



greg wasson

# a quorum of one

As any child of the '70s knows, inflation hits everything. Still, the proposal to increase the fine for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana from \$100 to \$250 rings discordant. A 250-percent increase in the punishment for a crime that shouldn't be a crime seems unfair.

But, that jump is only one part of the plan. The second is to decrease possession of more than an ounce but less than eight to a Class A misdemeanor and more than eight ounces to a Class C felony. Currently, both are Class B felonies.

The House Judiciary Committee will discuss the issue this week, and committee head Tom Mason heralds the new scheme as an attempt to put some rationality in the state's marijuana laws.

Aside from the argument that anything short of legalization is by definition irrational, Mason is to be lauded for proposing a reduction in some of the marijuana penalties. The laws are graphic demonstrations of attempts by those in power to

eradicate a lifestyle they disagree with.

So, like most things formed by committee, the idea contains sweeteners for each side. The marijuana lobby gets a decrease and the hardliners get a jump. But, in the process, much of the public gets the shaft. To understand that compromise doesn't always work, consider Angus' trip to the big city.

Not having any excess of bucks, Angus rode in to town on his thumb. As a result, he ended up in a neighborhood he shouldn't be in. As his ride disappeared around the corner, Angus found himself accosted by two large ruffians.

Impatiently demanding his wallet, the two emptied it and one took the cash and the other the credit cards. A compromise was reached, but it's hard to see how Angus benefited.

When the committee begins work on the bill this week, it should work hard to see that Oregon's marijuana users don't end up feeling like Angus.

As a famous Roman senator once said: Citizens, render unto me a break!

Actually, the bill has two more notable provisions. One removes any distinction between possession of dried, packaged marijuana and pot still in the ground. The second creates a new crime, possession with intent to distribute.

Explanations for the new category are that the man still needs some way to go after dealers. Smugglers caught with a shipload are obviously not planning to use it all themselves and should be persecuted more intensely.

Skeptics, like Rep. Margie Hendriksen, D-Eugene, respond that we're suddenly going to see a number of simple possession charges become possession with intent to distribute, as those fine people down at the District Attorney's office wage their never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American way.

## YOURS

### Devastation

In recent weeks, I have become more and more alarmed at the deliberations taking place in the state Capitol regarding the budget for higher education.

The options being discussed are all grim. Consideration of total closure of one of the three major universities is unconscionable. A 10-percent reduction in the operating budget of the University would be devastating, particularly on top of the 3-percent reduction in the Governor's budget.

While I am keenly aware of projected declines of state revenues because of the debilitating economic climate, we must not compound our problem.

The City of Eugene, indeed all of Lane County, regards the University as a major industry. It is one of the few in our area that provides needed diversification from a timber-dependent economy. The scope of the potential economic impact on the Eugene-Springfield area is staggering.

Projections indicate that the effect on our local economy of such a budget reduction would be in excess of \$26.3 million annually. To put the scope of such an impact in perspective, it would be equivalent to eliminating from the Eugene-Springfield economy the combined payrolls of Spectra Physics, Agripac, Citizens Bank, and Strech & Sew. We can all surely appreciate the serious effects of such a loss as that reduction further multiplies throughout our entire economy.

I also value the University for the significant cultural, social, and recreational contribution it makes to our community.



Eugene would not offer the unique business and living environment that exists here without the University. This community cannot afford the debilitating budget reductions now being contemplated.

I therefore urge you and your readers to join with me in writing and calling the Revenue Committees of the House and the Senate and the Joint Legislative

Committee on Ways and Means in Salem to ask them to reject this contemplated proposal.

Cynthia Wooten  
City Councilor, Ward 7

## Protect student's health center investment

As your representative on the Student Health Center Advisory Committee for the past two years, I have consistently supported keeping the infirmary open because we, the committee and administration, did not have enough accurate information to assess the use of the health center facilities. However, that situation changed last fall with the use of specific illness and injury diagnosis computer forms which will allow an accurate assessment of when a patient was seen and the treatment required. Based on this type of information, it is true, the infirmary and 24-hour service has become a victim of the statistics. The committee voted to close the infirmary and reduce 24-hour service to service 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 12 noon to 8 p.m. Sunday. Was this decision justified?

The statistical information showed that the infirmary averages three patients per

day, that 96.3 percent of the current patient load is seen during regular office hours and that 98.1 percent of the patient load would continue to be seen during the proposed service hours. The information also showed that out of the remaining 1.9 percent of the patient load, only 27 out of 203 patients over a 90-day term required some form of immediate care (fractures to abrasions). This means that you are paying expensive physicians and nurses wages for them to see one patient who really needs immediate care every third night.

As your representative, I asked myself these questions: Is this the proper way to spend your money? Are you getting your money's worth from 24-hour service and the infirmary? Is it fair to ask the majority to fund this type of service for such a very small minority (three patients per day out of 15,000 students for the infirmary and .25 percent of the total patient load out-

side the proposed service hours) when other good facilities are available? My answer to all questions was no and I voted for the infirmary closure and reduced service.

The result of this decision is that the health center will save more than \$200,000 by releasing about 10 staff members which will result in a savings of \$3 per student per term. Some students will need insurance, but most won't. Of the five insurance companies I called — Allstate, Farmers Insurance Group, Blue Cross, Kemper, and State Farm — you are covered, as a full-time single student, under your parents' policy until age 23, 23, 23, 22 and 21 respectively. Check your family's policy to be sure.

In conclusion, the committee made a decision that they felt best represented the student's interests but this decision is not cast in stone; the hours of service are especially open to change. This decision

does leave you with the problem of what to do with the empty infirmary, the second floor of the health center. When facing this problem, if you view yourselves as stockholders in the health center, consider that there is a major investment in quality medical facilities. A wise use of that space might be to encourage medical use from the private sector — perhaps a lease that would result in even lower student health fees and perhaps additional student care. Watch for and guard your investment against conversion to non-productive and non-paying uses such as office space or housing. It is your investment and through your participation or pressure on the health center Advisory Committee, it is your decision.

Bill Vanderمولen  
Senior, general science  
Student representative  
Health center advisory committee  
Monday, June 8, 1981