

TARGETING THE HOMELESS

Jeff Zekas [Letters, 8/9] denounces the homeless and their sympathizers with the typical bitterness and cynicism of a disillusioned former believer in a cause he's now committed to discrediting. Once, when he "was young and naive," Zekas "felt sorry for these miscreants." Now that he's grown up and wise, he sees that the homeless are in fact "mentally deficient" perpetrators of "theft, assault, and murder."

Zekas tells a story about his vehicle being vandalized and broken into while parked outside Walmart on West 11th. How does Zekas know those responsible were homeless? The perpetrators were more likely *housed* young drug addicts who still have the strength and skill to support their habits by pulling off small crimes. In many years of working with severely addicted and mentally ill homeless people, I can say with confidence most do not have the skill, strength, organization or motivation to support themselves or their habits in this way.

When homeless people do perpetrate violent or otherwise serious crimes, the victims are almost always *other homeless people*. And while some homeless people may be a public nuisance, I'm not aware of one case of a housed person being physically attacked by a homeless person. I'm aware of four cases in recent years of homeless people being killed in Eugene (three of them by housed persons and the other by a fellow homeless person). In two of these cases, housed individuals specifically sought out homeless people to murder. Given a culture that arguably encourages violence against the homeless — with programs such as *Bumfights*, for instance — should anyone be surprised that homeless camps might contain "axes and knives"? The general population is armed for protection; why wouldn't the homeless be, given the likelihood they will be targeted for violence?

One mustn't romanticize the homeless population — which, like the population at large, contains plenty of damaged, maladjusted and, in some cases, predatory individuals — but some facts just can't be ignored: Children account for 38 percent of the total homeless population; 40 percent of homeless men are military veterans; 65 percent of single homeless individuals suffer from addiction; 26 percent of the homeless population suffers from a serious psychiatric disorder; families with children are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population. (Statistics provided by the National Coalition for the Homeless.)

*Brenton Gicker
Eugene*

BLOWING TOXIC SMOKE

The last line of Aaron Dactyl's letter ["Coal Train Hype," 8/2], "I can't wait for the coal train to arrive," shows that he is blowing as much toxic smoke as the coal trains he professes to love.

The fact that coal trains would not pass the UO campus is cold comfort when you consider that the trains will travel south through west Eugene, potentially impacting many local neighborhoods. The trains may sit idling and spewing diesel

fumes in the rail yard before heading west where many people live, work, bike and enjoy the outdoors. With a pound of coal dust flying off each car of a 150-car train over each mile, these trains disperse more toxic debris than any urban community should bear in any part of town.

The west Eugene streets surrounding the railyard may be heavily industrialized, but they are also filled with many homes, as well as schools, playgrounds and businesses. Coal dust, like other pollutants already present in west Eugene, is linked to asthma, emphysema and other respiratory and pulmonary conditions.

Concerns about water quality in the Fern Ridge Reservoir and the Coos Bay ecosystem further emphasize the folly of trading the health of people and the environment across the Northwest to provide coal to the power plants of other countries.

As a society, we are long overdue in realizing that creating jobs is not a carte blanche to generate negative environmental, health and social impacts. We must get Americans back to work with clean energy projects that create jobs.

*Ann Kneeland
Eugene*

TRAIN-HOPPER

I'm writing in response to the letter "Coal Train Hype." The letter [8/2] was authored by one Aaron Dactyl, who states that he "can't wait for the coal trains to arrive." A simple Google search of the author's name reveals why: He is involved in the illegal and dangerous practice of train hopping (see wkly.ws/1c6). No wonder he is so quick to trivialize the health and safety of his fellow citizens and our planet.

I wonder how the residents of Trainsong Neighborhood and River Road area feel about having their lives dismissed so casually, particularly given that west Eugene has some of the worst rates of asthma in the country due to its abhorrent air quality. A 2006 study by the American Lung Association found that Eugene had the seventh-worst air quality in the country. Moreover, simply because the trains will be passing mostly through west Eugene does not mean that fine particulate matter such as coal dust will not be carried into the university district.

This "not-in-my-backyard" reasoning advocated by Dactyl is both unethical and not born out by the facts. The logic behind going after the trains, rather than the port as Dactyl suggests, is simple: Transportation infrastructure is the Achilles heel of the fossil fuel industry. I can't speak for others, but personally I don't appreciate my health being threatened or watching our sacred and living Earth die from climate change so that Dactyl can continue in engage in his allegedly criminal activity.

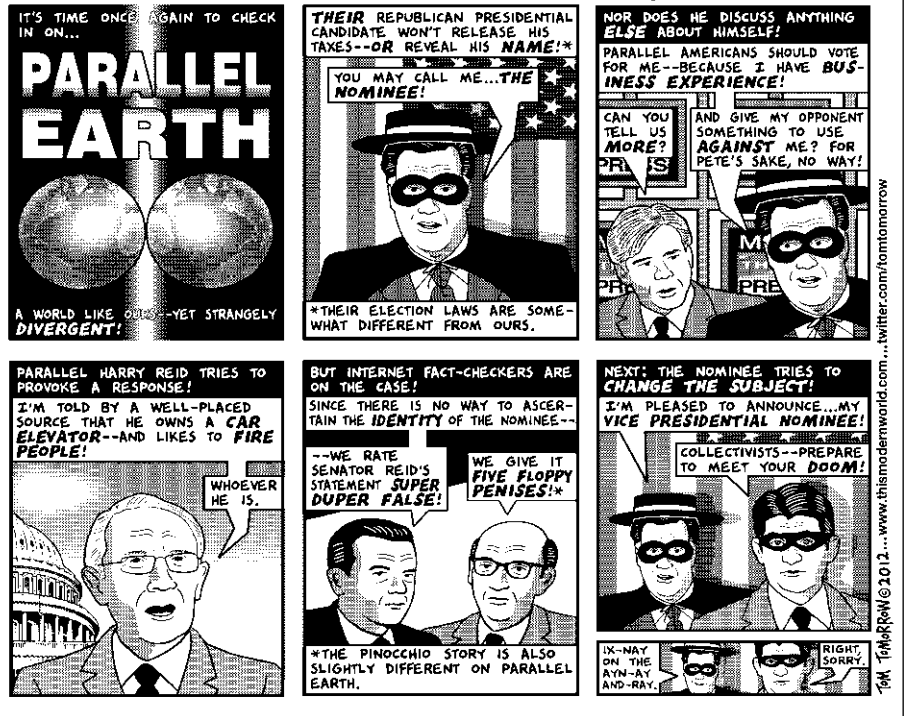
*Sebastian Fourier
Eugene*

BEARDS ON PARADE

The Eugene Celebration is nearly upon us, Aug. 24-26. Also coming is the first and hopefully annual Beard and Moustache Contest and Parade Entry. Being of the bearded persuasion, I am quite excited. We have set the lofty goal of getting 150 folks to march with us in the parade to celebrate Eugene's 150th birthday. I am certain there are

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



far more than 150 hairy folks in our community, but to honor being all-inclusive, we welcome all to march with us with real facial hair or created faux beards! And for fun we also welcome those so inclined to dress up as your favorite hairy/bearded person from history — for example, Abe Lincoln, Walt Whitman, Santa Claus, Eugene Skinner, ZZ Top, the Lorax, you get the idea. Come one come all, make it a bearded family outing.

And no need to be shy as you can cover up with your fake beard, made of felt, tree moss, a mop, New Orleans beads, construction paper.

Applications to enter our contest or sign up for the parade are at Out On A Limb Gallery, 191 E Broadway, 11 am to 5 pm Wednesdays through Sundays, or go to the Eugene Celebration website to download the form. Any questions? My email is rboy@efn.org

Near as I can remember I have not shaved for 13 years; come see me unfurl my twisted beard!

*Tim Boyden
Eugene*

LOVING THE BUNNIES

Saint Francis must be rolling over in his grave. Just when I think I have seen it all with regard to animal cruelty, here is this "rabbit rodeo" [7/26]. Talk about messed up on every level. From teaching children cruelty to terrifying the rabbits to breeding rabbits for such an event — I could go on and on. Shame on the Cottage Grove Riding Club for sponsoring such an event.

Rabbits are not bucking broncos, not that I excuse rodeos of any sort, but come on! Watching hordes of screaming children stampede and dive-bomb shy, gentle bunnies is nauseating. I wept as I watched the video of this atrocious event. Where have all the good cowboys gone? What happened to the lessons taught by Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and the Lone Ranger? These icons of yore taught children to be kind to animals. This Cottage Grove Riding Club must be some sort of degenerate outfit.

I moved to Lane County from rural New Mexico in part because of the relatively enlightened view this area has towards critters. How dismaying to find this in my backyard. I am disgusted. Lane County is

better than this. I suggest the Cottage Grove Riding Club take a page from Michael Vick and admit the error of their ways, evolve and start promoting kindness to animals. Instead of rabbit rodeos, children could tour the Red Barn Rabbit Rescue facility or Greenhill and learn about throwaway, neglected and abused animals and what it takes to keep rabbits properly. There is no shame in being a bunny-hugger.

*Karen DeBraal
Springfield*

LOVING THE WET SPOT

Observing the angry, red national weather map over the course of this summer with its triple-digit temperatures, wet blanket humidity, drought-stricken breadbasket and tornado-spawning thunderstorms, it occurs to this guiltily comfortable Eugene resident that we consistently have the best weather in the country. We are so green, so cool and just so darn conscientious that even climate change can't touch us. "Track Town U.S.A." "A Great City for the Arts and Outdoors." Nah! I've got your slogan right here:

"Cool, Green ... Eugene!" The wet spot on the Left Coast.

*David Perham
Eugene*

TRAGIC NECESSITY

In response to Tamara Barnes' Aug. 2 letter addressing me personally: Every day in the U.S., tens of thousands of puppies and kittens are born. Compare this to the nearly 11,000 human births each day, and it's clear that there can never be enough homes for all these animals. Shelters are stuck with the heartrending job of dealing with animals nobody wants. Those who refuse to spay and neuter their animals, who abandon animals when they grow tired of them and who patronize pet shops instead of adopting stray or shelter animals make euthanasia a tragic necessity.

*Curtis Taylor
Eugene*

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

As most readers are aware, Greenhill Humane Society took over kennel and adoption operations from Lane County Animal Services (LCAS) on July 1. The shelter is in the former LCAS site and has