

SLANT

• **Phil Knight and Nike** are hot topics following revelations about the absurd opulence of the new football facilities at UO. Letters are pouring in to local papers, but we don't hear much about where Knight's billions came from. Nike's business model is quite simple, and Uncle Phil has been brilliant at monetizing it: Contract with factories in the poorest parts of Southeast Asia to manufacture high-end shoes and other apparel and threaten or cajole governments to allow those factories to pay workers less than minimum wages. Some history of how Nike has manipulated poverty wages in third-world countries can be found at the Global Exchange website and elsewhere.

We often hear the excuse that factory work in cities is better than no jobs at all, but it turns out that laboring in village fields and rice paddies with your family at your side can be healthier, mentally and physically, than working long hours in a noisy, hot factory, far from home and exposed to hazardous materials, abusive bosses and pervasive sexual harassment and rape. Meanwhile, we Americans buy Nike

shoes for \$160 and Nike jackets for \$800 while the workers who make them can barely afford plastic flip-flops.

We are reminded of the stunning palaces and cathedrals of Europe that we admire so much, somehow forgetting that they were built by indentured workers, slaves and prisoners and financed with the huge profits that savvy Europeans (the Phil Knights of their day) made from slave labor in Haiti, Cuba and elsewhere in the New World.

• **Curious silence from Johnson Hall**, the UO administration building, regarding the lavish new football "sweatshop" across the river. Considering the national and local publicity, we wonder why President Michael Gottfredson and his press team haven't put out a statement of some kind. After all, Gottfredson is the leader of the University of Oregon/Nike. The Duck stops here.

• **Questions following a political speech** often raise the most pertinent issues, particularly with inquiring Eugene audiences. That's what happened Aug. 9 when Sen. Jeff Merkley spoke on the UO campus. Kate Gessert asked

about climate change. He said Obama should turn down the Keystone project. Jerry Smith asked why the focus is on the middle class when the lower classes and homeless are in more trouble. Merkley agreed. Arnold Ismach asked if shrinking news coverage is part of the problem with the dysfunctional Congress. The senator said the "more fractured and polarized" coverage is a bad development. These questions and many more advanced his opening theme, "The American dream is in trouble."

• **Climate denier, nuke-hugger and Tea-Party darling Art Robinson's** attempts to beat out Rep. Peter DeFazio for his 4th District congressional seat in 2010 and 2012 failed, but somehow the wingnut managed to get himself elected as the Oregon Republican Party's new chairman. We asked DeFazio what he thought of this and he told us, "It's a very sad day for any remaining moderate or traditional conservative Republicans." MSNBC's Rachel Maddow heard about Art Robinson's new leadership post and had some fun this week replaying parts of her outrageous 2010 interview with him. Lots of laughs, but it makes Oregon look bad. See our blog.

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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