

SLANT

• Every day should be Earth Day, but then people have short attention spans and can only handle so much catastrophe. Most environmental news is bad news, but let's not be ostriches or lemmings. It's human nature to fix things as well as destroy things. We were blessed last week with a talk at Eugene City Club by marine ecologist Dr. Jane Lubchenco of OSU, one of our nation's most knowledgeable scientists in the inseparable realms of water and climate. She expressed serious concerns for the well-being of our ecosystem, but she was also hopeful, saying communities can empower positive environmental decision-making. Eventually the wet rock we call home will be torched like a marshmallow at a Cub Scout campfire; meanwhile, let's all work to keep the laughter, love, music, art, politics, diversity and beauty of Earth alive and vibrant for the next few thousand generations.

• Just a quick reminder: The only public hearing we will get on the recent ICMA/PERF report on the Eugene Police Department is at 7:30 pm Monday, April 25 in City Council chambers. See last week's Slant for details.

• Earth Day reminds us of one of our pet peeves: the astounding amount of money funneled into cancer research primarily for drug testing, high-tech treatment and the elusive search for a "cure." The incidence of cancer continues to rise while pitifully few resources target prevention – which is a lot cheaper and more effective in the long run. As we learned at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (PIELC) recently, at least 50 different carcinogens can be found in off-the-shelf cosmetics today. The federal Food and Drug Administration is failing to protect the public from toxics in cosmetics, and it's even difficult to find out what's in these products, according to Dr. Samuel Epstein of the University of Illinois School of Public Health. See www.preventcancer.com for Epstein's expert analysis on the myriad ways our government is supporting corporate profits while our environment grows ever more toxic.

• Also from the PIELC: Air inside homes can be five times more polluted than air outside due to lack of air circulation and household toxics. Household dust contains high levels of lead and mercury, some of which is tracked in on our shoes. Solutions include air filters on heating and cooling systems, HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaners, use of non-toxic household products, and leaving your shoes at the door.

• Letters in the daily rag recently have been advocating a tax on bicycles as a way to pay for road improvements. Now hold on a minute! Every time someone rides a bike rather than driving a car, the public saves – less wear and tear on roads (less taxes to fix potholes), less pollution (lower bills for respiratory and other health problems), fewer cars on the road (less gridlock and more parking spaces available), less consumption of gasoline (lower demand and lower prices), less obesity (lower costs for treating its symptoms), etc. Rather than taxing and thereby discouraging bike use, maybe taxpayers should be subsidizing bikers and bike-makers, and encouraging even greater use of eco-friendly transportation.

• Our short news story last week on the upcoming Wesak celebration in Mt. Shasta drew a response from reader Christopher Michaels who tells us Wesak is actually observed at the full moon of Taurus, not Aries. Regardless, full moon is at 3:05 Sunday morning – useful information for those who wish to sit in silence and resonate with the "high point of the spiritual year." The festival lasts 12 hours before and after the exact full moon. Michaels tells us "Through the preservation of an inner quietness and an attitude of focused attention, participants can be swept into this tide of spiritual force and can thereby more fully serve humanity's need." Skeptical? There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

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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