

OSPIRG accountability: a tale of good and evil

In the beginning, as some of the older students will remember, all was Darkness. Since then, to make a long story short, the Forces of Light have triumphed.

I have seen it all with my own eyes. In the fall of 1970, Ralph Nader came to town, and I went to hear him speak. It was the turning point. He brought a lantern to students oppressed by a society that sells them watered-down orange juice; brought a flaming torch to an ASUO previously resolved to hold down incidental fees. A packed McArthur Court cheered him with one voice when he proclaimed that "100,000 public service lawyers" was the *sine qua non* of the society. Although I was then pre-med, I cheered too, in hopeful anticipation of my new, increased consumer purchasing power.

A new organization, called OPIRG at the time, was proposed. A petition with accompanying *raison d'etre* was distributed:

"...the 'free market' economy and the 'adversary legal system' are myths that have little if anything to do with the true balance of power in America today. Large corporations and government bureaucracies (!) wield an overwhelming share of the political and economic influence in what some would call our 'democratic system' ... we are aware of this imbalance and are trying to even the odds..." It was an ominous and powerful statement, exploding more myths with quotation marks than an *Emerald* editorial about freedom of choice. 7,744 people signed the petition, and — it seems like only yesterday — OSPIRG was born.

The *Emerald* predicted that "the effect of such

an organization would be nothing short of revolutionary." Apparently so. I remember seeing a Portland State University poll recently that said about 90 per cent of their students approve OSPIRG. I would expect a similar percentage here.

But I still sit in Darkness. I and the 10 per cent or so of the students who disapprove. What cynics! What atheists! But let's try to understand these anti-OSPIRG weirdos. Most of them don't have any friends. Nobody thinks fondly of them. Nobody says hi to them on the street. They brood a lot.

I myself brood mostly about the lettuce controversy, a little bit every day. Recently, though, I've tried to broaden my interests. I've compiled a list of ten consumer complaints I have that OSPIRG hasn't rectified since requisitioning \$13 of my money in the past four and half years. Read on.

1) Bic pens don't "write first time every time." As a matter of fact, they usually clog up still half full of ink. This bugs me to no end.

2) Blue jeans pockets get holes in them after a couple weeks of normal use.

3) Someone left the tip of our *Van Morrison Live* record sticking out of the album, and the sun warped it. There was weeping and wailing in the Sylwester house that night. But why doesn't somebody invent a process to straighten out a little warp like that or make records warp proof? I exchange records with a girl in Poland, and her records are twice as thick as ours.

4) The EMU doesn't have a TV room any more.

5) The PE department's jocks (the underclothes) don't even serve the function of regular jock

straps, which, by the way, is no function anyway.

6) Having the Dairy Queen sell scrambled-eggs breakfasts is as kitsch as making Independence Hall into an insurance company.

7) The *Emerald* doesn't print as many letters as it used to. This struck me in particular when I was reading through old issues doing research for my mudraking series, which will shake this campus to its ankle bones when I finally write it. Youse guys ain't seen nothing yet.

8) My bicycle's gear ratio is too low — girls' stuff. Why should we studs with diesel piston legs have to pay extra to increase the gear ratio?

9) I read somewhere that a guy in Texas invented a pollutionless car that runs on sea water and that the giant auto and petroleum corporations bought the patent and suppressed the discovery. Why didn't OSPIRG ever investigate this?

10) We have financial disclosure laws for politicians, so why not "politics disclosure laws" that would require them to reveal the stands on the issues?

OSPIRG is supposed to help me get my money's worth. If we should call to account a toothpaste company that promises to revolutionize our sex lives (the bitterest disappointment of them all), shouldn't we also call to account a mandatory political organization that promises to revolutionize our consumer power? I haven't even evened my odds.

Mike Sylwester, a graduate student in Slavic languages, is an amateur ASUOologist

Letters

Editorial condescension

I was astounded and appalled at the editorial in Wednesday's *Emerald* on the impending OSEA strike. Its essential point seemed to be that classified employees should not join the strike because it might disrupt the end of spring term. The writer showed absolutely no concern and less understanding of the issues involved in the strike, issues which, if they concerned people in Alabama or Southeast Asia, would have elicited rhetoric purple enough to hem an emperor's toga. The editorial expressed only a slightly nervous condescension toward the people who keep the university operating. It was as if student's convenience were a more serious matter than the very real economic inequities under which state employees labor.

How can students be so small-minded, so provincial as to offer delayed grade reports as a reason for hundreds of people to continue to accept substandard wages in a time of frighteningly rapid inflation? Worse, how could the writer presume to direct university employees not to join their fellows in the strike if it happens? He/she seemed to feel that classified employees should be more concerned with the smooth completion of the spring term schedule than with their own straitened circumstances and the apparent indifference of the executive department of the state to the recommendations of the impartial fact-finding panel!

There are many serious questions to be considered in the possibility of a strike by university employees. Recent statements by faculty members have shown some cognizance of these and some sympathy for the classified workers. That the student voice can only whimper, "Don't interrupt me, I'm studying" is a sorry testimony to the efficacy of a liberal education.

Roberta. M. Taussig
Research assistant,
Center on Human Development

Necessary precondition

It is my understanding that the ASUO Executive has recommended zero funding for the University of Oregon Day Care Center for 1975-76. I understand further that the center's services are absolutely essential to a minimum of 78 low-income and working students, and that if such services are not provided, a majority of these students will be forced to drop out of school. It is also my understanding that many of these students will be forced to seek "wel-



'SHE'S THE RIGHT HEIGHT, SHE'S FEMALE AND SHE'S CAUCASIAN — BUT PATTY HEARST SHE AIN'T!'

fare", as without childcare it is impossible for them to work. It is ironic that an administration which has in good faith attempted not to discriminate "on the basis of race, sex, religious preference, sexual orientation, disability, or other", has proposed an action which discriminates in the concrete against many women students who have children and are single (not to mention single male parents or two-parent families in which both parents are students or workers). If the university is moving into a "no-growth" situation, then given our current constraints, some prioritization of needs is necessary. What are the effects, however, of a "steady state" which freezes opportunity? What is the human cost if budget priorities effectively restrict participation on the basis of ability to pay? Is this not a form of discrimination as pernicious as any other?

For many students, day care is no luxury, but a *necessary precondition* for continued enrollment. How many other programs can claim to affect so vitally a student's life chances? How many other programs are so crucial in guaranteeing that discrimination against working parents, single parents, women, and low-income parents is addressed? To be sure, this is a small step, but a very real step nonetheless.

I urge that the ASUO Executive recon-

sider its decision, and that the IFC recommend funding at the level requested.

Gary Kim
Asian American Student Union

Child care top priority

The collapse of the ASUO Childcare and Development Center is virtually inevitable unless the IFC supports its budget request. During the past year, state and federal funds through the 4C's and Children's Services programs have dwindled. In the face of this loss of funding, not only have Robert Liberty and members of the IFC indicated that they will not support an increase in ASUO funding of the childcare center, but also that all present funding might be eliminated in an attempt to economize.

The ASUO Childcare and Development Center now serves mainly poor students who, without the center, would not be able to attend school. Approximately half of the families served are single parent families headed by women. If the university supports equal opportunity to an education for the poor, minorities, and women (as I feel it should) then funding of childcare should be a top priority.

Please express your opinions on this

issue to Robert Liberty, ASUO president, and the Incidental Fee Committee. This issue is not a matter of funding plush, luxury programs. The outcome will affect our futures and the futures of our children.

Susan Swanberg
Senior, Psychology

Boycotters not vandals

I was working at the Boycott table on the morning of Tuesday, April 8, the morning of the discovery of the damaged locks on Johnson Hall. Randy Shilts, of the *Emerald* staff, came in for a coffee break and told us he's been anonymously contacted by phone as to "a good story at Johnson Hall." He had rushed right over to cover it, and found the situation with the damaged locks, which had been discovered by Campus Security. Randy's story was the first time we had ever heard of the incident at Johnson Hall. Those of us at the table were surprised, and also concerned at the existence of provocateur tactics against the boycott. The UFW Solidarity Committee had nothing to do with the recent cases of vandalism on campus.

Anne M. Korn
Biology (GS)