

Letters

Please stop

Please stop your sexist policies in the writing of your newspaper articles. It is not only disgusting, but also ridiculous to find this newspaper referring to "him and he," rather than using a unisexual term, when one considers that 51 per cent of the population is comprised of women. Perhaps you could use him-her and s-he instead? It should not be too much of a strain for you to make this concession and it would make the female half of those who support your paper feel a little more included in it.

Mary Duhaime
English

Editor's note: It has been the Emerald's policy for several years to conscientiously and consis-

tently substitute non-sexist pronouns and references whenever possible without distorting the language of the sentence.

Letters policy

The *Emerald* will accept and try to print all letters containing fair comment on ideas and topics of concern or interest to the University community.

Because of space limitations, letters must be no more than 200 words, typed, triple-spaced, dated and signed. The writer's major and class standing should also be indicated. No unsigned letters will be published.

Longer opinion columns will be published whenever possible after being submitted to the editorial page editor. The limit on opinion columns is 800 words, using the same format as letters.



The *Emerald* will not be responsible for the return of letters or opinion columns. Opinion writers are advised that the opinion

should address itself to specific issues or events. The scope of the opinion should be broad in nature and not personal.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit submitted material for punctuation, spelling and grammar.

opinion

Change opposed

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

Forty years ago the state of Washington adopted a primary election voting system that only one other state, Alaska, has seen fit to copy. The other 48 states prefer systems unlike that of Washington. Most of them, about 40, favor the traditional primary election system used here in Oregon so successfully the past 70 years.

So it is rather strange that we are now confronted by a petition drive directed by leaders of Oregon's Republican party which would replace our traditional party primary system with the Washington state system—after 1976. Why have the state's Republicans, after 40 years, suddenly discovered the "great," up to now, overlooked virtues of the Washington state system? An answer to that question can be supplied in part by a description of the Washington state primary.

Political party texts call the Washington scheme a "blanket, hybrid, mixed," system. (The "jungle" primary is a name preferred by some Washingtonians.) Every voter in Washington receives a blanket primary ballot which lists all candidates by the office for which they are running (US senator, governor, state representative, etc.), though the candidates' party affiliations do appear after their names. Unlike Oregon's primary, Republicans in Washington can vote for Democrats and Democrats can vote for Republicans. And they do, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is to select the weakest candidate of the opposition party who will be easiest to beat in the November general election. The most recent example of such questionable ballot behavior, called "raiding," occurred in 1974 when Republicans crossed over in the governor's race to vote for the weaker Democratic candidate, ex-governor Rosellini, who was then a push-over for incumbent Republican Governor Evans on election day. By mixing candidates, parties and Republican and Democratic voters in one blanket primary, the Washington state primary deservedly earns the title, "blanket, hybrid, mixed" primary. It presumably offers some satisfaction to those who vote, "the person, not the party." But by blurring and obscuring party affiliation, irresponsible activity-like raiding is encouraged and candidates' accountability to their party, principles and platform is downgraded in importance.

What threatens to aggravate the situation even further in this state is the Oregon Sup-

reme Court's holding in the Deras case last year, which removed all limits on the amounts of money that can be contributed to and spent by candidates for state and local office in Oregon. In such a jungle-like primary, to say nothing of the general election, candidate accountability too easily shifts to those with the biggest check books. Responsibility to individual, independent voters is endangered under these conditions and the so-called individual freedom of choice often associated with the Washington state hybrid gets lost as candidates become more dependent on big money sources than on political parties or individual voters.

The Republican party predicament nationally and in Oregon is now such that its leadership finds virtue in electoral systems which downplay the party label. Nationally, only about eighteen per cent of the voting population presently claims to be Republican. And in Oregon, as of May 1, 1975, registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans three to two (657,551 to 439,292; 53,388 independent). The Democratic margin increases each year. Such was not always the case in Oregon. For years before and after 1935, Oregon was known as the "Vermont of the West"—solid in its support of the Republican party. No Republican favored any change in the primary system. Then as now, voters registered as Republicans or Democrats and pressures and the power structure made Republican registration the respectable thing to do. About 1950, all that began to change as Democratic registration for the first time exceeded Republican. Now 25 years later, the Democratic Party of Oregon is rapidly converting that registration majority into solid election day majorities and for all intents and purposes, has become the majority party in Oregon. One of the main Republican responses to the Democratic challenge thus is its discovery of the Washington state mixed primary system, which abolishes both registration and primary voting by party membership.

The political considerations inspiring Republican advocacy of the Washington blanket system are abundantly clear. De-emphasizing the party label cuts away at the more favorable image the Democratic party label now has for voters. Republicans also shy away from intraparty primary contests, usually running only one candidate per race, while Democrats apparently believe the Constitution mandates that every party member run for office at some time or other. So Democratic primaries are sitting ducks for Republicans to raid in search of weak candidates. Most of all, pushing attachment to party into the background, whether in the primary or general election, works to the general advantage of Republicans. Democrats, as the party of less privilege in terms of amount of wealth and education, depend much more than do Republicans on the party label as the principal signal as to whom they should vote for. The

advantages of superior wealth and education contribute to Republicans turning out to vote six to ten per cent more than Democrats to promote their self-interests through the ballot. And with the symbol of party obscured, money becomes more influential in determining the vote. Money is a political commodity more available to Republicans than Democrats. For example, the Oregon Republican State Central Committee plans to have a quarter million to spend in 1976. The Democratic Party of Oregon will be lucky to have \$50,000.

If the Republican primary drive was solely dependent on the intrinsic merit of the Washington blanket hybrid, its petition bearers would be hard put to explain to Oregonians why Washington state's political system had anything worth absorbing into our politics. But it is no secret that the biggest advantage enjoyed by Republicans in promoting their primary initiative is the prevailing political mood of the American people, shared to a greater or lesser degree by Oregonians. In the backwash of Viet Nam and Watergate, political parties, politics, politicians and government—seldom winners anyway—look worse than ever. Though Oregon's political system leads the nation in solving environmental and related problems, Oregonians are not immunized from the criticism that governmental responsibility to the citizenry is not all it should be. Younger voters especially in Oregon and nationally, whose political maturation began with the assassination of John Kennedy and climaxed with Richard Nixon's presidency, are prone to find little good in the system. Eschewing traditional politics, including the parties, seems the "in" thing to do. An independent political posture appears safest to assume. Such a generalized response to the political atmospherics of the day are reinforced in Oregon by its political cultural tradition of independence and openness. Republicans trade on these political facts of life in describing the open, independent, "un-party" characteristics of the Washington state blanket hybrid system. An "Oregonian" poll of last winter mirrored this voter reflex. However, the 1975 legislature wisely, I think, laid to political rest a number of alternative "open" primary schemes in favor of retaining our traditional Oregon party primary.

Facts and theory seem to point to the following conclusions. Oregon's political system, including its primary, is working well. Openness is the hallmark of the system. The two parties, though not well organized by the standard, say of Minnesota's excellent system, are still highly competitive and this competitiveness redounds to the benefit of the voters. But Republican influence, so long dominant in the state, is on the wane. To retain political power, the leadership of the Republican party is advocating the Washington state

hybrid primary as a way of weakening voter preference for the Democratic party. The Washington state system has a superficial, and perhaps for some, an immediate attractiveness because of its de-emphasis on party and its apparent stress on individual, independent voter choice.

Several of the state's leading newspapers, including the "Oregon Journal" have editorially cautioned the Oregon electorate about the danger of accepting the arguments of Republican proponents of the primary change. They have called attention to the harm such a scheme can do to responsible party government, which Oregon now has. They point out that democratic government is a complex mechanism, to be measured not only by the right to vote but also by the accountability of political parties to the electorate. Central in their editorializing is the immense difficulty encountered by political parties in maintaining responsibility when their candidates for office can be determined by those outside the party and those who are members of opposition parties.

Political parties in Oregon may not be as accountable as one might like them to be. Yet if their influence is to be attenuated even more by dropping the Washington state hybrid on them, voters should not conclude that individual members of the electorate stand first in line as beneficiaries of change. Interest groups and those with the "big green" (and I don't mean the Oregon basketball team) bundle—in the absence of responsible parties—will be even more advantaged in their untiring efforts to steer the day-by-day course of Oregon politics. The simple fact of the matter is that splintered political parties and atomized, independent, individualized politics are a simplistic caricature of what responsible government really is.

One final word in closing. I view the present party primary system in Oregon as truly open and responsible. The best way to ensure that Oregon's politics remain clean, open and accountable is to exert direct, personal influence on party choices through individual participation in party affairs. There is no organization more open and responsive to direct citizen involvement in Oregon than the Democratic party. The trouble with too many people is that they don't bother to find that out for themselves. They probably don't care enough! Professor Herman Finer was absolutely right when he observed, "Democracy must be renewed every day." That means a continuing, participatory commitment by all of us as preferable to an independence beyond, above and outside the political main stream. For in the final analysis, the level of our politics here in Oregon, or anywhere for that matter, will be no better than those who make the daily political choices by their presence as active participants in the political process.

Wednesday, January 14, 1976