

Atiyeh's 'voluntarism': covering up cuts?

*Yankee Doodle went to town
riding on a pony,
stuck a feather in his hat
and called it macaroni.*

In his inaugural address to the Oregon Legislature last week, Oregon's new Gov. Victor Atiyeh ladled out some pious exhortations for citizen voluntarism as an alternative to continued growth of government.

The sentiments echoed Atiyeh's campaign slogan — 'a dream we can afford' — and gave voice to the dissatisfactions most of us feel over the increasing remoteness and inefficacy of the bureaucracies that surround us.

Those dissatisfactions had revealed themselves earlier in such symptoms of social anomie as continued declines in voter turnouts in elections and the potent cries for property tax reductions and limits on governmental spending.

If Atiyeh could accomplish the needed governmental reforms in combination with an upsurge in voluntarism, it would be a feather in his political cap and could well become the symbol of his administration.

Recent proposals by Atiyeh, however, indicate that this particular feather may be just so much macaroni.

Particularly chilling is Atiyeh's meat-cleaver approach to Department of Human Resources budget where he wants to ax benefits for the handicapped and indigent patients receiving medical care.

His budget recommendations submitted to the Legislature this week, for instance, would cut off payments for hospitalized welfare patients after 13 days in place of the 18 now allowed. Hospitals, hardly noted for their humanitarian generosity when it comes to getting bills paid, might well boot their poor patients out of bed and into the street.

Possibly, Atiyeh expects physicians, medical institutions and attendant personnel to 'volunteer' their services to bridge this gap between need and patients' resources, but we doubt it.

Rather than take on the difficult task of increasing the productivity of state employees and maintaining or reducing the total number of public workers — whose salaries, after all, constitute the biggest item in Oregon's budget — the new governor is pursuing the easier path of simply cutting the benefits

these workers are supposed to be passing on to needy recipients.

True reform, admittedly, would be an onerous task. State employees are protected by a powerful union and have become used to receiving as a matter of course merit-pay increases originally designed for uncommon efforts.

Were Atiyeh to reverse the inertia of bureaucratic government, it would indeed have come halfway to earning respect for his administration.

However, the other half of the task he has set for himself — encouraging citizen voluntarism — may also be beyond the methods Atiyeh has in mind to employ.

So far, his efforts in this area have been composed of moral admonition and vague proposal to establish 'citizens

ours

zen councils' in communities around the state to feed their complaints, compliments and suggestions directly to the governor's office.

This latter suggestion, however, appears doomed to bring the same opinions from the same articulate 'opinion leaders' and political activists who make their views known through the existing avenues of communication.

Idle and indefinite mechanisms such as this will do little to allay the suspicions and timidity of the heretofore "invisible citizens" — the poor, the culturally and ethnically different, the powerless — who remain most apathetic toward government.

Moral admonition, too, seems unlikely to elicit the desired response from persons who have not already volunteered their time and energy for altruistic purposes.

No one doubts the personal satisfaction Atiyeh has gained from digging muddy ditches with Boy Scouts, an example of his own voluntarism that he has mentioned more than once.

But more productive incentives will be needed to swell the public ranks with new volunteers.

We suspect that a few persons, their lives gutted by a 40-hour work week, if employed, and the struggle to make ends meet, if unemployed, will respond to Atiyeh's bland call and accept new demands on their limited resources.

America remains primarily a profit-motivated society, in economics and private behavior, and Oregonians can hardly be expected to arise en masse out of the goodness of hearts long hardened by business-minded social philosophies.

Atiyeh will need to come up with more innovative designs.

A good place to start might be with building on the foundation provided by existing non-profit, social-service groups.

If the governor used whatever political suasion he has with federal officials, he might usefully encourage that Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) funds could not be used by local governmental agencies.

Although the original purpose of CETA revolved around training currently unskilled persons for useful jobs, CETA recipients have all too often wound up in dead-end bureaucratic jobs such as file clerks.

This unfortunate situation has arisen because local officials who control CETA money have used the federal

largesse to ease their own budget and personnel problems.

Besides using these tax dollars for legitimate job-skills training by private employers, a ban on governmental use of CETA would increase the amount available for creative, local groups that rely heavily on volunteers, such as White Bird Socio-Medical Station, BRING's recyclers and the financially imperiled Drug Information Center.

Another method of promoting grass-roots voluntarism might be to grant companies deductions or credits toward corporate taxes to offset the cost of paying employees while the latter work on off-the-job, voluntary service up to predetermined number of hours.

In effect, this would represent a government subsidy of the citizen response Atiyeh is seeking.

Proposing programs of substance and not just spouting rhetoric would be a wiser use of the office to which he was elected for attaining the general goals with which a majority of the governor's constituents apparently agree.

theirs



yours

'Burned fingers'

The incessant protesting by the University's Iranian students has put a pretty disgusting taste in my mouth. Their cause does not alienate me, they do. I cannot find much, if any, sincerity in the Iranian protestors themselves.

To begin with, the Iranians here are living in and under the very government they claim to hate. And they are doing so of their own free will. Out of all the world's universities they have decided to support those of the country they claim to detest.

Could it be that they feel they have more effect on our government by coming to the U.S.? This is possible, but surely, attending our universities doesn't make their protesting any more effective. Why do they congregate in the universities when they could con-

gregate in Washington, D.C.?

I am convinced that the reason they aren't in Washington is a lack of sincerity. Unlike their truly revolutionary counterparts in Iran who risk all for their cause, these pseudo-revolutionaries risk nothing and steal glory that isn't theirs.

An effigy of the Shah was burned in front of Condon Hall, after the Shah had already left Iran. I hope the daring protestors who pulled that one off didn't burn their fingers.

Bruce Berry
sophomore, undeclared

Women's rugby

I am writing this letter in an effort to reach as many women on campus as possible. I am one, among

a few other women, who is interested in playing women's rugby.

Rugby is a new sport for many women, myself included, so it's understandable why many are hesitant to try the game. But my experience, little as I have, was great.

I played many women's sports in high school but never really enjoyed the cut-throat competition for each position within my own team. I started playing on a women's rugby team, which was just starting, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of team effort and unity.

Rugby is a very physically exertive sport but the tales of brutality are in most cases exaggerated. You make the game as rough as you want it.

If you've never tried rugby, and you want to experience a new

realm in sports just opening up for women, then please come out and support the club.

The men's rugby club is, at this time, backing us. If we get enough women interested we can form our own club. We have a coach, a few other teams to compete against, all we need are enthusiastic women.

We will be announcing an organizational meeting next week. Try it out I can't imagine anyone being disappointed.

Linda Beckley Alley
2053 City View No. 2

VAT backer

Mr. Ullman authored the preface to my book of 1977 titled "Value Added Tax And Other Tax Reforms." As is pointed out in this

book, the corporate profits tax and the property tax are just as truly costs that must be met from prices charged as the value added tax (VAT). If regressive is defined as a tax included in prices, then all taxes are regressive.

If, on the other hand, the term regressive is used to refer to taxes only included in the prices of necessities, then VAT by exempting, say beans and rice, can be made non-regressive much more readily than a payroll, corporate profits or property tax.

The corporate profits tax on Heinz's equity costs is as high as that on Tiffany's equity costs and the same is true of payroll and property taxes.

Richard Lindholm
professor,
business administration
Friday, January 19, 1979