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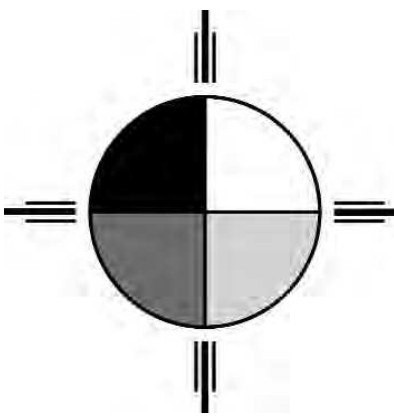
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CRITICAL MESS

Critical Mass does little to further a positive image of bicycling in Eugene. I think it's a great concept, community bicycle rides showing support for practical transportation, bicycle lanes, and freedom from oil. When I rode at Critical Mass in Eugene this is not what I saw. The focal point becomes willingness to run red lights as the mob on wheels asserts right of way in front of death machines (automobiles).

The police have legitimate concern. What if a motorist with a green light kills a straggling bicyclist or swerves into a pedestrian? There would be medical bills, insurance struggles, and psychological distress for everyone involved. Insurance companies would most likely sue the police department for knowing in advance about this heinous risk to life and not acting.

Even though Critical Mass has a great cause, breaking the law in a way that critically endangers yourself and others is both irresponsible and violent. It's no surprise that police give out tickets and "knock down" bicyclists as motorists call 911. For the future of these community bike rides, basic safety will be a focus, either enforced by police or advocated by responsible cyclists. A partnership with the police can be worked out, but you can't expect it to just materialize among violent disregard for human life.

Michael Cleaver
Eugene

A POOR FIT

I've lived in Eugene for all 17 years of my life. I grew up at the Saturday Market and Country Fair, and as I've grown I've been blessed with local businesses like Cozmic Pizza and Sundance. I'm also the daughter of George Smallman, owner of the Keystone Café. I've seen personally how local businesses benefit both consumers and the families involved. I've watched my dad establish lasting relationships with local producers such as Nancy's, Red Barn and Veggies on the Run, and have observed how keeping our economy local has been to the advantage to all participating parties. The Whole Foods project endangers this way of life.

Eugene has an agglomeration of local businesses that work to provide consumers with the best local products available. Businesses like Sundance, The Kiva, New Frontier and The Red Barn work to benefit real people in the Eugene community. These businesses have positive externalities that transcend the obvious. When I was younger, my parents were able to pick me up from school when I was sick, spend time with me when I had adolescent problems, and allowed me to be a part of the community they worked in.

The issue with the Whole Foods project is

not the food they would be selling. I, like any other socially responsible individual, am excited by the idea of a store that sells organic food and natural products. The problem is the invitation of a big corporation into our unique community and the implications it will have on the surrounding area. The parking garage alone will promote more downtown traffic, frivolous slates of concrete, and is a poor and unnecessary use of space.

It's also a violation by the city staff of an unspoken Eugene philosophy. Eugene is a unique, progressive town. Subsidizing a big corporation to develop here strips Eugene of its authenticity and takes us one step closer to being any other city in the U.S. The city staff should instead support the local businesses already in existence.

This is about preserving our uniqueness. This is about supporting our local economy. This is about ensuring that local families, like mine, continue to benefit from local, amiable partnerships and are not threatened by corporations' competitiveness. We are a town of activists, and here is a cause that needs an ample amount of support. Support our local economy, not the Whole Foods project.

Kyra Rose Buckley
Eugene

CHANGE CONGRESS

As good as it was to be with many hundreds of my fellow residents demonstrating our opposition to the war on Iraq and for taking back America, and as encouraging as the fact that, in this time of public apathy, we turned out nearly as many people as L.A. or N.Y., I feel obliged to conclude, with Rep. Peter DeFazio, that the only way forward is through electoral politics.

Much as I dislike the inevitable hypocrisies and ego-inflated campaign organizations, changing the majority in the U.S. House and/or Senate is the necessary precondition for all the other changes we need, necessary but not sufficient.

The active community organizing and incisive humor of groups such as CodePink and WAND, engaging and educating the folks in the middle, is what will make the difference. And it's equally important to get involved in the initiative issues. "Taking back America" means the accomplishment of a whole slew of reforms — health care, immigration policies, campaign financing, restoration of social services savaged by the federal and state fiscal and moral bankruptcy, and more.

There's plenty for anyone to choose among. All the initiative campaigns need all the help they can get. So, just do something.

Paul Prensky
Eugene

BETTER TOBACCO

This letter is in reply to Jennifer Rowan's

WHO YOU GONNA BLAME?

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