic reasons. With a surplus, we have reduced interest rates, which means lower car payments, mortgage payments, and yes, student loans.

Lastly, tax reform. Washington bureaucrats have made thousands of changes to the tax code over the last two decades, and still almost no one is happy. A simplified tax code would benefit all Americans. And while we're at it, reform corporate welfare. Helping a struggling business is great, but screwing

over taxpayers so a few millionaires can get richer is against the American way.

These are just a few initiatives that would reel-in the parasite economy and invigorate the radical center. But it requires sacrifice from all plates at the table. Who's willing to start?

Eric Pfeiffer is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald, currently serving an internship at the National Journal Hotline in Washington, D.C. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at epfeiffe@gladstone.uoregon.edu.



Letters to the editor

Nader lobbies for justice

This is responding to a few ill-informed points that have appeared on the ODE editorial page calling to question Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader's political lobbying and his potential to get things done in Washington.

To conclude that the lobbying efforts of Nader and the many organizations he's helped found, such as Public Citizen, the EPA, the PIRGs (that's OSPIRG, too), etc., is no different from say, Chevron, Philip Morris, G.E., etc., is a grotesque misrepresentation of what Nader and the Green Party stand for: Democracy by, for and of the people.

It is not America's financial "upper crust" that Nader and his affiliates lobby for. They lobby for the public's health and safety: clean air and water acts, OSHA, EPA, Freedom of Information Act and seat belts. This is in stark contrast with what V.P. Gore and Gov. Bush stand for. If you doubt this, look into the major contributors to their campaigns and parties. Nader takes no corporate contributions. Then look at whose interests the Republican and Democratic parties serve and compare it with Nader's platform and record.

To those who doubt Nader's effectiveness if elected, as a Harvard Law graduate fighting for public safety and health since 1965, he's got a few ideas on getting things done, such as true campaign finance reform and a re-distribution

of the national budget. Look at Nader's record and what he's accomplished so far. Look over Bush and Gore's records and make your own comparison. It should be rather telling.

Tyrone Reitman
 Religious Studies/ Sociology

Voters' Guide simplifies the process

Responsible voters are showing signs of impatience, frustration and confusion as they struggle to understand the 26 complex statewide measures on the November ballot. Busy Oregonians are looking for reliable information that is strictly balanced, unbiased, and nonpartisan. They also want easy-to-understand information that won't take days to read.

The Voters' Guide, published by the League of Women Voters of Oregon, is just such a document, and it's now available across the state — free. LWVOR's Voters' Guide deals evenly with both sides of each ballot measure. It also covers all 30 candidates running for U.S. Representative and statewide office. The candidates' answers to comprehensive questions, appropriate to their desired positions, are reproduced in their own words. Further details about candidates are available at www.dnet.org.

The Voters' Guide explains each of the 26 measures concisely — with the titles, a short summary, the balanced pros and cons, some necessary background, and the projected costs involved. Only 40 pages in length, more than 230,000

free copies will be available to Oregon voters, thanks to civic-minded sponsors. The Voters' Guide is available at the customer service counters of all Fred Meyer stores, as well as other stores, libraries, senior centers, schools, community colleges and universities. For further information, please call the office of the League of Women Voters of Lane County, 343-7917.

Karen Rikhoff
 president
 League of Women Voters of Lane County

A vote for Nader supports Bush

As young, potential voters in what promises to be the closest presidential election in 40 years, college students are in an extremely influential position. It is vital that, before deciding for whom to vote, each student think seriously about the long-term effect of that vote. For those who care about forging a more fair, just and progressively-inclined America, careful consideration should lead to a vote for Al Gore, not Ralph Nader.

All Americans owe Nader a debt for being a stalwart voice against corporate greed. However, college-age voters, who have flocked to the Green Party in increasing numbers, must realize that a vote for Nader only brings our nation closer to a Bush administration, one that wouldn't hesitate to appoint a frighteningly right-wing Supreme Court.

It is easy to get caught up in Nader's talk of the two parties being virtually identical in their cor-

porate dependency. But Nader is dead wrong in stating that Gore and Bush don't differ: A look at their opposing views on gun control, abortion, gay rights, and campaign finance reform, for example, shows how incorrect Nader's assertion is. While one may prefer Nader in the abstract, the reality is that the only thing which a vote for him can accomplish is the election of Bush and Cheney.

Mike Alpern
 Communications Director
 Americans for Democratic Action

DPS oversteps boundaries

This is in regard to the ODE's Oct. 23 article, "DPS strives for more power amid internal difficulties." As I understand it, DPS is supposed to be a campus security service. What problems do the campus have that require armed security guards?

The surrounding campus area seems to be fairly heavily patrolled by real police officers. Their response to any situation requiring armed force on campus would be only marginally slower than that of DPS. Actually, it would probably be faster, because anyone who sees an incident with a potential for serious violence is going to call the police rather than campus security.

Having armed security guards on campus is not only a bad idea, it's an irresponsible and dangerous idea. Everything I've been reading about DPS lately (illegal lights, defensive tactics training, guns) indicates that the department is not satisfied just to be a force of help-

ful security guards who can call in the cops if situations get hairy. But isn't that the function of campus security? DPS wants to pack heat, get in fights and drive around in cars with flashing lights — in general, they've been watching too many syndicated cop shows.

DPS is, by definition, a force of campus-bound security guards, and there is no shame in that. They serve an important function. However, they shouldn't try to overstep their bounds. Eugene and the University are progressive and civilized enough to have a "gun-free" campus.

Kyle Davis
 Class of '97
 Kazakhstan

CORRECTION

On Monday, the editorial board incorrectly implied that the City of Eugene's proposed response fee for disorderly parties was connected solely to the address. In fact, it is connected to both the address and the party host's name, so students would not be punished for a prior tenant's disorderly partying. Additionally, the fine for repeated disorderly parties is not \$1,000, but is the actual cost of the police response. On the first offense, the fine would be limited to \$1,500, but additional offenses would be the total cost of the response.

Also, the Measure 86 graphic on the editorial page in Tuesday's paper incorrectly said "yes." The text for the measure was correct, but the editorial board recommends a "no" vote. And ballots may be returned on Election Day until 8 p.m.