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Nuclear arms disputed, refuted as supporters defend measures

By Deborah Janes
of the Emerald

Controversy over Ballot Measures 16, 18 and 51 came to a head last night as opponents and supporters defended their positions in a debate at the Eugene City Hall.

Measure 16 would grant tax credits to Oregon companies that made a conversion from production of nuclear arms

components to production of consumer goods. Measure 18 would make Lane County a nuclear-free zone and Measure 51 would declare Eugene a nuclear-free zone with much stricter guidelines than its Lane County counterpart.

Measure 51 bans the production, testing, waste disposal and transportation of nuclear weapons in Eugene. In addition, the measure would designate a seven-person elected board to oversee compliance and issue fines for violations. "These measures address global issues from a local base and allow us to say we don't want to be part of the suicide pact," said Olive Bowers, representative from Citizens for a Nuclear Free Oregon.

Opponents argued that the measures would jeopardize Lane County citizens' security and violate their rights to be defended.

"These measures tie the hands of individuals who care about defending themselves," said Toni Nathan of the Libertarian Party and member of the Concerned Citizens for Defense.

Robert Bennett, former Lockheed Aerospace Engineer, railed against Measure 51 as "bad legislation," and objected to the clause that allows private citizens to issue an injunction against any company they believe is in violation of the measure.

David Oaks of Political Action for Lasting Security responded that with Measure 51's passage, city council

members could alter the language of the ordinance.

"City Council should start from scratch on 51. It's cowardly to do a patch-up job," Bennett said.

The six-member panel focused their discussion on the moral issues instead of the implications of the measures, to the chagrin of some audience members.

"They talked of peripheral issues and not about the specifics of the measures. We're bitterly disappointed," said J.K. Byrne, observer.

"We have a responsibility to protect Europe and Japan. We have a nuclear umbrella," Nathan said.

Eugene needs to defend itself not against the Soviets, but rather the defense industry that "is ripping us all off," Oaks said. "Who are defending the old people starving in the street? The ones backing these measures, that's who," he added.

The measures would be detrimental to Oregon's already depressed economy by scaring away potential defense industry contracts, argued opponents.

Companies based in Lane County that are involved in production of nuclear components would be forced to leave if Measure 51 passed, Bennett said.

"Nuclear defense projects are the cutting edge of new technology. These projects always have commercial applications later," Bennett said.

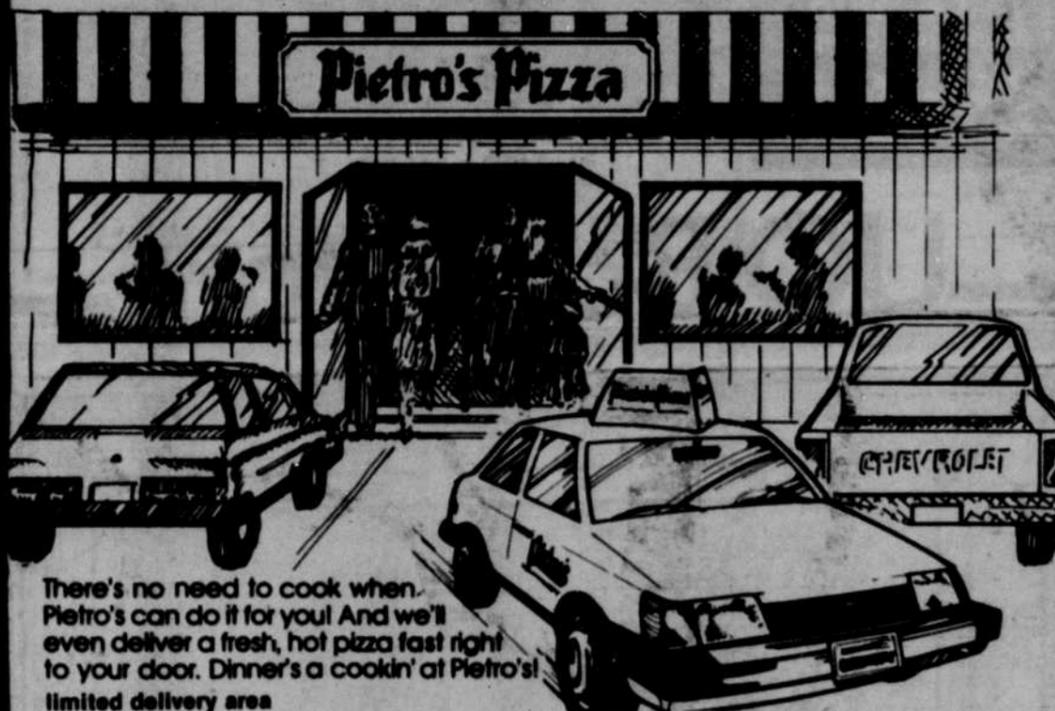
The possibility of economic spin-off from defense projects to Oregon's economy is unlikely, as demonstrated in the insignificant contribution since the beginning of the Cold War, said Steve Johnson of Decision Research. "We don't want that type of employment. The morality of making nuclear sub-components is that they are helping with mass destruction. We are asking people to think about that," he said.

But attempts to outlaw nuclear arms production as outlined in Measure 16 are futile, Nathan believes. "It would just create a black market on technology. The genie is already out of the bottle."

The Soviet Union has initiated arms reduction by placing an unilateral moratorium on their nuclear arms testing 14 months ago, according to Johnson. "That must mean they are nuclear wimps," quipped Johnson.

City Councilor Freeman Holmer acknowledged that the United States has the potential to kill everyone on the planet. "But the Russians are building more and we must keep pace with them."

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