

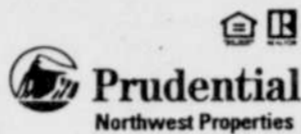
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Speak out

Bringing up the rear

TO THE EDITOR:

Does it ever occur to a barebacker to think of anyone but himself? If he wants to make his own sexual choices, fine. But what about my choice not to pay for his selfish arrogance?

What the barebacking article failed to point out is the *real* cost that all of us pay for this type of behavior ["Risky Business," Jan. 3]. We pay with higher insurance premiums, overextended use of limited HIV/AIDS funds and negative press, which creates apathy in those who have tried to advance the rights of the gay community.

And these costs are just the beginning. If barebackers really want to be left alone, I suggest they cancel their health insurance and decline financial or emotional support as they dwindle down to death.

Grow up. Get some therapy. Face the fact that you never are going to be alone in this. Our individual actions do affect the whole.

Love and respect yourself and your community enough to behave in a conscious and mature manner. Anyone acting out of love and awareness never would put themselves or their community in such a pathetic and dangerous position.

DAVID LANGTON
Portland

Talk dirty to me

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you very much for running the article on the practice of barebacking.

I especially appreciated that you allowed the "street" language. It makes for a more understandable read, instead of clinical language.

Personally, I am vehemently opposed to this very unsafe practice in our community and would support any efforts to head it off. It's stupid for those who engage in it.

DAVE DISHMAN
Portland

Net worth

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm amazed Marty Davis can ask with a straight—er, lesbian—face if the Internet has made life better ["Year In, Year Out," Jan. 3].

If only I'd had the Internet available when I was coming out. I did have CompuServe, but not until I was in college, and the only people I could talk to were far away.

At that point, I never knowingly had met a real-life gay person. And that's just the first of many advantages it brings. Like all tools, it has good uses and bad uses, but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

ALAN BATIE
Portland

Use your imagination

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm writing regarding Marty Davis' recent commentary on the new year and the moral crisis we are undergoing as a nation with regard to economic leadership.

Let's assume for purposes of argument that everyone wants to do the right thing. We still would have a crisis in economic leadership because of our poverty of analysis and lack of imagination regarding solutions to our economic problems.

In other words, if the problems in economic leadership were primarily moral, we would want to replace the capitalistic system itself with

something that is more moral, less selfish. But if the capitalistic system is correct in assuming the validity of individual and group selfishness as a necessary motivating factor in economic progress, through the free market mechanism, then we might want to consider a program such as minimum incomes, floated back in the '60s by both parties, so that the poor would be given the means to choose what services are best for them and the marketplace would provide the means by which such services are delivered an economical and effective way.

Too bad such a program is seen by most opinion makers as somewhat to the left of Marx when it actually has nothing to do with such 19th century intellectual constructs. I say, if we are bent on capitalism, then give it a try.

ALAN WOOD
Portland

The cost of savings

TO THE EDITOR:

Oregon voters will face a difficult decision Jan. 28: temporarily raise income taxes, or allow schools and social services to be drastically defunded. As an organization of crime survivors dedicated to reducing future victimization, Survivors Advocating for an Effective System is gravely concerned about the potential creation of thousands of new victims as a result of slashing funding to social services.

It is unrealistic to think that gutting social programs equates with a solution to the state's budget woes. And it's patently ridiculous to assume such misplaced priorities engender compassionate, humanistic and effective fiscal policy.

The newly homeless, the thousands of addicts denied treatment, the jobless and the hopeless could well find themselves swept up into the last stop on the desperation express: the corrections system. While the amount of money allocated to keeping people healthy, safe, educated and out of jail continues to dwindle, we note with dismay that the corrections budget remains quite substantial (the primary cuts to which are, ironically, to programs and treatment).

As criminal justice reform advocates, we are frustrated by a system that continues to cut services to people living in poverty and people of color—the people who make up the majority of crime survivors. These cuts, coupled with cuts in programs aimed at reducing crime, provide a recipe for disaster.

It is a long-established fact that people with lower incomes are more likely to be victimized by crime. As a state, do we wish to actively create more victimization by creating more poverty? Cutting services to the people who need them most will generate precisely that result.

Consider, too, the cost of cuts to outpatient alcohol and drug treatment. Legislators might feel good that they've saved about \$350,000 until they realize that, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services, every dollar cut from treatment will result in as much as \$7 spent on a variety of other publicly funded social services. Lack of access to treatment means addicts will continue with the progress of their disease and very likely will end up in medical clinics, the court system, corrections, hospitals, detox centers or child welfare agencies.

So the \$350,000 legislators saved this year actually translates into a cost of about \$2.5 million to taxpayers down the road. Is the alternative—that is, keeping programs funded at their current levels and looking for progressive ways to sustain that funding—really that costly? When one considers the very real potential for creating thousands of new crime victims, the answer is quite evident.

Titanic as the current crisis is, it is not unfixable. But the answer is not found in political