

FIRE THE CHEERLEADERS

I've lived in Eugene for nearly a decade but I'd never given the Ducks much thought. I've never watched a game, never been to Autzen Stadium, and the *Ducks Illustrated* inserts go straight into recycling. However, after reading David Wade and Kai Ariel's letters (10/30), I now realize how tragic the simple existence of football is.

How dare people waste their Saturdays watching a game (a game!) when they could be doing something important like picketing the Federal Building or watching Spearhead play live. I'll bet Ken Kesey is spinning in his grave (yeah, yeah, he was a big football fan in life, but he's on a higher plane now! He's seen the error of his ways!).

I think the UO owes it to us to make its sports program more progressive. Junk the national anthem and hire String Cheese Incident to play a Bob Marley medley. Fire the cheerleaders and replace them with the Sweet Potato Pie girls. Have Jeff "Free" Luers burn an SUV on the 50-yard-line whenever we score a touchdown. This way the jocks get the game, the hippies feel proactive, everyone goes home happy. And isn't that what diversity is all about?

*Kris Bluth
Eugene*

DEFINING FREEDOM

Less than 24 hours after the same-sex marriage decision in Massachusetts, I'm already tired of the howling. Americans take pride in being right about our government, economy and civil rights. How can a population with such idealism indulge the destructive, insistent, micro-managing of a few?

Bullying moralists have tried to tell us who our God must be, what we can do in our bedrooms, what we are allowed to indulge ourselves with, how to run our bodies, and now, who we can marry. If we were truly free and wise like Solomon, we would never engage ourselves in the childish exchanges of "yes I can — no you can't." Instead we would

have law that reads like this:

When there are consenting adults, there is no crime. Church and state are to be kept separate, always. You cannot be forced to have an abortion against your will. You cannot be forced to use drugs against your will. You cannot be forced to marry anyone against your will.

To those who would tell the rest of us how to live, I say, if you don't approve of it, don't do it. Take all the responsibility you want for yourself and then allow me to do the same.

Isn't that what freedom is all about?

*Jane Moodie
Eugene*

SOME 'SPLAININ' TO DO

I had the pleasure of attending the keynote debate Nov. 14 at the UO. The debate, labeled "Global vs. Local," was one of the many wonderful and educational opportunities available free at the 7th Annual Sustainable Business Symposium. Jack Roberts, executive director of Lane Metro Partnership, was arguing the global side and Michael Shuman, director of Green Policy Institute and author of several books, argued the local side.

It was quite entertaining and very informative but, not nearly enough time for real debate. The two "debaters" spent most of their time laying out their arguments.

Shuman demonstrated that 95 percent of the resources from Lane County going into business incentives are going to large, non-local corporations like Sony, while only 5 percent go to local smaller businesses. He also demonstrated that Lane County would get much more bang for the buck by investing in local instead of global.

Roberts didn't necessarily disagree. He claimed that he would love to give local businesses more of the pie, but they are simply not asking. Roberts made it repeatedly clear that he was born and raised here in Eugene, cares very deeply about the "mom & pop" businesses, and desperately wants business diversity.

He may have actually gotten some people

NO EXIT

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WARNING: NEVER MIX PROZAC, ROGAINE AND VIAGRA!



to believe him until he said that once Barnes & Noble came to town, he began supporting them because of their "better selection." He said companies like Barnes & Noble and Wal-Mart offer family wage jobs, cheap goods, and convenience. When will Roberts realize that small businesses have absolutely no chance to survive, let alone thrive, when the wealthy people in the community support huge corporate conglomerates to get a "better selection"?

And when will Mr. Roberts begin looking at a company's business ethics and not just how many "family wage" jobs they will produce before lining their pockets? And how do corporations such as Barnes & Noble and Wal-Mart represent diversity? Please Mr. Roberts, explain.

*Joshua Welch
Eugene*

MUSCLED BUTTS

Regularly when I open the *EW* to the Letters page there are strident complaints about the exploitation of women's bodies by the paper (Charlotte Behm, 11/13). *EW* does show skin more than somewhat, but I consider that a virtue not a vice. I agree with Charlotte that *EW* would do well to exploit sexy naked men and I would applaud a well-muscled butt on the cover sometime. Perhaps though there are not as many attractive, sexy men in Lane County willing to disrobe for *EW*. I doubt if there would be the same opposition to naked men, but why shouldn't there be a double standard if it satisfies the righteous?

Sexuality, male or female is a beautiful powerful force. Sexy women are strong women empowered by their creative Aphrodite nature. Apparently though, it is a

reasonable DOUBT BY TOM LININGER

Eugene Reality

Don't believe the 'Edutopia' hype.

Portland's *Oregonian* is running a series of articles this month about the economic health of different regions in Oregon. *The Oregonian* refers to these regions as the "nine states of Oregon" (borrowing a gimmick from Joel Garreau's 1981 book, *The Nine Nations of North America*). *The Oregonian* profiled Eugene on Nov. 18, describing this community as the "State of Edutopia." While *The Oregonian* reported that seven of Oregon's nine "states" are struggling economically, *The Oregonian* portrayed "Edutopia" as economically stable due to the steady demand for higher education. The article left the impression that Eugene is an island of prosperity amidst a sea of destitution in Oregon.

There's only one small flaw with this utopian vision of Eugene: It's contradicted by the statistical evidence. You'd have better luck finding the Northwest Passage or the lair of Bigfoot than finding this so-called "Edutopia."

What do the statistics tell us about Eugene's economy? In the spring of 2003, our local unemployment rate was 8.2 percent, compared with a national unemployment rate of 5.8 percent. Eugene currently has a lower rate of net job growth than does Oregon as a whole. Unemployment is not exactly utopian (although, in *The Oregonian's* defense, both words do start with the letter "u").

Poverty is a major problem in this community. A startling 17.7 percent of the local population lives below the poverty line, partly because of our high student population. Nationwide, this figure is 12.1 percent. The percentage of Lane County residents seeking emergency shelter care in the year 2000 was twice the statewide average. There are 1,806 homeless people in Eugene on any given night — a number that has risen 33 per-



cent since the 1990s. Why didn't these statistics capture the attention of *The Oregonian's* writers? I guess "Edutopia" is a catchier nickname than "Will-work-for-foodtopia."

The ratio of Eugene's median income to its housing costs has become infamous. The most recent census indicated that per capita income in Eugene was below the national average, while other data have suggested that housing costs here exceed the national average. In 1998, a survey showed that the ratio of median income to housing costs in Eugene was the second worst in the nation (only San Francisco had a worse ratio). A follow-up survey in 2001 indicated that Eugene had the 12th worst ratio of median income to housing costs among the 180 largest metropolitan communities in the U.S. Maybe we can take back the number two spot now that *The Oregonian* has revealed the secret of our idyllic lifestyle.

The Oregonian is correct that the UO provides an important pillar for the local economy. But it's inaccurate to conclude that the UO is immune from the hardship of Oregon's economic downturn. State funding for the UO has dropped significantly. Departments throughout the University are paring back, and layoffs may occur if voters reject the Legislature's tax package.

Why should we be concerned that *The Oregonian* has painted a falsely sanguine picture of our community's economic health? Here's the problem: *The Oregonian's* series suggests to residents of the seven distressed "states" that Eugene doesn't need the Legislature's attention. The rural Republican legislators who control the purse strings in Salem might be even less sympathetic to Eugene's predicament when Oregon's largest newspaper describes Eugene as "utopian." This characterization could breed resentment and division, when the reality is that Eugene suffers along with the rest of Oregon during a recession.

Let's remember that Oregon and its largest college town are interdependent. We need the state, and the state needs us. Eugene is not in some imaginary state; it's in the state of Oregon.

Tom Lininger is a law professor and former county commissioner.