

DeFazio says Congress won't pass financial aid cuts

By Shawn Wirtz
Of the Emerald

President Reagan's proposed budget cuts in financial aid will not pass Congress, said U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio during a visit to Eugene on Friday.

"I don't think his proposal for radical restructuring is going to go through," DeFazio said. Instead of cutting financial aid, more money should be appropriated, he said.

DeFazio also criticized Secretary of Education William Bennett's proposal to raise the interest rates on student loans but determine payment amounts based on the student's salary after graduating.

"I see that as a real problem. You can't come out of school with what would basically be a house mortgage," DeFazio said. Student loans are a lucrative investment because the federal government makes the money back when students get high-paying jobs and start paying taxes, he said.

Despite the sense it makes, members of the Reagan administration don't support higher education because "their philosophy is real simple. They don't care," DeFazio said. "Their other motivation is that they're really looking at what they say is a surplus.

"They don't even know anybody who can't afford to pay for a Stanford education out of their own pocket," he added.

While students are facing cuts, unless Congress calls a vote by Feb. 5, congresspeople will receive an automatic pay raise. "A number of senior people are predicting it will come to a vote," DeFazio said. "I'm not enough in the inside to know what's going on there.

"Pay raises are very emotional issues, especially among senior members," he said. "I'm not saying it isn't expensive to live here, but in a time when we're running huge deficits I don't really believe we can justify increased pay.

"After some of the other members go home and they hear from their constituents, it might shake some people," DeFazio added.

DeFazio said he will use his committee positions to fight against the Hanford nuclear waste site becoming a federal repository and keep power rates down in the Northwest.

"I'll certainly be fighting a Hanford proposal," DeFazio said. "No further waste should be brought into the disposal site."

There is general consensus in Congress that the process for choosing Hanford as a site candidate was tainted, he said.

DeFazio is encouraged that the concern over Hanford is "really becoming not just an Oregon, Washington and Idaho issue," he said. While representatives from Nevada are "particularly concerned" about the transportation of radioactive wastes, "they have seen sites that might work," DeFazio said.

DeFazio appreciates any help Gov. Neil Goldschmidt can offer in fighting Hanford as a site, but doesn't think putting a referendum on the Oregon ballot would be productive, he said.

"I see no reason for a referendum. I think the governor

should be able to ascertain that it's not necessary," DeFazio said. Congress already knows Oregon's opposition to Hanford is "overwhelming," he said.

Outside his committee work DeFazio may join the Human Rights Caucus and the Arms Control Caucus, he said. "I think we're going to legislate foreign policy," DeFazio said. "I believe we will stop aid to the Contras."

The money diverted to the Contras from the sale of arms to Iran has weakened the president's position, and with a Democrat-controlled Senate, DeFazio expects more money will be spent on social services and less on military purchases, he said.

Some members of Congress are just realizing "that they can stand up against him (Reagan)," but he made campaigning against Reagan part of his campaign policy, DeFazio said. "It doesn't come as any revelation to me that he's a paper tiger."

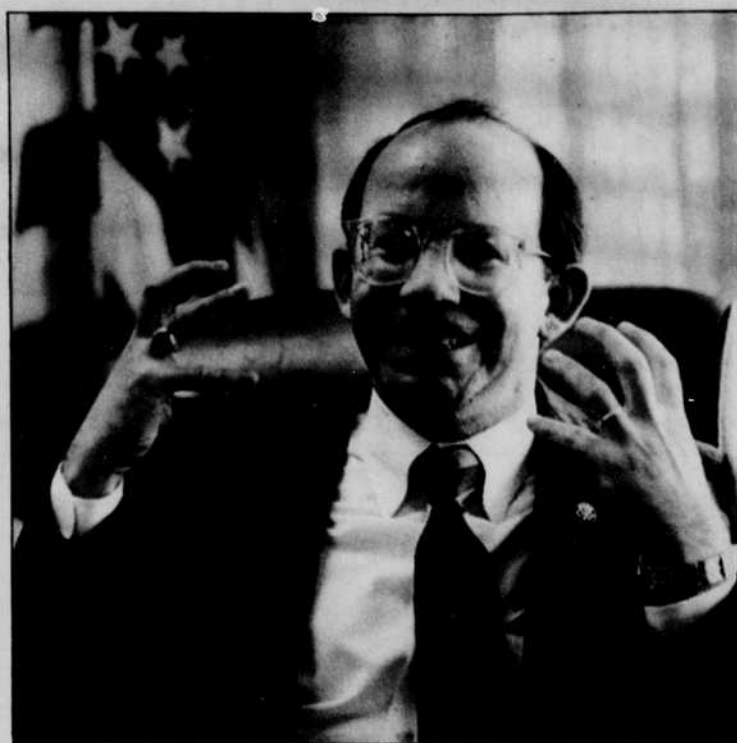


Photo by Michael Wilhelm

Rep. Peter DeFazio pledged to fight making Hanford a nuclear waste site.

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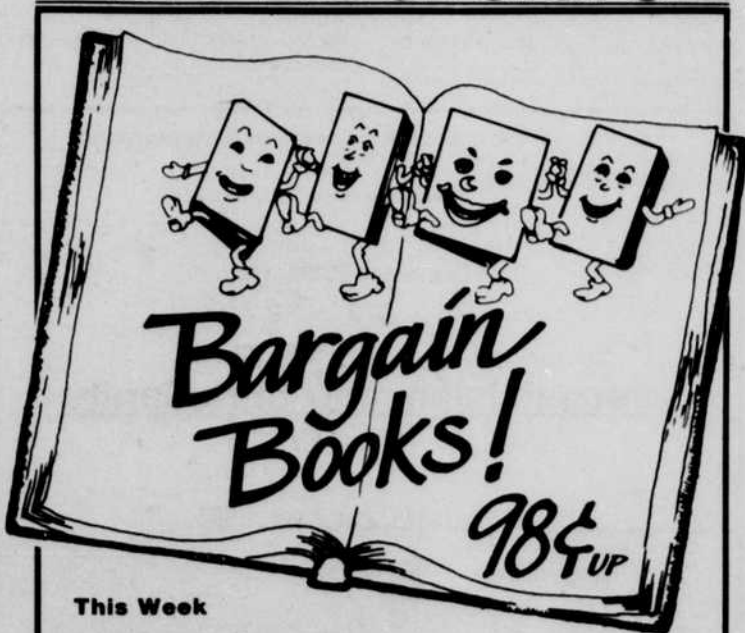


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