

opinion

Financial aid office not taking sides

We sympathize with the "damned if they do — damned if they don't" position of the University's financial aid office over enforcement of the Solomon amendment.

The Solomon amendment forbids disbursement of financial aid to students who have not registered for the draft. The law, which went into effect July 1, requires draft age students to be registered for the draft or declare exemption if applying for federal financial aid in fall term.

Ed Vignoul, University Financial aid director, said that the University doesn't have a choice in the matter. The University receives \$22 million in financial aid that would be jeopardized without their office's proper compliance with the law.

Draft registration, like the draft itself, is one of those issues hung with the trappings of conscience and morality. Vignoul has done a commendable job keeping his office above the furor of debate for or against draft registration. Students who are opposed to draft registration might remember that the financial aid office has opted to guarantee the availability of financial aid to students instead of taking sides in the issue. Don't grumble at the financial aid workers when you are given the compliance form to sign — they didn't advocate the law.

The law has been buffeted about the courts since it was passed last year. A test case filed by the ACLU in District Court in Minnesota last October issued an injunction against the law. However, in June the Supreme Court stayed the injunction. What this implies is the case against the law is on hold — though the enforcement of the law is being pursued.

The ACLU considers the rule "a serious abridgement of constitutional rights" — the right forbidding self-incrimination (the fifth amendment) and the right barring criminal punishment without benefit of trial (bill of attainder). They are absolutely right. But how many times have we seen the sharp edge of constitutional rights dulled by governmental expediency?

Meanwhile, students, if only to further their possibilities through higher education, will have to grit their teeth and "X" the compliance statement.

More support services needed for vagrants

The city of Eugene has initiated a Vagrancy Task Force to handle transients that regularly pass through town.

We think the task force is a good idea, but we advise the venerable City Council to be cautious.

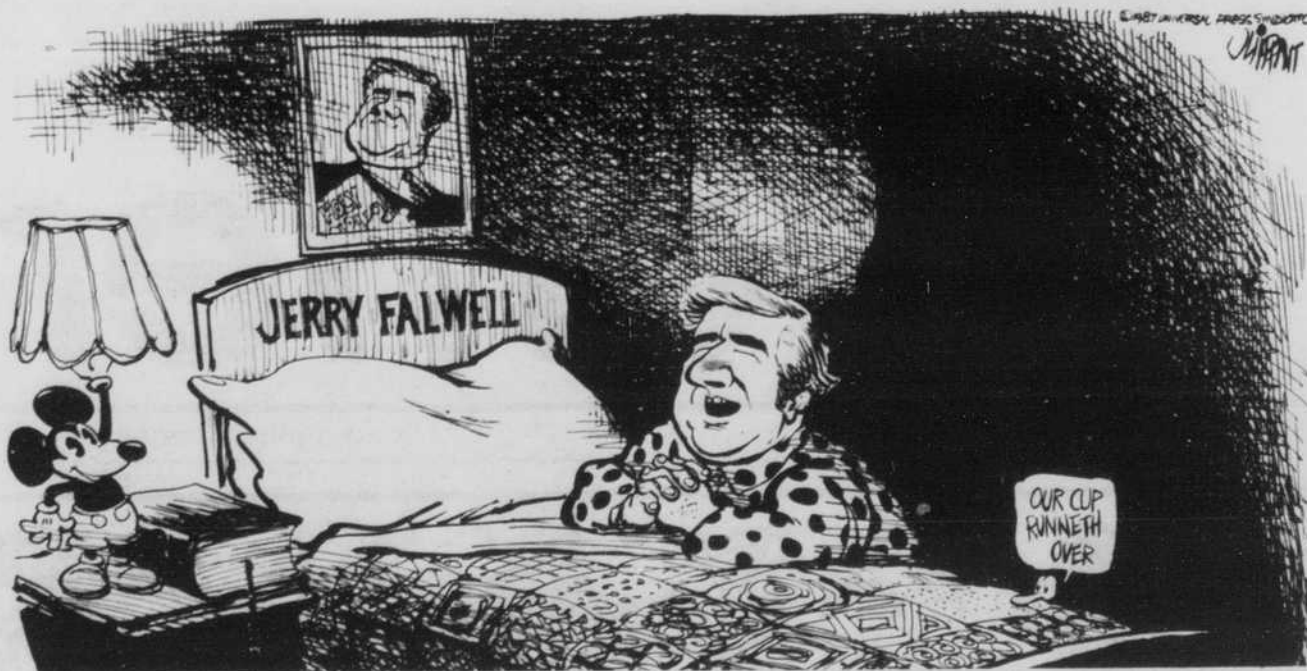
The problem of vagrancy is acute in the West University area. An influx of vagrants on 13th Avenue is common during spring and summer. In fact, some students seem able to predict the weather in Seattle or California by the number of vagrants drinking in the park on 14th Avenue.

The attack on vagrants will be two-pronged, using existing support services and law enforcement. The law enforcement efforts will be concerned with use of abandoned buildings by vagrants and drinking in city parks. The particulars of the support services effort have yet to be outlined.

Support services should be the most important aspect of the city's vagrancy program. Yet, it seems the city's approach is nothing new and will rely on the police to round up the bums, throw them in jail for the night and let them out in the morning.

The ACLU is objecting to the program because they say it gives "too much discretion" to the police to pick up "people who look scruffy." That's more than likely true — the police might use the charge of vagrancy as a catch-all or a means of harassment.

The city should emphasize its participation in programs such as the Eugene Mission, Salvation Army, and the White Bird Clinic. The Eugene Mission is an effective organization helping vagrants turn their lives around. However, the mission is located on West 1st Avenue a long way from the areas that vagrants congregate. The city might consider setting up outreach houses in the trouble areas.



"WE THANK THEE FOR THE GIFTS OF THY BOUNTIFUL HERPES AND THINE BLESSED AIDS, O LORD... NOW SEND US SOMETHING FOR ALL THE OTHER WIERDOS."

debbie howlett editor's note

Frankly I've been baffled as to why some student government officials aren't a bit more outraged over what I've capriciously tagged "Food-Gate."

A little more than a week ago I found myself discussing an editorial I wrote which chastised student leaders who were "tight-lipped" about alleged violations at the Food-Op, a non-profit collective that took the meaning of work-study literally.

The semi-private conversation I had with ASUO Vice Pres. Kevin Kouns and ASUO Publications Director, Mary Hope started out as a discussion of the ASUO's involvement in "Food-Gate." We then meandered to a discussion of the ethics of bending the law. Strangely enough, we even talked about the 'ethics' of breaking the law.

And we weren't talking civil disobedience.

Kouns said the Food-Op incident occurred, in part, because of the way the time sheets are printed (they don't allow a student to record more than one block of time in a given day). Further, Kouns said, there was no criminal intent in the recording of work hours, ergo there is no criminal liability.

I disagreed. Kouns tried to sway me. It was only bending an administrative rule, he said. Hope concurred.

Without the knowledge of whether it was a federal offense or an administrative rule, I asked Kouns and Hope if it were not criminal, wasn't "Food-Gate" just a bit immoral. That got a lukewarm "maybe."

We then discussed the morality of bending rules to

tap the fed's vast pot of public money. We argued whether a few thousand dollars would ever be missed by the federal government. Without coming to a conclusion, we changed the subject — sort of.

We talked about a rumour I'd heard — that the University's administrators were in a heavy sweat over "Food-Gate" because they were afraid an audit would show the University receiving more federal work-study money than they ought to be receiving (administrators adamantly deny this is the case).

Hope said she'd heard the same thing.

We circled back to the argument of the morality of taking more than one's fair share from so large an entity. We used the University's rumoured excess as a point of discussion.

Hope's rationalization for "bending the rules" when it comes to squeezing the fed's pocketbook, is a time-worn cliché. She said the government doesn't allow the common person to be completely honest because honesty usually nets J.Q. Public less money. Kouns and Hope cited food stamps as an example.

Nobody, according to Kouns, separates and marks food-stamp-purchased food from, say, a house-mate's non-food-stamp-purchased food, even though it's required by federal law. If the government asks though, Hope said, you tell them you're doing exactly what you're not doing. If you told the truth, you wouldn't get as many food stamps, Kouns said.

Hope said that if the University were indeed getting more than its share of work-study money, "so what." The ASUO wouldn't say anything about it because surplus funds benefit University students. Walking up to the feds and saying "here, the University has too much of your money, take some back," is misrepresenting the students at the University, she said.

We argued over how students would wanted to be represented, monetarily or morally.

It is interesting that what comes to light in the news pages of this paper — the comments that are 'for the record' — have a distinctly different sound than what is

said "off the record." This conversation was an interesting, sometimes heated, exchange. It was not explicitly "for the record," yet it was never said to be "off the record."

I was privy to a couple of student leader's thoughts on how they dealt with the federal government. If the Food-Op weren't so entrenched in what appears to be federal violations, those comments might not have made these pages. But given the involvement of the ASUO in this incident (whether the ASUO should be involved or not), which carries implications that the Food-Op defrauded the federal government, Kouns and Hope's comments seem highly newsworthy, and highly interesting.

Hope and Kouns caught me with my pencil poised. Since they did not say their comments were "off the record," I feel compelled to record them.

My mind guides my pencil to write that both Kouns and Hope's jugular veins are popping in an effort to restrain themselves from bluntly saying "Fuck the Feds."

And by now you might've guessed that both Kouns and Hope may want to say nearly the same thing to me. Maybe they do, I'm not sure.

Hope did surmise that I was crusading on a white horse, that my seemingly pious position was only because this type of news would make a name for myself, my staff and my paper.

I felt that was a fair comment, and to an extent, she's right.

Exposing impropriety at the University's Food-Op, and editorializing about the shame of it all isn't going to land any one a job with the Washington Post. The Emerald, and Jim Moore, the associate editor covering the ASUO, may earn a modicum of respect for their integrity, and possibly a few laurels for some hard work, but not much more is likely to come of it.

It also struck me that, in a simplistic way, a newspaper gains admiration and respect, especially from its audience, by telling the truth.

So I smiled at Hope. "You bet," I answered with as much cockiness as I could muster.

Hope smiled too, but I'm fairly certain we weren't making the same connection.

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