

# Letters

## Can't say

Regarding the opening statement of Bob Welch's January 9, 1976, write-up on the UCLA-Oregon game. I really don't think that Bob Welch can say that Rickey Lee would have made that same shot that Mike Drummond missed. I feel that a shot like that is mostly luck, and the statement made Drummond appear to be lacking in the skill to have made the shot. Mike Drummond is an "all out" basket player and I would like to see an apology to Mike for that statement. Also, I'd like to say "Great game Ducks!"

Shirley K. Trimble  
Staff, Biology Dept.

## Desperate poet

My name is Butch Bailey. I am presently incarcerated at the U.S. prison on McNeil Island in the state of Washington. I am 28 years old, Black and born under the sign of Aquarius. In addition, I am five foot, ten inches tall, 169 pounds. My eyes are brown and my hair is black. I also wear a

beard. I hail from Washington D.C.

I am writing this letter in hopes that your paper will publish my name stating that I am a prisoner desiring correspondence with any young lady at the University of Oregon. I am a lonely dude from the east coast. I am desperate for outside female communication. Since my imprisonment (over four years), I have been totally rejected by all whom I once considered friends, loved ones and family. So in my desperation, I am appealing to you to assist and help me hold fast to the reality of the outside life.

If it bears any significance, I am a poet. I have been writing for the past ten years. If any female would like to read some of my many poems, I am willing to share them.

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## Support needed

The future of student-faculty influence over policy determining

the usage of Mac Court will be decided this Wednesday at 3:30 p.m. in 150 Science. Our proposal for a Mac Court Board deserves and needs your support.

A student-faculty board would be representative of the desires of the University Community. It would allow students to be represented in policy decisions about how Mac Court should be used

and for whom. If our proposal is to succeed we will need the help of concerned students and the support and votes of faculty members.

We need students to speak to faculty about the proposal. This effort is being organized at the ASUO Offices.

Earlier this year I assembled

many interesting documents and a history of Mac Court. I encourage interested individuals to visit Don Chalmers or myself at the Incidental Fee Committee office in Suite 5 of the EMU and look at these materials.

Dave Donley  
Co-sponsor  
Mac Court Board proposal



## opinion

# Change advocated

*Editor's note: The following opinion by State Representative David Frohnmayer, Republican, District 40, advocating a proposed primary election registration change, was solicited by the Emerald. The Emerald also solicited an opinion opposing the proposed change from James Klonoski, chairman, Democratic Party of Oregon. Mr. Klonoski's opinion will be published in tomorrow's Emerald.*

The 1975 legislative majority—under the last minute pressures of state Democratic party leaders—narrowly defeated a popular open primary bill. In such a proposed primary, all voters, regardless of partisan registration, could participate in nominating the full range of public officials who govern us.

Today, you can vote only for nominees in one party. If you are an Independent there is no opportunity at all to select final contenders for the November ballot. If you live in a one-party legislative district, you have no alternative to the person nominated by the dominant party.

Over 11 per cent of all members of the 1975 legislature were elected without opposition in the general election. The primary, in effect, became the general election. Members of the minority party, as well as independents, were not able to participate in the election process that chose their public official. In theory (and in some cases in reality) a bare plurality within one party controlled the outcome.

Primaries should serve all the people, not just a few politicians or one party. That is why I support the recent initiative proposal to establish an open primary for Oregon. The reasons are compelling.

Participation in the political process is at an historic low. We should encourage rather than discourage avenues for citizen involvement. The straight-jacket of major party allegiance should not be required for access to the franchise.

In Oregon, over 62,000 Independents today are denied participation in a vital part of our system unless they register—against their will—in one of two political parties. In the most fundamental sense, that is unfair.

Oregonians, more than other modern Americans, have a tradition of independence in voting. But even national polls indicate that 40 per cent of the electorate would prefer to register "Independent" if given a choice. More revealing, a clear majority of today's youth (54 per cent in a national survey) would prefer to register Independent. Regrettably, the unresponsive

conduct of both major parties has supplied them ample justification.

Oregon's two major parties do not pay the cost of our present primary elections—all the taxpayers do. Oregon Secretary of State Clay Myers, longtime advocate of election law reform and a principal architect of the open primary proposal, put it accurately: "State laws and taxpayers' dollars should serve all the citizens—the individual voters and their preferences—rather than being the tool of politicians or political managers." As former Gov. Tom McCall said, since primaries are "not the property of the parties, why, then, should they be allowed to keep it as sort of a 'closed corporation'?"

Public support for the "open primary" proposal is hardly partisan. The open primary is supported by nearly nine out of ten of all Oregon citizens and by Democrats even more strongly than Republicans. A Bardsley poll in the spring of 1975 showed 86 per cent of all Oregonians wanted an open primary—only 10 per cent were opposed and a very small four per cent were undecided. This strong support comes from 88 per cent of the Democrats, 83 per cent of the Republicans and nearly 100 per cent of the presently disenfranchised "Independent" and "miscellaneous" registered voters. The poll was no phony. Its results were confirmed by an independent poll of the respected Oregon Research Institute released in December, 1975. The ORI poll also revealed an overwhelming 83 per cent endorsement for the open primary.

The "Open Primary" initiative has enthusiastic Republican support, to be sure, led by Tom McCall. But among other sponsors are the respected Independent, Senator Chuck Hanlon, and the young Democratic State Senator from Ashland, Len Hannon. In a recent appearance at the University of Oregon law school, Oregon's articulate and versatile State Treasurer Jim Redden also endorsed the concept. As a leading contender for the Democratic nomination for Attorney General, Redden has hardly forged a political reputation as an apologist for the GOP. He nonetheless endorsed the open primary in which voters could cross party lines "to increase voter interest and participation in the primaries." Veteran Democratic State Representative Al Densmore, a thoughtful and principled leader currently seeking his party's nomination for Secretary of State fought repeatedly during the 1975 legislature for a more limited version of the open primary. Regrettably, opposition from a few leaders of his own

party successfully thwarted Densmore's nonpartisan reforms.

A few voices have urged opposition to the open primary. The arguments are clothed in political theories of high principle with exaggerated rhetorical flourishes about "party government" and "political responsibility." But what are the realities?

Most revealing was the candid statement made to me just prior to debate on this subject in the 1975 legislature. A Democratic legislator described his off-the-record opposition to the open primary in this way: "I learned it in the armed services. When they're down, keep your foot on their neck."

As a statement of tactics to ensure one-party domination, the observation is astute. But I suspect admirers of Oregon's tradition of representation in the public interest will judge it harshly.

Apologists for "party government" must establish that party government even exists in the form contemplated by their theories. And it does not. The villain in the piece, if any, is not the open primary, but the primary itself—which long since has prevented elite party bosses from selecting candidates for the organization.

Consider, too, what in reality happens to party platforms. The most volatile issue in the 1975 legislature was whether the ban on open field burning—a major source of air pollution—should be postponed. Both the Democratic pre-primary and Democratic general election party platforms contained public planks explicitly opposing extension. And a legislature controlled in both houses by the heaviest margin of Democratic legislators in decades thereupon voted for a three year extension. Party government? Adherence to platform? The facts speak for themselves.

Opponents argue—in a speculatively cynical view of the electorate—that the open primary will encourage "raiding" or sabotage by members of the opposite party. There is little, if any, empirical evidence for this spectre. The late eminent political scientist V. O. Key candidly admitted how little is known empirically about the real effects of a blanket open primary. Observers of the State of Washington, which has operated happily under an open primary for years, feel that the party system is stronger in that state than in Oregon. Two decades ago, political scientist Daniel Ogden surveyed the Washington experience. Contrary to the then-prevailing "conventional wisdom" among political scientists, he observed in most races a "striking

pattern of party regularity." In fact, he argued that by permitting voters to leave their own party for one office only, instead of obliging them to cross over for the entire slate, the blanket primary actually contributed to party regularity! Clearly, he argued, a new evaluation is needed, since Washington's experience "does not substantiate the criticisms that have been made. Party organization and consistent party support have not been destroyed."

Other studies of political sociology also tend to discredit the speculative "raiding" argument. The cross over voters (as is evidenced in the case of Alaska Gov. Jay Hammond) vote for the candidate of their choice, whom they continue to support in the general election.

If you harbor questions about our political system, ask how often our party system, as presently constituted, has really recruited and put forward the best leaders for our government. Compare—in a bicentennial year—the brilliant creativity of the leaders of the American Revolutionary era and ask why their colonial society of two and a half million (almost precisely the population of present day Oregon) was so much more successful in advancing leaders of talent and vision. Heed again the warning against the dangers of "faction" penned in the "Federalist Papers" by that perceptive architect of the American Constitution, James Madison.

Consider too, Tom McCall, a governor whom I once heard Jim Klonoski himself wistfully describe as the uncanny embodiment of Rousseau's "general will." McCall possesses his extraordinary appeal and credibility in major part because he does not hesitate to cross a party line for a good idea and because he genuinely detests what he aptly terms "sniveling partisanship."

No reform is without its risks. But any political system which insists on locking out increasing numbers of independent-minded citizens, and which frustrates the traditional and justified instincts of Oregonians to vote for persons rather than parties is in need of reform.

The open primary initiative does not lock that concept into the Oregon Constitution. If it fails to live up to expectations it can be altered by legislative action. The time has come to put the public interest above partisanship. In the interests of citizen participation and involvement in our governmental process, the experiment is worth our endorsement.