

Caring for Others

Former U.N. High Commissioner, president of Ireland to speak in Eugene.

Mary Robinson, the former United Nations High Commissioner of Human rights and former president of Ireland, will speak on "Human Rights and Globalization" at the UO on March 3.

Robinson is a guest of Svitlana Kravchenko, the Carlton Savage Visiting Professor for International Relations and Peace, and a Ukrainian law professor who has taught environmental law for more than 25 years and has lectured in more than 20 countries. Kravchenko administers the "Human Rights for ALL" program at the UO, teaching in both the Clark Honors College and School of Law.

The Human Rights for All program has brought in lecturers from around the world, and Robinson is the latest.

Kravchenko met Robinson in Geneva in January 2002, at a seminar on human rights and the environment that Robinson had helped organize. Robinson was the U.N. High Commissioner at the time.

"I invited her to come to Oregon and she was laughing and she said 'I love Oregon but I'm very busy, so send an invitation and I will consider it,'" says Kravchenko.

After some effort, Kravchenko finally reached her manager in New York who said he'd "work on it" and as Robinson was San Francisco bound, found time in her schedule for Eugene.

"They even asked if we had an airport here," says Kravchenko. "They think we're at the end of the world, like some small village."

That attitude may be typical of New Yorkers, but not of Robinson, who, despite her status, is personable and down to earth.

Robinson has an illustrious history. As High Commissioner, Robinson gave priority to integrating human rights concerns into all activities of the United Nations. As president of Ireland, she was the first head of state to visit Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide there. She also was the first head of state to visit Somalia following the crisis there in 1992, receiving the CARE Humanitarian Award in recognition of her efforts in that country.

Robinson currently serves as executive director of the Ethical Globalization Initiative, a program forging new alliances to integrate concepts of human rights, gender sensitivity and enhanced accountability into efforts to address global challenges.

After two years of studying programs worldwide, the EGI identified three objectives to address in 2004: fostering more equitable international trade and development, strengthening responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa and shaping more humane migration policies.

Using a human rights lens and gender perspective "to add value and make a difference," Robinson says she and other world leaders are insisting, "We must not just have an economic globalization, but a values-led one that would be fairer to everyone."

On the first point of trade, one area Robinson mentions is the worldwide proliferation of small arms, such as submachine guns. "We believe these are the true weapons of mass destruction," she says.

Research done by Oxfam and Amnesty International, which have linked to address small arms issues, reveals there are more than 600 million in operation. Most are legally owned, but more and more are being sold or traded illegally.

"We're trying to get an arms trade treaty to tighten that up," says Robinson.

To work on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa, Robinson says the problem must get more attention. By using a human rights lens, it brings the concerns home, as well as the need to take action.

"Everyone has a right to health care, that's a progressive implementation of human rights." With HIV/AIDS, adds Robinson, "It's not about a right to health care but a right to life."



Mary Robinson

The overall figures for subSaharan Africa show 29 million people with HIV or full-blown AIDS.

"Only a tiny fraction have access to treatment," says Robinson.

In Zambia, more teachers are dying than can be replaced. "How can you provide for the children? We must get away from cold statistics and look to people's lives," she says.

And lastly, immigration. At least 175 million worldwide don't live in the country of their birth. Next week, Robinson will join an independent commission on migration in Stockholm.

"I will seek to bring a strong human rights and gender perspective," says Robinson. "Immigration can affect women differently and the employment opportunities are different for them."

With that, Robinson's voice lightens up. "I also have another hat I wear," she says. "I'm the chair of the Council of Women World Leaders."

As to the Greek drama-sounding name of it, Robinson laughs, "It is quite an august body."

The prestigious group consists of women who have been or are currently presidents or prime ministers of their countries. "There are 30 of us," Robinson says, excitedly. The women are working together in various combinations to examine the environment, trade and finance, and "hopefully in May, health," she says. "The idea is to get women who have key decision-making power to work together, to all link together."

Just listening to Robinson's schedule is exhausting. "What keeps me going," she says, "is being inspired by the work people do at the grassroots. I have lots of opportunities to be in contact with them. They energize me."

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Mary Robinson's free public lecture is at 7 pm on Wednesday, March 3, in the EMU Ballroom, UO.

People Oppose Sprawl

Survey shows only one in 10 want more industrial land.

Opponents of adding industrial land to Eugene outnumber supporters by a ratio of almost eight to one, according to a recent city of Eugene scientific survey.

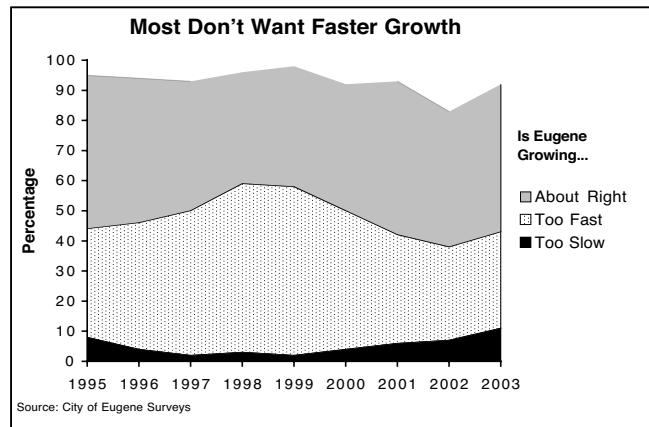
Asked if there is enough industrial land available for development in Eugene, 68 percent responded "yes" versus only 9 percent who answered "no." The remainder said they didn't know.

The survey comes amid a push by the Lane Metropolitan Partnership, a tax-funded business group that lobbies for corporate welfare and urban sprawl, to expand the urban growth boundary to add industrial land. The push is backed by land speculators who could sell farmland for industrial development at enormous profits.

The \$9,500 city survey asked 401 people 101 questions last November. Despite the large number of questions, few dealt with the burning issues facing Eugene. There were no questions about diverting tax money with urban renewal, the skyrocketing cost of the West Eugene Parkway, tax breaks for Hynix, developer subsidies, increasing environmental regulations, etc. Instead, the survey was full of bureaucratic minutiae. One question asked citizens to rate city animal control services on a scale of one to five. Eugene doesn't even provide animal control services; the county does.

Here's a look at some of the survey's more interesting results:

- Even in the current recession, three times more people in Eugene think the city is growing too fast rather than too slow. Compared to previous city surveys, concern about population growth in Eugene tripled from 1990 to 1999, when 56 percent felt the city was growing too fast. Now, 32 percent think the city is growing too fast and 11 percent think it is growing too slow. Half think the current, relatively low growth rate is about right. The small size of Eugene and its natural beauty and friendly people rank high among the top things people like most about Eugene, according to the survey.
- The recession has hurt. About 45 percent reported that economic opportunity had gotten worse last year, four times the number from five years ago. However, about half the people in Eugene still think their opportunities are better or the same during the recession.
- Despite the downturn, support for "tax incentives to businesses creating new jobs" has declined slightly in recent years, while opposition has grown slightly. About 55 percent now support the incentives with 35 percent opposed. The survey did not ask about the kind of large tax breaks given to Hynix, which were only available in a certain zone and which were given even while the corporation was not creating jobs.



• Thirty-nine percent of respondents still feel dissatisfied with downtown. The city spent millions re-opening streets and ripping out the downtown mall, but the car traffic has attracted few new businesses.

• The city got its worst service ratings for "planning and managing growth" and "managing your tax dollars." On average citizens scored the city 2.9 out of five on the planning question and 2.7 on the financial question. City progressives have fought for better planning and an independent city auditor for years, but have so far been defeated by council conservatives.

• The city asked citizens what it should do about budget cuts. The leading question did not allow citizens to answer that the city should increase efficiency, but only whether the city should increase taxes or cut services. Of the 41 percent who favored increased taxes, supporters of non-property taxes outnumbered opponents by a 3-1 margin. Progressive councilors have been pushing for years for the city to move to an income tax on the wealthy as a fairer way to raise revenue than property taxes.

• The city has diverted money from other services to pay for more police, but the vast majority of citizens don't feel unsafe. Ninety percent reported feeling very or somewhat safe walking alone in their neighborhood after dark.

• Some of the survey results make no sense. Drives have come out to use the city's new library but the survey reports that library use has declined from 70 percent using the old facility in 2001 to 58 percent using the new building in 2003. City staff referred questions about discrepancies in the survey to the survey consultant at Advanced Marketing Research, who did not return a call.

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