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## Labor, business debate sales tax

By Michele Matassa  
Of the Emerald

The president of the state's largest labor union and the dean of the University's College of Business Administration debated the need for and effects of a sales tax Monday.

AFL-CIO president Irv Fletcher said the state's economic situation doesn't warrant changing Oregon's tax structure to include a sales tax. The sales tax is regressive and places an unfair burden on lower-income taxpayers, he said.

"The more you make, the less you pay as a percentage of your income," Fletcher said.

Jim Reinmuth, business college dean, said a sales tax does not necessarily discriminate against lower income taxpayers.

"A sales tax is or is not regressive depending on how it is designed," he said. "It is not inherently regressive."

By exempting goods such as food and prescription drugs and by increasing taxes on luxury items, the sales tax could even be made progressive, Reinmuth said.

Fletcher repeated his union's support

for a more progressive income tax and stricter collection of corporate income and property taxes. He endorsed the Hendriksen Tax Plan, a proposed re-grouping of income tax brackets to shift more of the tax burden.

Reinmuth said high corporate taxes contribute to Oregon's high bankruptcy ranking — third in the nation — and discourage new high-technology firms from locating in Oregon.

Depending on income taxes is dangerous because collections are apt to vary widely, Reinmuth said. A sales tax would be a more stable income source for government and would "offer the tax structure more efficiency," he said.

Fletcher expressed continued faith in the wood products industry to provide jobs, although admitted the industry "will never come back to what it was three or four years ago."

Because high-tech companies will provide some replacement jobs, Fletcher said "I don't want to appear to be anti high-tech."

Fletcher and Reinmuth agreed that if a sales tax is enacted, it should exempt certain goods and heavily tax others.

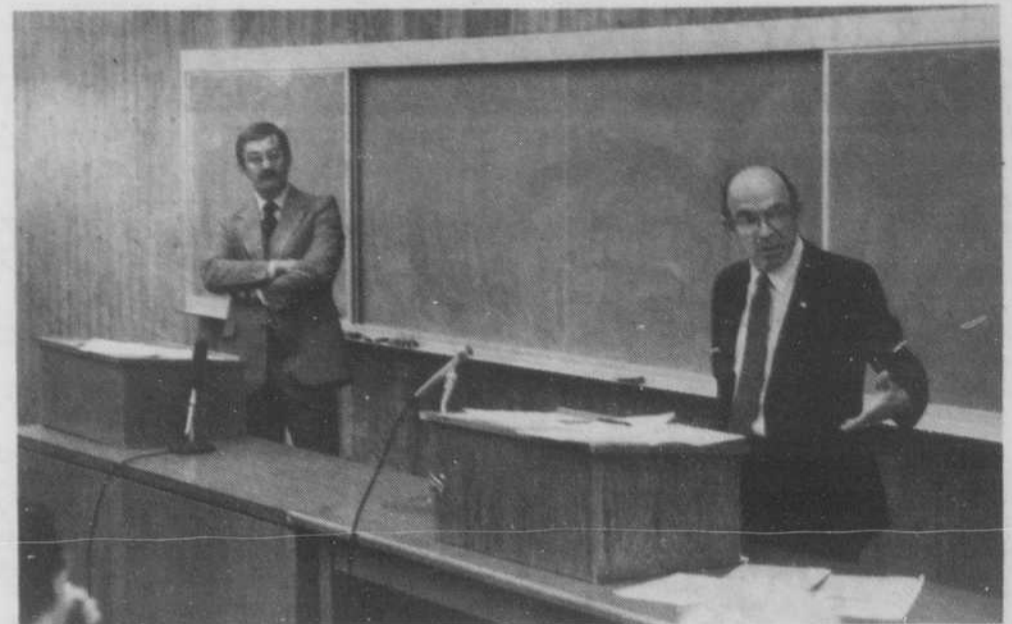


Photo by Dave Kao

Oregon AFL-CIO Pres. Irv Fletcher (right) attacks sales tax while Jim Reinmuth, University business dean, waits for a chance to respond.

Fletcher said it would be difficult deciding what to tax and what to exempt. "A sales tax would be acceptable if you

had diamonds, sailboats, Bermuda vacations to start with. Beyond that we have trouble."

## University student experiences Soviet life

By Charlene Bell  
Of the Emerald

University student Charlene Bell is one of 29 Americans currently studying at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. Bell, an Emerald reporter, will be sending several reports on Russian life — from the inside out. Her first report was written before the death of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

After studying in Moscow for nearly two months now, I find the mundane, everyday realities of Soviet life more puzzling, and at times more shocking, than any reports of exiled dissidents or labor camps in Siberia.

It is only fair to point out that I and the other students studying Russian at the Pushkin Institute wished to study in the Soviet Union for non-political reasons.

Our appreciation of the Russian language and Soviet culture as well as a genuine desire to become acquainted with the Soviet people, compelled us to apply to the program. The group is sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian, one of three American contingents at the Institute.

Originally 34 students from American universities were selected to participate in the fall 1982 semester program at the Institute. Five of those students were from the University — the largest group of students from a single school.

The day before our group was scheduled to leave Philadelphia to go to New York in late August, the program director received word that the Soviets were withholding six visas. Two of the "refuseniks," as we dubbed them, were from the University.

According to the director, the decision to cut the American quota came from the Supreme Soviet. The Soviet position re-



Onion-shaped domes crown Ivan's Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin.

mained firm despite long conversations with the U.S. State Department.

Weeks later in Moscow, we learned the "official" reason for the American quota reduction.

The Soviet line was blunt and impersonal. The six Americans were refused visas because they were not "serious students of the Russian language." The students speculated that our quota was reduced due to American embargo of materials for the Soviet gas pipeline to Western Europe.

Only the American contingent suffered a quota reduction out of all the countries represented by students studying at the Pushkin Institute. It seemed that countries that supported the Soviet pipeline received a quota increase.

For example, Great Britain received a quota increase although one British student confessed he had never enrolled in a Russian course.

This incident clearly showed us that there is no division

between political and social life in the Soviet Union.

However, as foreign students — particularly as Americans — we lead a privileged existence that is somewhat idealized and certainly not typical.

If we choose to, we may avoid the long food lines that Muscovites suffer through daily and eat all of our meals at the institute cafeteria. We also can avoid shopping with Russians entirely by spending American dollars and travelers' checks in special "berlozka" stores where only foreign currency or "valuta" is accepted.

At this writing, Moscow is experiencing a "deficit" of eggs, milk, toilet paper, tomatoes and cucumbers.

Even without official news of a "deficit," Muscovites usually stand in three lines to buy goods. And in the Soviet fashion, the natives buy in large quantities, often filling three shopping bags.

In the first line Muscovites inspect the goods and decide

which ones they wish to buy. Then they walk to the particular cashier assigned to that department and stand in line to pay for the goods. The customers must then stand in a third line to pick up the merchandise.

The Soviets seem to have developed a type of "crowd psychology" to help them survive the system.

In the first line, the store counter often is surrounded with shoppers inspecting merchandise to see what is being sold. There, shoppers must literally elbow their ways to the counter.

Those who succeed in standing their ground at the counter can question the harried sales clerks and examine the goods as much as they want. But those who are weak and don't state their business in fast-and-fluent Russian will be ignored and impatient shoppers behind them will shove them out of the way.

To avoid this, many Soviets instinctively form lines when

they see merchandise being sold without knowing either what is being sold or the price. Then they ask the people in front of them what is being sold. At this point some shoppers decide they are not interested and they leave — but no one ever leaves before holding a place in line.

Some Soviets who want to hurry up the process will ask people to "remember I'm in front of you" and then go stand in several shorter lines before returning to the first line.

More aggressive Muscovites simply shove their way to the front of the line. It is not unusual to see Soviet lines growing large in the middle as shoppers cut in close to the front.

Because the other people in line shout insults at the "cutters" it is not a technique Americans master easily.

Future articles by Bell will cover Soviets' attitude toward Americans, Soviet "Vanyas" (spas) and the system of privilege in the Soviet Union.

### Brezhnev buried in Red Square

MOSCOW (AP) — Leonid Brezhnev was buried Monday in Red Square with a somber military ceremony as grimly stolid as his 18 years at the Kremlin helm.

His successor as Communist Party chief, Yuri Andropov, pledged in a eulogy to pursue Brezhnev's policies at home and abroad, and offered in a meeting with U.S. Vice President George Bush to "build relations" with the United States.

Andropov warned, however, that the Soviets could "give a crushing rebuff to any attempt at aggression."

Hundreds of foreign leaders attended the funeral ceremony, and tens of thousands of Soviet citizens packed the vast central square, silently holding aloft scores of Brezhnev portraits trimmed in the red and black of official mourning.

Brezhnev, only the fourth leader in the 64-year history of the Soviet Union, died of an apparent heart attack Wednesday. He was 75. Andropov was elected to the Brezhnev's most powerful post within two days.