Oregon Daily
EMERALD

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Special Privilege Myth

Living organizations want a tax "exemption," so the legend goes. Despite the fact that this "personal" property tax has never before been paid by such groups and that homeowers do not pay such a tax, this is an "exemption" bill. And because the word "exemption" suggests some special privilege being sought, living organizations are now on trial.

The Emerald here suggests that this bill does not seek a special privilege, and that its major weakness is that it does not go far enough. It would be more appropriate to ask why such living organizations should pay a full share of "real" property taxes, for which its members receive few benefits. None of this tax money goes to the state of Oregon, which is generously subsidizing our educations, or to the federal government. Every penny goes to local government, predominantly to the city of Eugene, Lane County, and the Eugene School District.

Now what does the living organization member, who probably can't even vote, get for his tax dollar? He has no children being educated in the expensive Eugene public school system. He can go through four years of the University and hardly know the city exists around him, aside from an occasional fling on Willamette Street, for which he amply pays. He is not on the county relief rolls. It is true that he gets fire protection, use of city water and sewage systems and the city streets. He gets police protection, but houses which get robbed almost weekly don't place too much value on this. And the city has its traffic meters hungrily operating in front of our Student Union.

What does the average Eugene homeowner get for his tax dollar — one that is proportionately smaller because he pays no "personal" property tax? He gets the benefit of all the services which his city, county and school district provide — and if they're of no benefit he can vote against them. He probably has two childen in the public schools. And because he is a permanent resident of the city and has an investment here, he has a monetary and sentimental interest in the progress of Eugene.

While we pay both personal and real property taxes, Eugene homeowners who get much more benefit from the government services pay only the latter. Does this describe a situation of tax equity?

We suspect that if an economist studied the situation, based on the principle of equity, he'd find we should be paying a 50 per cent "real" property tax, instead of 100 per cent plus a "personal" property tax to boot.

This is not a crusade for fair treatment at the hands of local government, although we think this would be in order. It is merely exploding the great myth which underlies recent criticism of this tax bill. It is obvious that living organizations are not seeking a special privilege, and thus the very significant issue of Greek racial discrimination is not of much relevance to this particular discussion.

If this tax "exemption" bill passes, we will continue to be a gold mine for local government — not to be confused with state government, to which we owe our subsidized education.

Irrelevant, but Worth Discussing

Deferred living---the policy by which all freshmen live in dormitories instead of moving directly into houses---was resurrected the other day in Salem. One legislator investigating the various aspect of the living organization tax bill seemed to think deferred living proved that the University was hostile to the Greek system. What relevance this had to the tax bill is hard to imagine, but at any rate the issue is worth discussing. But not for long.

So the University administration is anti-Greek? Most bitterly attacked was Director of Student Affairs, Donald DuShane, who is a national officer of Phi Delta Theta. The "DuShane Plan," deferred living, was strongly defended at the hearing by IFC President Don McClain. And in this we are sure he would have the support of most Greeks, who while recognizing certain organizational problems nevertheless appreciate the experience of having lived for a year in the freshman dorms. And McClain represented an organization that has been given sole authority by the University to set the time of men's Rush Week---a decision which affects many outside the present Greek system, and one which presumably should be made on the basis of the welfare of ALL concerned.

And where was this official anti-Greek attitude when it was decided to make Earl Hall a freshman dormitory? The administration could have easily justified a decision making the new dormitory an upperclass dorm — as a reward for seniority. By doing so the Greek system would have had powerful new competition, for the prospective rushee would then know he could move into a fine new dorm his sophomore year by remaining independent.

Don't misunderstand The Emerald's point. We're not saying the administration was wrong. It owes much to the Greek system, which provides housing which would cost many millions of dollars for the state to replace. And the Greeks, or at least living organizations generally, provide the backbone of almost every student-activity which is meant to serve the interests of the whole University. We refer to such activities as Duck Preview, Homecoming, the Canoe Fete, and on and on.

The point is merely this. Anyone who attempts to discover a generally anti-Greek attitude in the administration is wasting his time. He should direct his witch-hunting talents at more vulnerable targets.

Tact to the Wall

"HEY, FELLAS! COME SEE WORTHAL'S NEW PIN-UP."

From the Squirrel Cage

Brittsan Invites Comment About Tax Bill 'Issue'

By DARREL BRITTSAN
ASUO President

Action on a bill before the House Taxation Committee will probably be taken this week. This bill is designed to exempt campus living groups from personal property taxes, and it would affect about 50 per cent of our undergraduate student body.

Since this bill does affect such a significant number of students, I felt that, as the ASUO representative, I should attend the Committee's public hearing on the measure last week.

However, the delegation which attended the committee hearing had a big surprise in store for them. This was the issue of discrimination. In their preliminary meetings on and in many discussions about tax exemption this problem was not mentioned as a probable argument against the bill.

Although many persons consider discrimination to be a minor issue in this connection, it was the issue which received the most publicity. This is not saying that discrimination is not important, and that we should forget that the issue was ever raised. It is saying that, compared to the other issues, it is of minor importance in this particular tax consideration.

However, the tax committee was presented with many impressive statistics showing that Oregon fraternal groups are eliminating discriminatory restrictions. It was also stated, as a matter of opinion, that students on our campus are largely against discrimination.

Yet with all this evidence the facts are that unfortunately very few non-Caucasians live in these fraternal groups. We will always have such discrimination as long as we have people who discriminate. We must realize that a very few individuals in such organizations can make them entirely discriminatory regardless of their written laws or the views of the others.

Also, the committee was told that there is not a big problem with discrimination on our campus. This statement was based on personal experience and the fact that there has never been any campus issue over discrimination. This does not say that we have absolutely no problem. Rather it is a relative statement comparing our campus to others throughout the United States.

Now, why is this issue said to be minor or irrelevant in this connection. The most significant reason is that such campus living groups consider themselves to be "homes away from home," not profit-making hotels.

Private homeowners do not pay personal property tax. Why should the struggling college student who is also trying to collectively maintain a home be subjected to this additional burden? Private homes aren't divided into those which discriminate and those which don't for tax purposes; why should campus living groups?

I hope that this will add to the general understanding of this taxation issue, and I would appreciate hearing your comments to better enable me to ascertain the campus sentiment.

Letters to the Editor

Emerald Editor:

The writers of the four letters in Tuesday's Emerald had one very clear point to make, although none of them said it in so many words.

That is: they are opposed to self functioning and self-supporting fraternal groups allowing the majority of the members of their organizations to choose whomever they please to live with. As fraternal groups and co-ops are now paying a very stiff property tax, the tax issue was nothing but a feeble excuse to present these opinions.

What the DU's and TKE's do is nice. So, also, is what any other fraternity, sorority, or co-op chooses to do. If they desire to exclude anyone from membership on any grounds, this is their concern and theirs alone.

You people who are discontent—why don't you form your own fraternities or sororities, with your own rules, and forever stop trying to destroy and

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