



One life's
just not
enough

See Page 10

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Lawyer warns of coming 'new slavery'

By Dave Berns
Of the Emerald

Renegade lawyer Gerry Spence ranted and raged about the inadequacies and dangers of multinational corporations, law schools and other American institutions Saturday, in a speech at the Western Public Interest Conference.

Spence, a Wyoming-based lawyer, who is probably best known for his part in the Karen Silkwood case, claimed the goal of the American corporation is to "turn the living to the dead."

"If I killed one person for money... I would receive the death penalty," he said. But while gas tanks the Ford Motor Co. has put into its Pinto-line cars could kill a "certain number of people," Ford can get away with this crime because it owns the American judicial system, Spence said.

Spence further characterized American corporations as a beast, without a heart or soul, that enslaves people. "We receive propaganda everyday saying we are free, when in fact we don't know we are being subjugated. This is a time of the new slavery, and we are the new slaves."

"Our masters (corporations) don't breath... at least the black slave had a live human being for a master. I grieve for our children who don't know any better and don't have a chance... other than to become a cog in the wheel."

Spence made his comments to more than 300 people in the University law school, during the third annual Western Public Interest Conference.

Although speaking before an audience predominantly composed of lawyers and law-school students, Spence was vehement in his criticism of both law schools and the legal profession.

"You all want to be Christ hanging on the cross," Spence told his audience. Instead of trying to better everyone's life, Spence said it's enough to change the life of one human being.

"Law school is most likely to be a negative, hurtful experience," he said. It teaches us to conform to the laws of society rather than examine its foundation,

Spence said. "I would rather send my child to a school that teaches him to question the system."

"Computers pick our modern-day lawyers. That machine can't separate out very much about the individual's humanness," Spence said, referring to the process used in grading the Law School Application Test.

During his 35-year legal career, the 56-year-old attorney has handled a variety of environmental and

personal-injury cases against corporate interests. He was successful in a \$10 million suit against the Kerr-McGee Corp. for negligence in the 1974 death of employee Karen Silkwood.

The conference included seminars on American Indian rights and environmental protection, pesticides and the law, ocean and coastal concerns, citizen participation and the law, and the conduct of environmental trials.



Photo by Michael Clapp

Wyoming-based lawyer Gerry Spence told a 300-member audience at the University law school that law school is most likely to be "a negative, hurtful experience."

Shift of tax burden refuted

Legislators oppose sales tax

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

Three Lane County legislators Sunday told a group of citizens at the Eugene Public Library their reasons for opposing the proposed 5-percent sales tax.

Rep. Larry Hill, D-Springfield, who voted against the sales tax in the House, said the tax package is designed to shift the tax burden in three ways. First, it would shift about \$30 million in taxes from businesses to consumers, he said.

It would also shift the tax burden from big businesses to smaller businesses. The bill has no provision for relieving smaller companies that rent business space, but businesses that own their own property would get property tax reduction, he said.

The sales tax plan would also shift the tax burden from upper-income families to middle-income ones, he said.

Hill cited a report by the Legislative Revenue Office estimating that a family of four with an income of \$25,000 would actually have an increase in their total tax bill of \$22 a year. The family's property and income taxes would be reduced, but their estimated sales tax payments would be greater than those reductions.

The same report estimates that a family of two with an income of \$50,000 would receive a net tax reduction of \$222 a year.

The sales tax would not help renters, because landlords cannot afford to pass on property-tax savings to their tenants, Hill said. Holding the vote on a sales tax would cost taxpayers about \$500,000, he said.

Since no formula for distributing the tax

revenues to local school districts has been established, it is impossible to tell exactly how much any specific family would be affected, Hill said.

Sen. Margie Hendriksen, who promised to vote against the sales tax, criticized the Legislature for its plan to reduce the timber severance tax, the tax timber companies pay in lieu of property taxes. Under the plan, the severance tax would be reduced from 6.5 percent to 5 percent in Western Oregon and from 5 percent to 3.8 percent in Eastern Oregon.

Since the severance tax helps offset property taxes, the reduction will add an extra burden to property owners, she said.

Sen. Ed Fadeley, a major opponent of the sales tax in the last legislative session, said he would not vote for the package as it is, but he might vote to refer an amended version.

Fadeley criticized the sales-tax package for not specifically limiting property tax levies of cities, counties or special taxing districts. The package also guarantees that property tax levies for public schools, Educational Service Districts and community colleges will increase after the initial sales tax offset by 6 percent a year, he said.

For every \$10 of sales tax collected only \$7 would go to property and income tax relief, he said.

Ray Phillips of the Oregon Taxpayers Union said his group had not yet announced opposition to the sales tax, "but it would certainly have to."

Though the plan was first touted as tax reform, its proponents now say it is only a means of stabilizing revenue for Oregon's public schools, he said.

"I don't see how they can call it reform, when they're taking from this pocket instead of that pocket," he said. "It's still taxes."

Valuable feline furs stolen from storage

Two animal skins valued at more than \$10,000 were reported stolen Feb. 25 from a building where they were being stored temporarily, according to Eugene Police.

The relics, which belonged to the University Museum of Natural History, were discovered missing from a former dormitory at 1652 Columbia St. when museum employees went to the storage building to move the skins to another location, said Officer Bill Jennings of Eugene Police.

The skins had been stored in the building since last summer because of an insufficient amount of storage space in the museum, said Herbert Wisner, a museum curator.

"There's a lack of storage space here," Wisner said. "There just aren't enough places on campus to store museum exhibits."

Wisner said the skins were about to be sold to another museum and were not meant to be on display at the museum. The museum doesn't ordinarily exhibit items such as trophy heads, he said.

"The donor made no specific mention about the purpose of the skins," Wisner said. "They were to be used for whatever purpose the museum saw fit. The donor asked not to be identified."

According to the police, the skins were last seen in the storage area Jan. 16 when they were viewed by an appraiser. The thief or thieves apparently gained entry into the building by breaking a side window, Jennings said.

An African lioness fur rug valued at \$3,500 mounted on a brown fabric lining is 125 inches long, including the tail, and 88 inches wide. The fur is yellow with a short, dark brown mane, black ears and is mounted with its jaws open, according to the police report.

The other fur is an Asian Indian Bengal tiger valued at \$8,400. The bright reddish-tan skin is crossed with black stripes and measures 130 inches long and 84 inches wide.