

Ron Eachus

Band-aids or ballot box surgery?

The youth vote obviously had a crucial effect on last week's cigarette tax election, but the effect the election had on the young electorate may be even more important to the state.

The tax election did little more than show that youth can make a difference in state and local elections. That in itself may send many a politician after upset stomach remedies. However, those seeking a trend in how youth would vote can't get much from analyzing the tax vote.

For youth, the election was like a pre-season workout for rookies hurriedly recruited in a last minute registration drive. Youth helped apply the band-aid to the state's revenue problems but it remains to be seen whether or not they understand the nature of the injury.

In the first place, the election was a threat. Pass the tax or have public agencies cut 2 per cent. It was the consequence of a poor job of tax reform, or

rather a job of no tax reform, by the legislature. It was the kind of election that has a voter arguing for one side until election day when he votes the other way. No one's satisfied. It's a tax that had both sides agreeing on one thing: it's a bad tax.

The tax itself is a discriminatory sales tax that's regressive as all sales taxes are. What's more it's a tax on what for many is a habit. And it's a tax for revenue only, not for reform that's badly needed.

Apparently youth, supposedly of liberal persuasion, found the alternatives even worse. The possibility of another tuition hike and cuts in educational budgets if the tax failed were undoubtedly a dominant factor. Concern for social and environmental programs were a reason too.

Sure there was a possibility the legislature would meet again in special session but it would have never dealt with tax reform, only budget cutting. Sure, if selective cuts were made the elderly, the property owner, the mental health,

welfare and environmental programs wouldn't necessarily have to suffer. Who has that much faith in the legislature though?

Consequently, the areas with high youth registration overwhelmingly passed the tax and the State has \$17 million it wasn't sure of.

And now it has an electorate interested in taxes.

More than anything else the cigarette tax election may have served to make the youth vote more aware of taxation as the state's major problem. After the legislative fiasco that led to the tax and the ensuing debate, youth should certainly be more educated about Oregon's tax methods and burdens.

They should also have a greater empathy for other taxpayers in the state who turn down school budgets because that's the only chance they have to vote on their taxes. Like them, students turned out to vote on somethings they usually are

powerless on—tuition hikes.

If young people's concern for education and social welfare, and their own pocketbook, is turned into a commitment for real tax reform their force can again be a determining factor in electing legislators who will produce that reform.

Already the need for that commitment is becoming obvious. Gov. Tom McCall has begun a study group on reform and according to the Eugene Register Guard further selective sales taxes will be considered. McCall has also favored a lottery. Both are regressive and both do not confront the need for progressive taxation that puts greater burden on those who can afford it.

Youth will have another chance to vote on the direction of taxation in November, this time without such a threatening situation. The experience of last week's election may have provided basis for youth to move from band-aids to some real ballot box surgery.

Letters

OSPIRG reply

I do not wish to dignify the allegations made by SIR and YAF (regarding OSPIRG) with this letter. However, I think that they have made some rather unfair and unfounded allegations that call for a reply so that fair-minded students can make rational decisions.

While the entire OSPIRG organization at all the campuses made 4843 refunds, at the University of Oregon there were only 524 refunds made—that amounts to only 3.6 per cent of U of O's student body. Like all the other 32 groups that use ASUO incidental fee funds, OSPIRG is budgeted a certain amount of money—this year it will amount to somewhat less than \$1 per student per term. Unlike other ASUO funded groups, OSPIRG allows those who do not wish to support it's programs to get their money back.

While the late Justice Black did make the statement attributed to him by SIR-YAF regarding 1st Amendment rights—anyone who has read the first Amendment knows that it does not apply to OSPIRG's funding procedure—nor does Justice Black's statement address itself to OSPIRG. OSPIRG definitely supports the rights of freedom of religion, speech and the press. Through our public hearings we support the right to peaceably assemble. And as for the right to petition—that is exactly how OSPIRG was originated—by a

majority of the students petitioning to support OSPIRG and it's funding procedure. The inference of some judicial decision by Justice Black regarding OSPIRG is an unfortunate twisting of the late Justice's words, as well as being completely fallacious.

Finally, the serious charge of "extortion" implied by the name of one of the groups connected with YAF and SIR is nothing but irresponsible. Such loaded language does sometimes stir emotions, but does little to clarify an issue.

Michael Dotten
U of O OSPIRG Board Chairman

OSPIRG reply

In their dubious campaign to free the university population from its intellectual enslavement by the Left, the Young Americans for Freedom have occasionally (though not often) stumbled into noteworthy courses of action.

Thursday's advertisement campaign against OSPIRG, however, was not one of them.

First was quoted a single paragraph, from some unknown source, concerning an unmentioned topic. Then, through some process known only to YAF and to God, this was implied to mean that by democratically electing an organization onto campus, and approving, by vote, its

method of fund raising, the University of Oregon student body had sold its precious freedoms into irretrievable tyranny.

Bull.

Ayn Rand would blush to read such an ad. Not only was it crude, rude and abrupt, but it was intellectually dishonest. It was a distortion of fact. It was an appeal to emotion rather than reason. In short, it was highly reminiscent of the New Lefty type of propaganda I thought YAF rejected.

Come on, YAF. Redeem yourselves. You can do better than this.

David Morrissey
Political Science

No representation

The guardians of our student fees, those who have been elected to represent the student body, are not doing just that. In the first place they have no idea how they were elected or by whom. Never have I seen or heard of a senator asking any students how they feel about certain issues or even actually trying to find those students who elected him. Clearly part of this is the fault of our present system of electing senators and more clearly it is the fault of the senators. In certain instances you may find a poll being taken to find "where the masses of students are today" but these polls are organized in such a fashion that it

would take a political scientist just to answer them with any inclination of what information our senators were trying to get. One classic example is the ballot taken last spring concerning reapportionment according to academic major.

Secondly even when a student is concerned enough to ask a senator to explain his views on a current issue he is immediately turned off with a curt and typically evasive answer which could be literally translated as "bugger off peon, I know what I'm doing so don't get involved or too concerned."

Wednesday an open meeting was held concerning reapportionment. The whole meeting was a total waste because it merely developed into a head-butting session over the various proposals. Due to the Wednesday meeting it became clear that there is no hope for equal reapportionment especially when the senators spend their time on criticism rather than cooperation.

Our senators look at the amounts of people turning out at the University ballots and merely say that the students are uninterested in the ASUO government anyway. How can there be any interest if the students only vote for the best letter to the Emerald editor and then never see who was elected. Most of the issues before the ASUO government are not even presented to the students unless the student makes a special effort to search out where and when the various meetings are being held.

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The whole point being that why must the senate spend X hours discussing reapportionment or any such issue when 1) they don't know how the students feel, 2) they don't really care how the students feel, 3) they don't know who has elected them, 4) etc., etc., etc. I, myself question the validity or justification for even having a senate when they are in fact invisible.

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Senior Sociology

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OSPIRG

THE NATIVES ARE A BIT RESTLESS
THEY'RE NOT ALONE!



TOGETHERNESS