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Voucher tuition system tied to consumerism

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Of the Emerald

While the issue of rising tuition rates has enjoyed a bright spotlight of discussion during the past school year, another aspect of the tuition question is slowly edging on stage. The idea of replacing the present method of public funding for postsecondary education with a voucher tuition system is under discussion in the Legislative Interim Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education.

Under a voucher system, the public funding which currently goes immediately to the State Board of Higher Education or to the individual institutions would channel directly to individual students. Every high school graduate would receive a voucher, or "portable grant," which could be applied to any institution in the state for postsecondary education. The institutions, both public and private, would therefore rely heavily on the consumers of their products (the students) for a major portion of their financial resources.

Such a state level voucher system would resemble the present federal - level Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG) program, which allots a qualified student up to \$1,400 for his postsecondary education, to be obtained wherever the student chooses.

Roy Lieuallen, chancellor of the board, explains the whole voucher idea as "placing in the hands of the students a requisition for services at an institution, rather than appropriating money to the institution. The voucher would not be cashable at the bank, and you couldn't buy a hamburger with it."

While any voucher system is a distant possibility at the University, both pros and cons toward the subject are already well formulated. Lieuallen says he has "no quarrel" with the voucher idea, but has not yet seen any specific voucher plan which he approves of. In fact, he "vigorously and strenuously" opposes the specific voucher plan currently before the subcommittee because he fears it would raise tuition rates.

This plan was presented to the subcommittee June 24 by Stafford Hansell, director of the State Executive Department and a member of the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission. Hansell claims the plan would provide the following:

- Reduce student fees during the first two years of postsecondary education.
- Expand consumerism by allowing students to "shop around" for the school of their choice.
- Expand access to a broader range of postsecondary institutions.
- Contain rapidly expanding education costs.
- Allow greater student sharing of graduate and professional educational costs.

In effect, Hansell's plan would save the state approximately \$9 million a year in funding students in the Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE), while it would pay considerably more toward community and independent colleges. Lieuallen objects to this plan because this \$9 million now coming out of state funds would have to come from the pockets of OSSHE students.

"The students would get ripped off," he says.

In addition to the raised tuition which would result from Hansell's plan, Lieuallen disagrees with the idea of "greater student sharing for graduate and professional educational costs." He fears that advanced research and "needed but high-cost instructional programs" would suffer greatly if students were required to pay more for their advanced studies.

John Wish, a University associate professor in marketing, offers another view on this idea of greater student sharing for advanced studies.

According to Wish, a voucher plan which would appropriate enough money for no more than four years of postsecondary education to every resident student would "enable us to keep track of the perpetual student."

Such perpetual students, Wish fears, usually come from rich families which can support the higher costs of advanced study themselves. The problem, he says, is that advanced study programs are now ironically funded more by the state than are undergraduate programs and therefore "the poor and middle class are taxed to subsidize the rich."

Wish cites the case of a medical student to substantiate his point. He says that the state appropriates approximately \$12,000 a year toward the medical student, who eventually ends up in the top two per cent of the nation's income bracket. Wish considers such training as medical, law and MBA to be personal investments which should stem solely from the involved students themselves.

"There has to be a time when students stop feeding at the public trough," he says. Wish says he bases his arguments for a voucher tuition system on principles of equity.

Lieuallen counters this argument by saying the advanced levels of study should not be restricted to the rich and that they are vital to a university community.

If approved by the Legislature, the plan presented by Hansell to the subcommittee would be phased in over a two-year period, beginning in 1978. Although the plan is far from securing legislative approval, Lieuallen thinks students should be aware of the possibility of a voucher system now so that they can voice their opinions on it before it is approved and thereby too late.

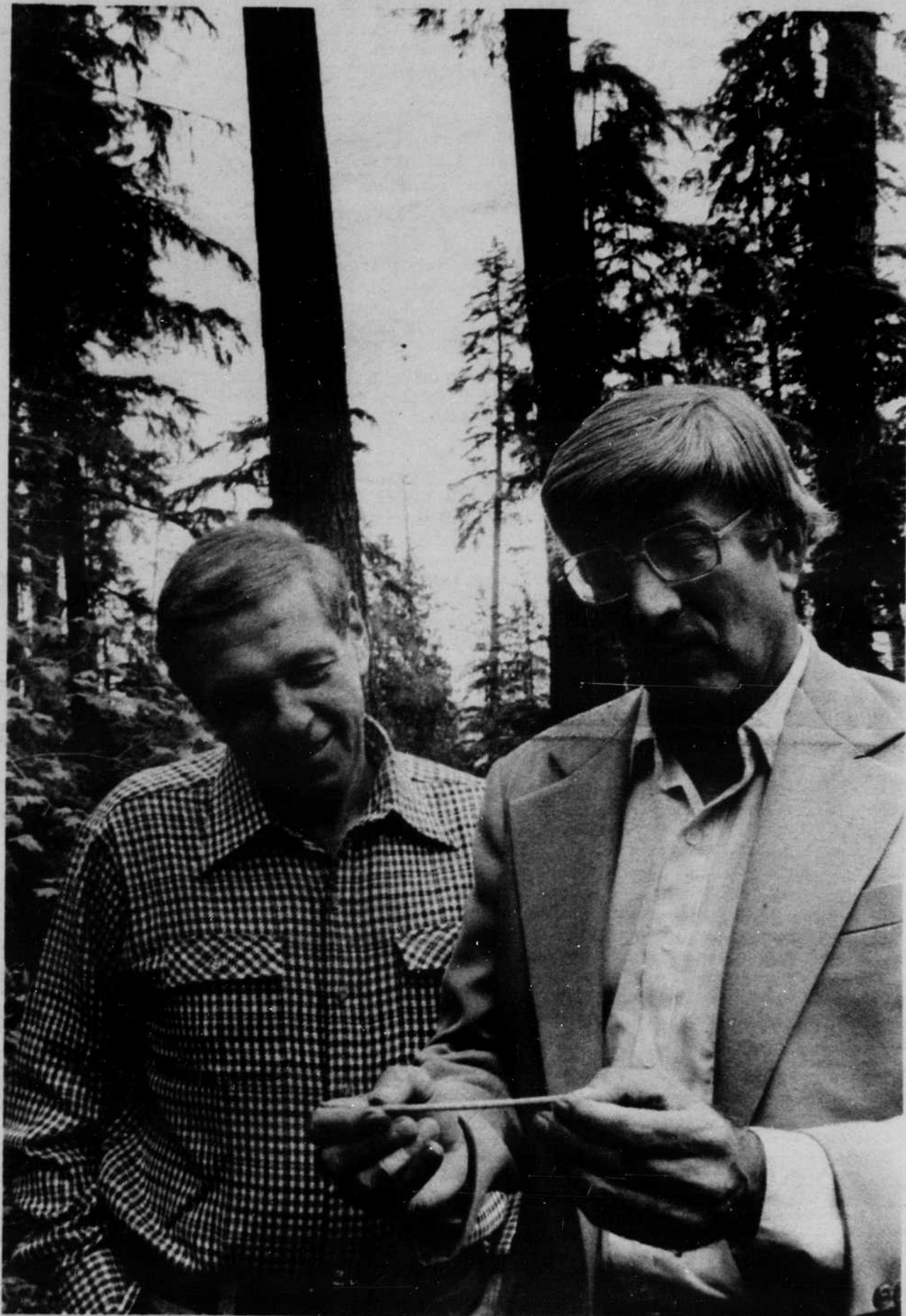


Photo by Perry Gaskill

N.Y. rep visits tall timber

Oregon congressperson Jim Weaver (right) shows New York congressperson Fred Richmond core sample of Oregon's famous Douglas Fir. Fourth district representative Weaver invited the Brooklyn freshman to see the Willamette National Forest first hand before voting on the timber bills facing the House Agriculture Committee. "Before today," said Richmond, "I thought clearcutting was out. But after visiting these clearcuts, I can see that our national forests can be managed as tree farms with proper professional supervisions."

Student shot, suspect arrested

A 24-year-old University student was shot and fatally wounded 10 p.m. Saturday in an attempted robbery of Tom's Market at 19th Avenue and Agate Street.

Dead is Eric Carsten Thede of 1475 E. 19th Ave., Eugene. The former geography major originally came from Santa Barbara, Calif., and was working as a clerk at the

market.

Police apprehended 20-year-old suspect Robert Alan Armstrong, of Bakersfield, Calif., around midnight in a nearby apartment. Armstrong offered no resistance, and police reports say the firearm was recovered. He is being charged with armed robbery and murder. Arraignment was scheduled for Monday.

Ad deadline misprinted

We regret that we published the wrong deadline for classified ads in our July 6 issue. We should have said that the deadline is Friday 1 p.m. So, relax. You've got another day to get in those *Personals*.