

The death penalty is not a form of justice

Murder: It happens all the time. Reports of violent crimes that result in a victim's death fill the pages of newspapers almost daily. How should society deal with convicted murderers who have committed cruel acts of violence against innocent victims? On Nov. 6, Oregonians will have a chance to answer that question.

During the past year an organization which calls itself "Concerned Oregonians for Justice" has worked hard to get the death penalty reinstated in Oregon. Ballot Measures 6 and 7 call for an amendment to the state constitution that will allow death by lethal injection to be used in cases of aggravated murder when the jury unanimously finds that the defendant acted deliberately, without provocation, and is a possible future threat to society.

The death penalty is considered by COJ to be a form of criminal justice. In reality the death penalty promotes a philosophy of an "eye for an eye" in society. It teaches that revenge is the answer to murder.

Proponents of the death penalty argue that it will decrease the number of violent murders that occur in society. They say that those individuals who are likely to commit murder will think twice before they act knowing that the penalty could be death should they get caught.

On the surface this sounds like a good argument, but a careful look at the facts shows that there is no proof linking a decrease in homicides to use of the death penalty.

The biggest collection of work to this effect was done by Thurston Sellin. In a series of studies that he carried out looking at states before and after they had a death penalty and also comparing states with and without capital punishment laws, Sellin carefully documented that there was no correlation between use of a death penalty and a decrease in murder.

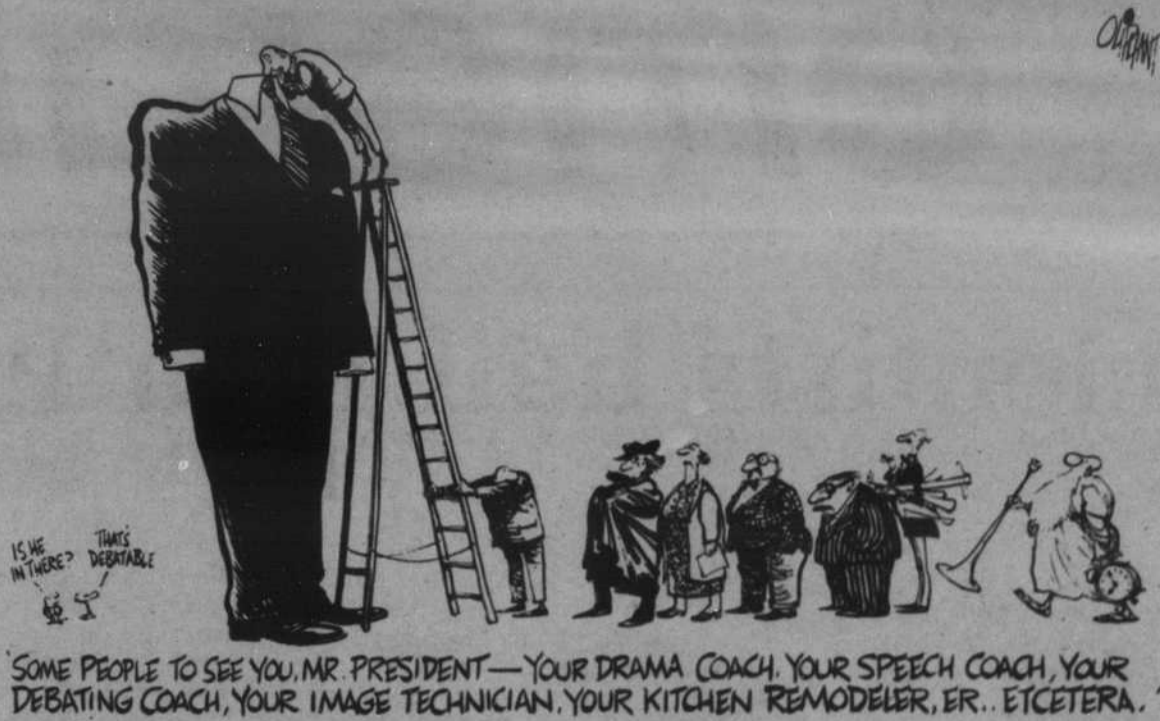
Another study (Bowers and Pierce, 1979), showed that in New York State between 1907 and 1963, an increase in homicides occurred within a month of executions carried out under the death penalty. An average of 2-3 additional homicides was reported. Bowers and Pierce called this phenomena a "brutality effect." They concluded that use of the death penalty actually increased the rate of murder in New York State, because it sent a clear message to the public that killing was permissible in certain cases.

The death penalty does not decrease the rate of violent murder in society nor is it an example of criminal justice. It does, however, increase the chances of innocent persons being charged with murder and put to death. Since 1900 there have been 300 persons charged with murder in U.S. courts who were later found to be innocent. Had there been a death penalty, many of them would have been killed.

Supporters of the death penalty have also ignored other important findings related to violent crime, such as reports which indicate increased murders in areas where there is an increase in unemployment.

Racism is also an issue since 49% of all people sentenced to death have been black and 43% of those currently on death row are also black. Studies carried out by Robert Mauro, University Psychology Professor, and his associate, Sam Gross, indicate that those who kill whites are more likely to be sentenced to death than individuals who kill blacks.

The bottom line is that the death penalty does not decrease the rate of murder. It ignores social problems that contribute to violent crime, it can lead to innocent persons being put to death, it teaches the public that killing is a form of justice, and it allows racism on the part of juries and judges to be a deciding factor in whom should be put to death. Vote no on Measures 6 and 7.



letters

Swallowing it

What he was saying: "And when I became governor of California I started this and I continued it in this office, that any issue that comes before me, I have instructed Cabinet members and staff, they are not to bring up any of the political ramifications that might surround the issue."

What he was thinking: "And if you'll swallow this, you'll swallow anything."

Reagan fans have been swallowing some big ones lately.

Keith Bowen
Eugene

Unchallenged

Constant rhetoric from the Mondale-Ferraro campaign takes issue with the Republican party for failing to endorse the ERA. But why should a political party be inclined to endorse a dead issue? Don't Democrats believe in the Constitution?

The Constitution of the United States clearly outlines the procedures through which an amendment may be ratified. Despite the fair and just intents of the Constitution, a Democrat-controlled Congress ignored the Constitution and extended the period for ratification by an additional 3 years. The amendment still died. And nobody can blame that on Ronald Reagan.

With regard to women, President Reagan's record is unchallenged:

1. Under Reagan, a woman represents the United States in the United Nations.
2. Under Reagan, a record number of women serve in the

- president's cabinet. More than in any previous administration.
3. Under Reagan, a hispanic woman serves as Treasurer of the United States.
4. Under Reagan, women account for 57% of all the president's political appointments.
5. Under Reagan, a woman serves on the Supreme Court. O'Connor, much more than a token, is an outstanding Justice.
6. Under Reagan, 1,600 women have been appointed (by the president) to policy and management positions in the administration.

President Reagan's record is clear. He supports progress and opportunity for women.

Unfortunately, Mondale's political motives in nominating Ferraro for VP are also clear. Mondale's record can't stand up to Reagan's, so he had to do something to cloud the issue.

On November 6, don't be caught with your head in the clouds — vote to re-elect Ronald Reagan.

Eric Stillwell
Political Science

Only support

I am writing in reference to Vice President Bush's remarks during his debate with congresswoman Ferraro. His "concept of the vice presidency" sees the vice president supporting the president's policies 100%, both publicly and privately. I disagree with Bush. His attitude should not be a rule of thumb for any vice president.

I would much rather see a working relationship between the vice president and president where each maintains his own private opinions while showing solidarity in public. This was Walter Mondale's feeling when, back in the Carter days, he publicly endorsed the Soviet grain embargo policy, while privately expressing skepticism about it.

It is beneficial to have presidential advisers with differing views. The president can then review the full scope of an issue and so formulate policy accordingly. A president who only has his opinions reverently reinforced by his advisers can not be formulating policy which is in the interest of the entire nation.

Shouldn't the president hear what the other side has to offer before jumping the gun on an issue? The vice president,

because of his proximity to the president, is in a vital position to enlighten him to these other schools of thought.

A lesson can be learned from President Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis. He surrounded himself with advisers who had many different views for dealing with the situation, forcing the president to consider every option. This resulted in a responsible, well thought out solution to the conflict. All presidential policy should be formed in a manner to ensure the strength and integrity of this country.

Bruce Abedon
Eugene

Moral outrage

As a Mondale supporter, I am appalled by the behavior of the RCYB and a new group called Autonomen which systematically violated my First Amendment rights for over an hour near the Marine recruiting table in the EMU. I was called a Nazi by the Autonomen group for saying that Mondale offered a Democratic alternative to some of the policies of the Reagan administration which they were allegedly there to protest.

As a blunt warning to such fanatics, most of the students protesting the Reagan administration policies are doing so to further protect freedoms they feel are being endangered by Reagan's policies. They feel that Reagan's policies would possibly take away their rights as citizens of a democracy. I very much doubt that most students at the University would want to live in the sort of political system advocated by the RCYB.

Frankly, I feel moral outrage at the unbelievable arrogance of extremist groups who use legitimate protest as a vehicle to get a platform to totally dominate open air discussions.

I think that it is completely unfair for the RCYB and Autonomen to abuse an open air forum for the purpose of ramming a totally intolerant political philosophy again and again at the expense of legitimate protest groups. Would such fanatics please get away from the serious business of political discourse if their aim is to stop a presentation of the issues.

Andrew Beckwith
Graduate student, Physics
Wednesday, October 17, 1984

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