

You most likely have heard about the funding cuts our State is making to education. Among other things, school bus routes have been targeted for severe cutbacks. According to a February 9<sup>th</sup> North Coast Journal article by Sean Kearns, about 4,600 students in Humboldt start their day with a bus ride: [I quote] "From Shelter Cove to Pecwan, along the seams of river valleys and coastal plains, drivers of the roughly 100 buses in the county's 29 school districts retrace routes a few hundred times a year. Collectively covering more than a million miles annually on county roads and highways, the bus routes run like threads through the swaths of stretched out geography." End quote. Apparently, in mid-December a nearly 250 million dollar mid-year reduction in state school transportation funds suddenly took half of what districts in California were planning to spend on busing. That ~~cost~~ cost Humboldt about 2 million dollars. Rural communities are especially hurting from this cutback—no surprise because it costs a lot more to transport a kid from Shelter Cove to South Fork or Pecwan to Hoopa than ~~at all~~ <sup>at all or two</sup> in a big city.

In mid January a delegation from Southern Humboldt made national news by traveling to Sacramento to protest the loss of school bus service from remote areas like <sup>Shelter Cove</sup> Humboldt. Like a good politician, Wes Chesbro expressed ~~some~~ sympathy, and even Governor Jerry Brown seems to have backed down-- for now; but ~~the~~ next year's budget is likely to restore the cuts.

I do think it is a serious problem if kids can't get to school, ~~and~~ I also think our priorities are pretty foolish if we can pay for prisons and pensions, but not schools. Nevertheless, the bigger problem is one that is taking place around the globe, from Europe to Washington, from Sacramento to Humboldt, we are seeing the financial collapse of governments, because the number of people taking *out* of the government till are greater than those putting *in*. Something has to give, because governments sooner or later have to balance their budgets even if they often have ~~very~~ large lines of credit. People like Warren Buffet are screaming that the ~~the~~ upper 1% should pay more ~~in~~ taxes. I agree, and that spawns and idea.

Since the state government is broke, and many of the people in southern Humboldt pay no taxes on their primary cash crop, why don't *they* pass the hat and help pay for ~~a~~ reliable ~~transportation~~ transportation for their kids to get to school. After all, from what I hear about their income, the growers are most likely in the upper 1%, and most of them pay even lower taxes than Mitt Romney. So, how about it? A gesture of public-mindedness would --well, it would serve the community, and help the kids from remote areas get a ride to school.

Barring the benevolence of the local growers, ~~like it or not~~, it will be increasingly up to the parents to see that their kids get educated. Governments are broke and gasoline is skyrocketing toward \$5/ gallon. So, some parents who live in remote areas may want to home school; others may have to buy Jr. a motor scooter. Others will perhaps be paying a portion of the 1400-1500 dollars per year it costs taxpayers to bus Jr. to and from school.

In spite of all the complaints about the cost of education, the middle class has been remarkably resourceful at finding a way to educate their kids and get them on their way to fulfilling the American dream. As for the poor kids: I have no idea what will happen to them, but I fear for them and their future.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment