

• Last Monday night Congressman DeFazio reminded a standing-room-only crowd of true believers why we are so proud of his voice in Congress. He talked about unilateralism, pre-emption and the War Powers Act, how this administration accomplished a fundamental shift in foreign policy without Congress debating it or the public even knowing what was going on. He explained that the Bush administration is asking for \$87 billion now for Iraq because they don't want to be begging for money closer to the election. Last April, they borrowed \$79 billion for Iraq. That is not all spent. DeFazio blasted the administration's efforts on security following 9/11; aircraft are not more secure; we've done nothing about securing containers coming into our ports; and the FBI and CIA still don't talk to each other. He wants the Democratic candidates to go after Bush, not each other. As for campaign finance reform, public financing is the only way to go. He pointed out Maine and Arizona as leaders and said public financing already has made a big difference in leveling the process in Maine.

• Maybe you can't fight city hall, but you can fight the federal courthouse, and win. Persistent and assertive work by the Eugene Human Rights Committee, Lane Independent Living Alliance and others were successful this past week in getting a wheelchair ramp designed into the courthouse staircase. This communitywide campaign on behalf of the disabled is not only a success for Eugene and Springfield, but also serves as an example for other cities in their pursuit of equal access. Congrats to everyone involved, including the GSA officials and designers who made it happen. But now we face bigger problems. Will Bush's massive federal deficits delay the courthouse construction for many years? How do we avoid creating an island surrounding the courthouse, cut off from downtown? How do we accommodate traffic without building a highway on the banks of the Willamette? How will this new area be developed? Will local taxpayers be subsidizing a federal building? Will there be adequate and timely public input or will all these huge decisions be hashed out behind closed doors?

• Jack Roberts of the Lane Metro Partnership spoke to the City Club last week and defended tax breaks to attract big industries, and called for expanding our inventory of buildable land. Roberts, as usual, presented his case well and even talked about sustainability, but his basic assumptions are obsolete. The economic growth he envisions as healthy is not sustainable when it draws more people to our valley. Even at 1 percent growth, our population will double by the time our toddlers retire. We do not have to expand our urban growth boundary just because we have a shortage of cheap land. We can choose infill and redevelopment. And sprawl carries a massive long-term environmental cost (water and air pollution, loss of farmland, etc.) that is not figured into Roberts' calculations. We need a whole new way of thinking if we are not going to become just another sprawling, congested city.

• Bonny Bettman filed for City Council re-election this week, following Betty Taylor. Other

seats up for re-election in 2004 are those held by Scott Meisner, Nancy Nathanson and Jim Torrey. Bonny's smart politics make her a rising star. She was nominated for Elected Official of the Year at the 1000 Friends of Oregon conference last weekend, and was interviewed along with Bobby Green in a *New York Times* documentary that aired nationwide last week on cities that have named streets after MLK. She's also being recruited for appointment to Floyd Prozanski's House seat if Floyd gets the nod for Tony Corcoran's Senate seat, but we hear she won't take it this time around. Bonny still has a 13-year-old at home and Salem's a long commute. Meanwhile, rumors have our mayor thinking about challenging DeFazio for Congress, figuring redistricting has put more conservatives in District 4. Voters would certainly have clear choices in that race.

• Molly Ivins sold out the McDonald twice last weekend and drew hundreds more to her \$25 booksigning reception. What's the big attraction? Well, if she can raise hell in redneck Texas and have fun doing it, we can do it too, right here in only moderately conservative Lane County. We love her stories about corruption in Texas politics and she's an inspiration for us to tell our own tales of absurdity. How do we follow her advice to loosen up and have more fun with politics? More political theater! More lively debate! More parties! More beer!

• Speaking of raising hell, James Arthur McFadden, aka Peace Walker, is in town this week talking racial politics and police brutality to anyone who will listen. The outspoken California activist, who is black and homeless, has traveled by foot all over the country and stopped to see us in response to our Oct. 16 cover story on racial profiling. McFadden says he's often profiled and grilled by police in his travels, but some of the worst treatment he's experienced was in Coos County where he says he was beaten by cops and arrested on made-up charges. He says he was also hassled by police in Florence, Yachats and Eugene. He was cited and released "just for talking politics" on a harassment charge in Eugene Oct. 24 following a verbal altercation.

• Is *The Register-Guard* for sale? Every year or two we hear rumors that some members of the third and fourth generations of Bakers are eager to sell out to a big newspaper chain, but other Bakers want to hang on. The rumors are back, but we got no response when we queried Editor and Publisher Tony Baker. How are mainstream papers doing these days? The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association reports this week that newspaper circulation numbers statewide have dropped about 40,000 or 4.2 percent since 1996. Meanwhile, Oregon's population is growing by about 45,000 a year.

*SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com*

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