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Quarrel leaves no party for Independent voters

By DANA TIMS
Of the Emerald

"If I had my way," said Rep. Bill Rogers, R-Vida, "there wouldn't be any Democrats in the Legislature."

"Well if I had mine," responded Glen Otto, D-Troutdale, a short while later, "there would be certain Republicans not in the House."

Spurred by such exchanges, party labels were dragged out and beaten like old rugs Friday as the House Elections Committee discussed a bill that would allow political parties to open their ranks to Independent voters for primary elections.

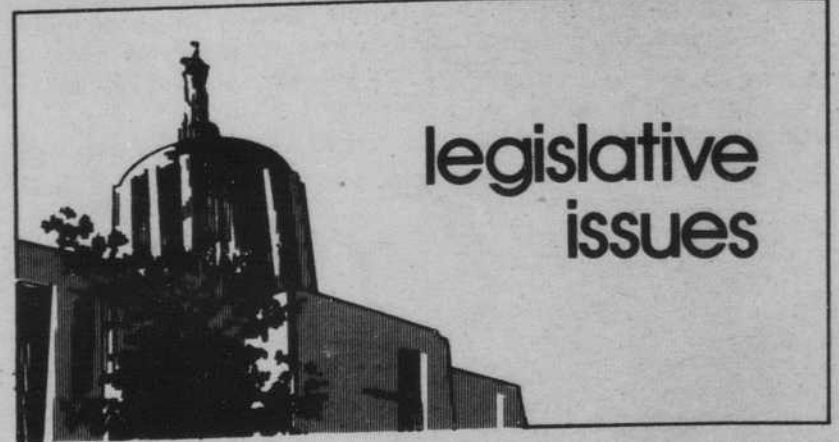
House Bill 2307, introduced by Rep. Bill Rutherford, R-McMinnville, is supported by the committee's three Republicans and opposed by the four Democrats. The split follows party philosophy, since most Democrats feel that Independents who would choose to exercise such a right would flock to their primary, leading to party de-stabilization.

Republicans, who are outnumbered 3-2 by Democrats in Oregon voter registration, calculate that if voters didn't have to register with either party, Democratic registration might fall.

At Friday's hearing, one Republican testifying for the bill stressed the importance of individual rights and dropped the party issue altogether.

"They're Americans and they have the right to vote," said Rep. Nancy Ryles, R-Beaverton. "Party registration shouldn't be a prerequisite for casting a ballot."

Ryles told the committee that in her district (Washington County), 40 percent of those who have



legislative
issues

registered since 1974 have done so as Independents. Statewide, the number of Independents was estimated at 200,000.

"They resent having to declare membership in either major party," added Ryles, who said she supports a two-, three- or four-party system, aided by an open primary.

Rep. Tom Mason, D-Portland, disagreed with Ryles and gave her a short history lecture, citing the "inherent instability in multi-party systems."

"What about Italy, England and France?" asked Mason. "Won't that do the same thing to us?"

"I'd say the Oregon Legislature is like that and it's okay," Ryles replied.

In the past, courts have ruled that Independents could not vote in primaries because it violated the "associational rights" of party members. HB 2307, however, would allow the parties to choose whether to make the policy decisions that would allow Independents to vote.

Committee chairer Wayne Fawbush, D-Portland, claimed that the end result of growing numbers of Independents would

be the destruction of parties. He noted that parties "play a compromise role. You get enough of the good to be able to accept the bad."

Steve Young, recently retired Republican party state chairer, called Fawbush's words, "philosophical mumbo-jumbo — all of it well intended, I'm sure."

Only 500 to 1,000 voters are actually "Independents," explained Young. "There are 200,000 who are unaffiliated and another 200,000 to 400,000 who could register but are too alienated to do so."

The bill doesn't mandate, but allows participation and inter-party competition, said Young. "It would allow parties to go out and woo those too skeptical to otherwise register."

Rogers, who referred to all party officials as "hacks," found it ironic that a two-party system could be touted when "one party is always trying to do the other one in."

But Otto replied that the Democrat-Republican split in his district, although 59-37, "isn't wide enough," indicating little sympathy for the minority view and little chance for the bill to escape committee.

Homefried keeps male nude

A consensus to keep male nude art on display was reached Monday in a restaurant where every worker has a say in decision-making processes.

Homefried Truckstop collective members voted to retain the self-portraits by Mohammed Rezalian for the month of March. Several

lesbian members, and others who objected to public display of male genitals, removed the drawing Saturday after the collective's art directors had approved the showing.

Members met for an hour Monday to "examine their feelings about the drawing" and then vot-

ed "not to censor art," at least not without contacting the artist, says collective member Virginia Tilley.

"This doesn't mean it still can't come off the walls," says Terry Yaffe, another collective member. "If a portion of the community objects, we'll listen to them. But at this point, it doesn't seem necessary."

"Our mistake was in taking it down in the first place," Tilley declares.

Rezalian, whose major emphasis as an artist has been nudes and self-portraits, says his drawings of female nude bodies were displayed a year and a half ago at the Homefried Truckstop and no one had objected at that time.

"My art has nothing to do with sex," he says, "just art. Nothing was even said about the artistic form."

Tilley says there are more objections to the male naked body "since they're in the oppressive role."

The collective will meet next week to determine how to deal with art in the future.

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