

secretly located in Albany. I can't imagine any more credible explanation.

Larry Koenigsberg
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our bad. See correction in News Briefs last week.

ENDANGERED ACT

The National Endangered Species Act (ESA) is up for renewal, but is being threatened by radical revision. The act has already brought back from near-extinction numerous species whose survival proves the effectiveness of the act. To assure the survival of the Earth as our forefathers knew it (and we discern its threatened future), it is imperative that the act not only be renewed but strengthened.

We and all humankind share the genes of all animate life. Survival of our lives and our children's lives depend upon the vast gene pool of every living creature. The large animals and all people depend upon the diverse nature of all created order, in order to remain a viable human creation. The future of our children requires a sustainable ecology in which all varied animal life is preserved.

The ESA is important existing legislation that underscores these principles.

Doug M. Still
Cottage Grove

LISTEN TO RIDERS

When I called LTD two months ago to report how many bikes were getting turned away on the rural routes to Cottage Grove and Creswell, I was told that the buses were primarily for pedestrian passengers. Riding the bus with 22-plus people standing because the longer buses were not available for the most vulnerable route, I am beginning to wonder exactly what LTD and the buses really are for.

Are they for the transit dreams and plans of the people who work in Glenwood? Do they see their job as what "mass transit should look like," as opposed to the daily conditions working people and families depend on? Is the latter not exciting enough for them? Do they not see the great responsibility they have?

LTD even failed to apprise their own drivers about the construction of the rapid transit, to the tune of many working people in Cottage Grove missing the bus entirely or getting home an hour late. This is already after a long

work day with a long commute tacked on.

Instead of punishing people who commute from the country and clear the streets of hundreds of more cars, LTD should take greater care for their most vulnerable route. Maybe the people making decisions about the buses need a large reality dose. Maybe they can actually start listening to the riders who call them every week, if not every day, about the urgent need for more service to this route.

Kerstin Britz
Cottage Grove

MONEY FLOWS DOWN

Capitalism and the free market make up the best economic system ever. More people get wealthy under this economy than any other. Capitalism is helping the poor of the world by giving them jobs that pay them more than they would otherwise make. It's best for everyone, and should raise all people out of poverty as it spreads worldwide.

We have more wealthy people now than ever. They enjoy a lifestyle unimaginable to kings of the past, and that number is growing.

Capitalism benefits those who are competitive and willing to take risks. Capitalism

allows those capable to get ahead, and in turn, money flows down to many other people who benefit from the wealth others earn. As communities get wealthier, they take better care of the environment because they have more financial resources to do so.

It's mostly a bunch of bullshit! The poor will never be raised out of poverty — there are more people in poverty now than ever after decades of capitalism. Even in America, 90 percent are losing in wealth, while the top 10 percent are getting unsustainably rich. The environment is quickly being polluted and depleted, and other species are going extinct at a phenomenal rate.

We're trying the impossible, and doing more of the same: "Growth is good" will only make our situation worse. If cancer in the human body could speak, it would sound much like the growth advocates above.

We need a more cooperative social and economic system, locally based, that recognizes the very real limits to human growth and consumption. Please, speak out about this. I need your help!

Patrick Bronson
Eugene

viewpoint BY CARMEN URBINA

Looking Through the Glass

Time to examine uncomfortable issues.

Carmen Urbina is a community member, vice-chair of the Eugene Human Rights Commission, and a member of Whiteaker Community Council's Advisory Committee. She spoke about race, class and poverty at the Eugene rally — part of the National Mobilization Against the War in Iraq — Sept. 24. Below is the text of her comments.

Buenas tardes a todos. Good afternoon to all of you.

Thank you, Marion (Malcolm) and to all the folks involved in putting this rally together. I started thinking and talking to folks about this issue and what I found out are several things. People feel uncomfortable speaking about the war — in many respects.

I hear, "What war? We are not in a war. The war ended." It would seem so when in the U.S., in Oregon, in Lane County and in Eugene, our dead soldiers have been placed in the last pages of the newspaper, and of course, if we want to know what is happening to the Iraqi people and their casualties we have to go to foreign newspapers and media.

But then I started talking to folks about poverty and race. Then we absolutely do not want to talk about it. It makes us uncomfortable.

And then I started talking to folks about classism — and this is what I heard: "That only exists in those Third World countries." We are way too sophisticated to endorse classism.

Well folks, please indulge me and take a mental journey with me. I will call it, "The Window." Through this window we are going to explore in the next minute or so the issues of poverty, race and Katrina.

And let's start by quoting two people when they were asked about Katrina. The first one is Michael Brown, former FEMA director, when he found out he didn't have a job. He said, "I'm going to go home and walk my dog and hug my wife, and maybe get a good Mexican meal and stiff margarita and a full night's sleep." Good for him that he could go to such a wonderful place.

Then we have former First Lady Barbara Bush commenting on the refugees in the astrodome: "What I'm hearing, which is sort of scary, is they all want to stay in Texas. Everyone is so overwhelmed by the hospitality. And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were under-privileged anyway, so this is working very well for them," insinuating this was a step up, so it was OK.

Now: Are you still looking through this window — are you with me? Through this window, let's start to look at the issues.

We started seeing some images of white folks carrying food that were actually labeled, "survivors of Katrina carrying food." Then we saw images of African American folks carrying food, and suddenly that is called, "looting." Then we



don't see images of Latinos at all, therefore that population is invisible. What's new?

I ask you: What do we call that?

Now, let's continue looking through this window: In the U.S., the richest country on Earth, we have New Orleans, and why is it looking like a Third World country? How can that be?

We saw, through the disaster of Katrina, communities that were forgotten and invisible with substandard schools, dilapidated housing, inadequate health care, homelessness and hopelessness. We then suddenly started seeing and asking: Who are the poor?

Then we see a nation that as a value system sees folks that live in poverty as being responsible for their own economic woes. And we judge it. We judge poverty as, "It's your fault." We judge. In that same judgment we are ignorant. We hear what our government and leadership wants us to hear with no critical thinking or questions.

We hear that in the U.S., if you are poor, it is because you want to be. We hear of these amazing programs that will help the poor achieve the American dream — a great house, white picket fence, 2.5 children, summer vacations, two cars, etc.

We hear about Social Security and Medicare. "Don't we have those programs to take care of the poor?" Well, reality is that during the last four decades those programs have been totally eliminated, and our elders, our seniors are suffering.

We hear, "Food stamps feed all the hungry." Huh? Reality is that people are hungry and children are hungry. We find children hiding food and milk in the lunch room at the schools so they can have something to eat during the weekend. We have children that are hungry.

We hear "Welfare reform took care of that poverty. Aren't they on welfare? Aren't they taken care of?" But reality is that the welfare reform came to punish the poor. Reality is that we find single moms struggling — working two to three jobs and trying to make ends meet with minimum wage jobs. We find single moms working several jobs, one to pay child care, one to barely pay rent and another one to barely survive.

Now I am checking in with you. Where are we? Are we still looking through the window? Yes, or no? Or did I trick you all and we are now looking at a mirror? Well, I tricked you. We are looking at a mirror. I am sorry to tell you that we are here in Eugene looking at a mirror called poverty and classism in our backyard. Here in beautiful Eugene, Oregon.

To end it, I will leave you with some numbers and a call for action. Childhood in America: One in five children is born poor. One in nine children is born to a teenage mother. One in 146 children will die before his first birthday. One in seven children will never graduate from high school. One in 13 children will be arrested before age 17.

Now the challenge to action. Let's take back our America, for our communities! Let's call our community back and see the values that it has and challenge them. Let's look in our backyard at the homeless situation.

Let's look in our backyards and look at our educational system — the lack of funding — and really see that our generation is letting "the powers that be" commit criminal activities against our children.

Let's look at the lack of mental health services. Let's look at the violations of human rights that happen everyday in our community. Let's look at racism in our community. Let's take action and change it. Without fear.