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Photos by Brian Erb

The Amazon child care center has become so successful that the state asked the center to write a book on starting a cooperative child care center.

Parents power Amazon center

By Marianne Chin
Of the Emerald

About 20 small children are seated at miniature tables and chairs in a toy-filled classroom. "Daddy, what are you doing?" asks one girl of a man emerging from an office.

It's not the typical question you hear at a day care center, but the Amazon child care center isn't the usual day care center. Participation by parents is part of what keeps the six year-old center open.

The Amazon Cooperative Child Center, located in the heart of the Amazon Family Housing complex, arose out of a need for low-cost full-time day care services for the children of students living there. The complex houses students and gives priority to those with children.

A cooperative program where parents contribute from three to five hours a week servicing the center seemed to be the solution to meet the day care needs of the tenants.

The classrooms are well-equipped and well-staffed at the Amazon child care center.

The center, which is partially funded by incidental fees, is open to children two-and-a-half to five years-old and normally accomodates about 20 to 25 children at any one time, according to Eugene Organ, a parent at the center.

"There are many places for parents to fit in. They keep it going," says Organ, who has been with the center for the past three years.

A look at the well-equipped playground and classroom, fully-stocked freezer and happy children shows the apparent success of the program. Parents not only provide help in the classroom, but they also do the purchasing and cooking of food, cleaning and maintenance of the facilities, fund raising and planning of curriculum. Parents also serve on the school's board of directors, which also includes one member from the Amazon Community Tenants Association and meets about twice a month.

"We're working to maintain what we have now," says Organ. "Our program has been considered one of the most successful in the state."

So successful was the program that two years ago the center was offered funding by the State of Oregon Children's Services Division to write a book on starting and operating a cooperative child care program. The guide, published and written by staff members and parents in 1981, is entitled "All Right, Who Ate the Goldfish," and was inspired by a child who did just that.

The Amazon center, open from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. weekdays, is staffed by a full-time teacher, a teacher-coordinator, a bookkeeper, work study students and the parents. The teacher to student ratio is 1-5, according to Organ.

On a typical day, parents drop their children off before 9:30 a.m. and pick them up around 4:30 p.m., though children are not required to stay at the center a full day, according to Suzy Blanchard, teacher-coordinator.

Daily activities include planned physical and learning projects, story and nap times, outdoor playtime and three complete meals. Visiting speakers, field trips and a swim program at the YMCA are also planned, said Blanchard.

"We try to make this a home away from home," says Blanchard, "and emphasize family, nurturing and belonging."

Blanchard says the center also has plans to set up a learning center and emphasizes that teaching children to be self-sufficient and less reliant on adult supervision is a goal of the center.

Organ also points out that the center sees a lot of participation by male adults, a factor he says is not present in most day care centers.

"We have lots of support from the University in kind, though not financial," says Organ. "It is an effective program and there is a lot of Amazon community support."

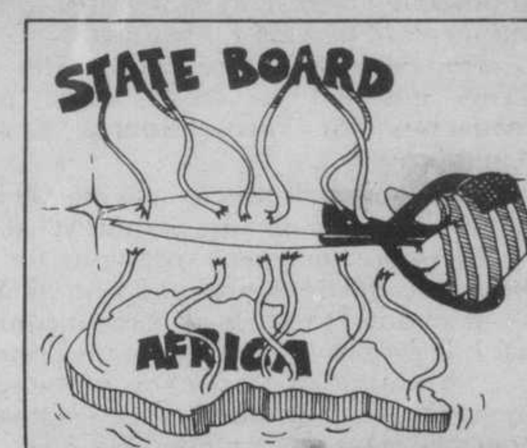
ASUO resurrects divestiture lawsuit

By Jim Moore
Of the Emerald

A 1978 divestiture lawsuit, born amid an outcry of public support and buried by lack of action, is being resurrected by the current ASUO administration.

In 1977 the Oregon State Board of Higher Education voted 8-3 to halt its investments in any company that conducts business in South Africa. But six months later James Redden, then state attorney general, ruled that the board did not have "statutory authority" to make a decision regarding divestment.

Redden said that the Oregon Investment Council has the greatest amount of authority over investments in the state of Oregon. The council, whose investment officer is State Treasurer Clay Myers, has not made any requests to stop the investment of state funds in those companies.



Graphic by Shawn Bird

Encouraged by public protests of Redden's decision and demonstrations calling for divestment, the ASUO spearheaded the court action that included support from many non-University organizations and individuals.

But after gaining two judgments favoring the ASUO's position, the case has slipped from public view. Briefs and motions lay in the countless stacks of other unfinished court business.

Meanwhile, those investment funds have grown from $11.75 million in 1977 to $25.4 million at last count in 1982, says ASUO attorney James Campbell.

Campbell says it's nearly impossible to determine, at any given moment, how much of that money is invested in companies involved in South Africa, but he estimates it may be as much as 30 percent.

The suit involves four major points, two from the ASUO, the plaintiffs in the suit, and two from the state board and the Investment Council, the defendants.

The ASUO's first point is that the ASUO and other student groups have the right to take the board and council to court. The court ruled they do.

The ASUO's second point may be the most critical and the most controversial. The ASUO questions whether higher education investment funds are controlled by the board or the council. They felt the board had control and should not have been overruled by Redden.

In two separate decisions from 1981, the courts ruled in favor of the ASUO's second point.

"The board retains the ultimate authority and control over funds currently invested in common stock," wrote Circuit Judge George Woodrich in September 1981.

Since that ruling, the board and council have not sought a ruling on either of their points. Those points are that states cannot divest because that action intrudes on foreign relations, and that divestment violates the state's prudent investor rule.

Without a ruling the money remains where the council wishes. That's where the current ASUO administration enters the scene.

ASUO Pres. Mary Hotchkiss intends to approach the Incidental Fee Committee within a month to seek help in funding the reactivation of the suit.

"It's unfinished business," Hotchkiss says. "A suit that's half won."

She says a lot of time, effort and money have gone into the suit and she wants to carry it through.

Campbell says he feels confident about winning the suit, if enough money can be raised to force the case back into court. Hotchkiss and the ASUO are prepared to participate in fund raising activities.

"We have a good chance of winning and setting a precedent," Campbell says.

Hotchkiss also is concerned with the moral issue involved.

South Africa has legalized apartheid, which is strict racial segregation. Blacks, who overwhelmingly outnumber whites, have been denied participation in government, job opportunities, education opportunities and other basic human rights.

The heart of the issue centers on whether divestment is the best method of denouncing and defeating apartheid; the ASUO says yes, the Investment Council, led by Myers, says no.

"Divestment would probably hurt more than help blacks," says Myers, who says he believes apartheid is "reprehensible."

Myers says many black leaders in South Africa oppose divestment, and that there are a variety of other pressures that can be brought to bear against the South African government.

Boycotts don't work, he says, referring to divestment. Rather than divesting, money could be raised to support multi-racial groups, and sanctions could be imposed on companies that don't practice job equality, he says.

Myers also is opposed to new businesses entering South Africa and the expansion of those currently established there. He says conditions

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