

Does verdict signal athletic impunity?

Ron Billingslea has been found innocent. We can express outrage, satisfaction or indifference to the verdict, but the fact remains that the former assistant basketball coach has had his Constitutionally guaranteed day in court — and won.

But we're uneasy with the verdict — and worried about what it indicates about University athletics and the University.

Deputy district attorney Darryl Larson — prosecuting a case he thought open-and-shut — failed to convince the seven-man, five-women jury that Billingslea knew he was taking state money when he accepted \$1,680 from the Bronson Travel Agency.

Billingslea's defense countered that the former coach believed the money he deposited in his private bank account was a "fringe benefit" of the job.

Must we now also conclude that athletic freebies extend to courts of law?

Even during the trial, Larson warned the jury that an innocent verdict would be "a signal to the prosecutor's office that no sports figure should be indicted, because he won't be found guilty."

Larson's appeal now takes on prophetic significance. Future trials — particularly that of Billingslea's fellow assistant coach Mark Barwig later this month — will be seen in the light of the Billingslea verdict.

The cynic — and we are not above cynicism — might conclude that University athletic figures have been given some sort of "athletic impunity."

That conclusion is not unjustified. At least one juror said the presence of "big-time jocks" and the possibility of testimony by ex-head coach Dick

OURS

Harter and player Felton Sealey influenced the trial's outcome.

"If it would have been an ordinary Joe Blow," the juror said, "he would have been convicted."

We hope that isn't the case. But Larson's and our concerns are warranted. Freebies are apparently part of the turf for "big-time jocks." And Billingslea himself admitted that they included free clothes and beer from local businesses.

Apparently the "fringes" and special considerations flow so readily that it's easy to forget about weighing right and wrong.

As deep as our concern about University athletics is, we also worry about what this mess says about the University.

When a man in a position of leadership and responsibility can claim ignorance of the basic

differences between right and wrong, what are we to conclude about the people who hire admitted ignoramuses?

Claiming such ignorance is too much like the speeder who pleads innocent because he doesn't know the speed limit. But if he doesn't know that doing 60 mph in a school zone is illegal, we need to get him off the road.

Unquestioning ignorance is a defense no one can accept. The justice system is based on the simple assumption that ignorance can't preclude guilt.

One juror who voted guilty in the 10-2 verdict said she couldn't believe the former coach didn't know the \$1,680 he got from Bronson Travel — money from unused airline tickets — was indeed University money. She characterized the story as "illogical."

We'd say that's a tame assessment.

But she's right. And that bit of illogic can only further alienate the University community that has witnessed the ethical double standard between the University's athletic and academic divisions.

Billingslea's trial reinforces our belief in the fundamental soundness of the judicial system and the absolute necessity of due process.

But the verdict can only reinforce our belief that moral standards are suspended somewhere between Johnson Hall and MacArthur Court.

YOURS

Guy's self interest

I am not usually of the habit of writing to the editor every week, but I feel a strong need to do so in this case. Last week, I wrote concerning the on-campus and Salem rallies for higher education. At Friday's rally, one of the ASUO presidential candidates, Donovan Guy, was handing out letters accusing the rally as being nothing more than a political ploy for another candidate, Rich Wilkins.

To Mr. Guy's letter, I have two replies: 1) The U of O day at the capitol was planned several months ago. For the entire period of the planning stage, Rich Wilkins (ASUO vice president for state and university affairs) and the Student University Relations Council have been in charge. Dave Eaton did not simply "allow Rich Wilkins (sic) name to replace his own," at the last minute as Guy's letter implies.

2) Mr. Guy's fourth paragraph speaks of the "poor organization and planning by the ASUO" which resulted in only one person showing up for a discussion of higher education at the University Inn. If he would have checked his facts, he might have discovered that the program he was referring to was sponsored by the Housing Office and was organized by me, not Eaton, Wilkins, or anyone else.

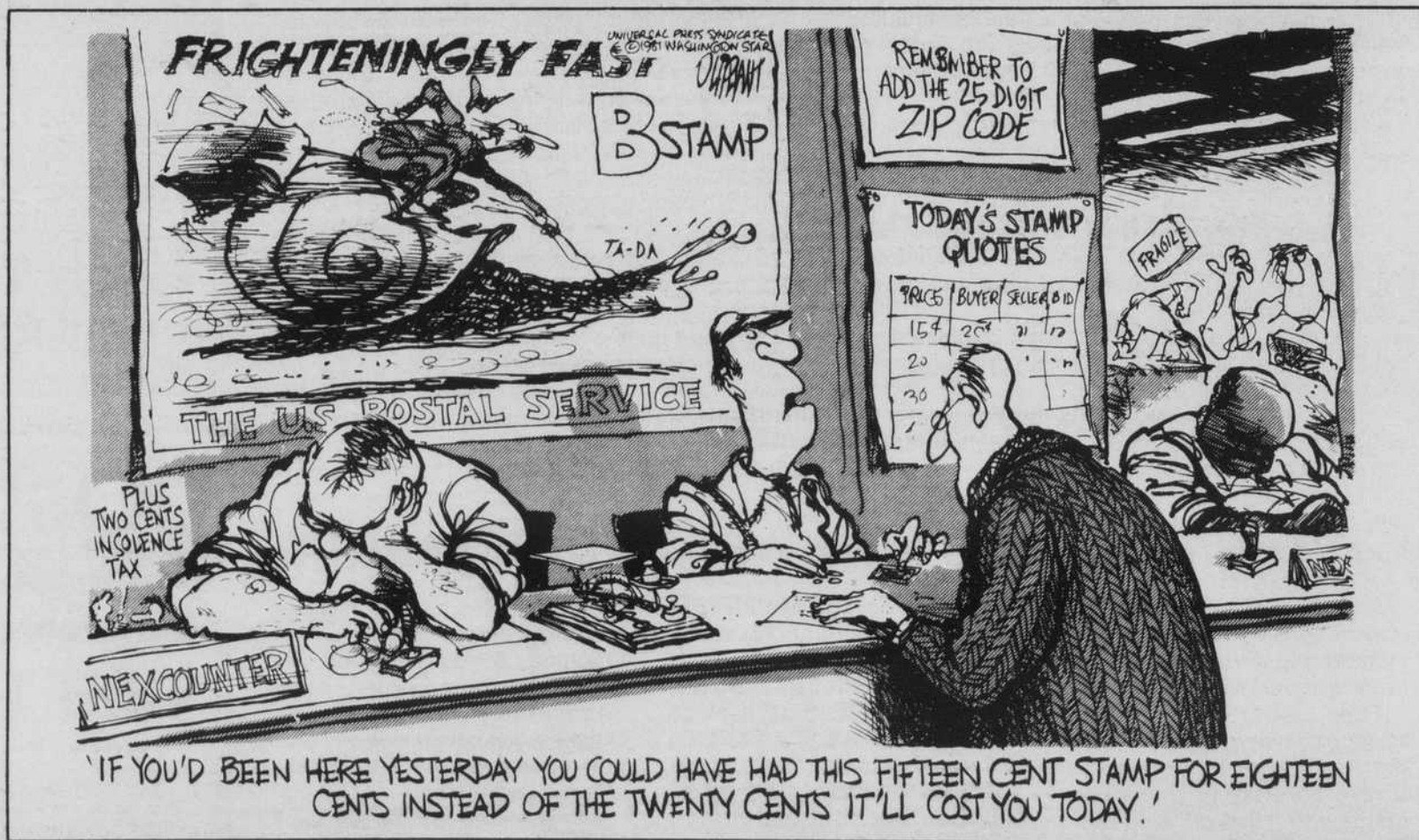
It greatly disturbs me that a candidate for student body president would make such allegations without first checking his facts. I also am disappointed that Donovan Guy can't see past his own self-interest and realize that the rallies were in the best interest for all.

Greg Harris
RA, Alder House

Not monolithic

(In regards to An Opium Den of One. April Fools Day understood etc.)

Boy, you have chutzpah! You really gave me a blast. I'm a Christian who is just trying to be real cool and friendly, and I find out that I'm the greatest thing since Adolf Hitler and Nestles. Well, here's one thing you's got to remember: Be specific about the type of Christian you are evaluating, i.e. Christianity is not one great Kiwanis club. (My apologies to the Kiwanis for any miscasting.) If I joined the Kiwanis (I suppose) I would acknowledge that I have a thoroughly common set of beliefs which all my



Kiwanis pals would also have and this set of beliefs would make us all Kiwanis.

This is not so for Christianity. There seems to be only one common belief Christians hold, and even that is subject to many shades of grey.

I'm still afraid my point is not getting across. Try this; replace "Christian" with "Philosopher" (or even "American"). Different philosophers hold different beliefs. Some differences are not obvious and some are so great one wonders if there is any correlation other than the fact both people call themselves "philosopher."

To be concise, the title "Christian" does not beget unanimity. Someday, everyone will understand this, and maybe then I'll be able to tell a person that I am a Christian without having him duck.

Mark Waldo
Carson Hall

Apathetic ASUO

Are the students of the University of Oregon as apathetic as I am led to

believe? In the April 6 Emerald article entitled "ASUO Anti-apathy Rallies Planned for Capital, EMU," we are told that ASUO Pres. Eaton and Vice President Wilkins spoke about higher education funding at the University Inn on April 2, and only one student showed up. The article claims that this incident illustrates the apathy prevalent on campus, and condemns the general student for being "unconcerned."

I believe that the students of our University are concerned with our present financial woes. A day does not pass when I don't hear complaints about graduate students teaching upper-division courses, or one's inability to find a seat in an overcrowded class. Students are concerned — they simply haven't had a way of burning their energy for this financial cause.

Were you aware of the April 2 funding meeting at the University Inn? How many higher education budgetary meetings have you been aware of this year? We must not condemn the students of the University for not attending these finan-

cial meetings for they, as I, were probably unaware of them.

Who can we blame for this apathetic turnout at our financial hearings? The Eaton/Wilkins administration has been too "unconcerned" to sufficiently inform the student populous of these meetings, and therefore must be declared as the true apathetic party.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Wilkins is attempting to overcome this apathy problem by scheduling an anti-apathy rally at the EMU and the state capital a few days before the ASUO primary election, in which he is a presidential candidate. Further note that the originally planned date for the rally was moved up a few days, presumably to accommodate the primary election schedule. Are these rallies intended to overcome student apathy or to overcome Mr. Wilkins' presidential candidate opponents?

The ASUO administration — not the student populous — is more apathetic than I am led to believe.

David Connelly
Junior, accounting
Tuesday, April 14, 1981