

# Editorial

## Reagan creates economic elite

President Reagan is returning to an old campaign theme with his proposal of an "Economic Bill of Rights": getting the government off the backs of the people. Unfortunately, his "Bill of Rights" will deprive the people of their right to governmental representation.

In a speech last Friday Reagan outlined his economic proposals that will become his main emphasis for the rest of his term. His so-called "Economic Bill of Rights" includes proposing a constitutional amendment that would require a balanced federal budget, allowing the private sector to participate in the federal economy, promoting a freer market and world trade, and reducing government regulations.

In essence, these proposals seek to usurp the powers of Congress and circumvent its ability to represent the people. Reagan is creating a more elite form of leadership by reallocating the powers of Congress to the executive branch.

The constitutional amendment for a balanced federal budget comes after Congress proposed a \$1 trillion budget that did not meet Reagan's expectations. It increases spending on domestic programs and decreases spending on defense.

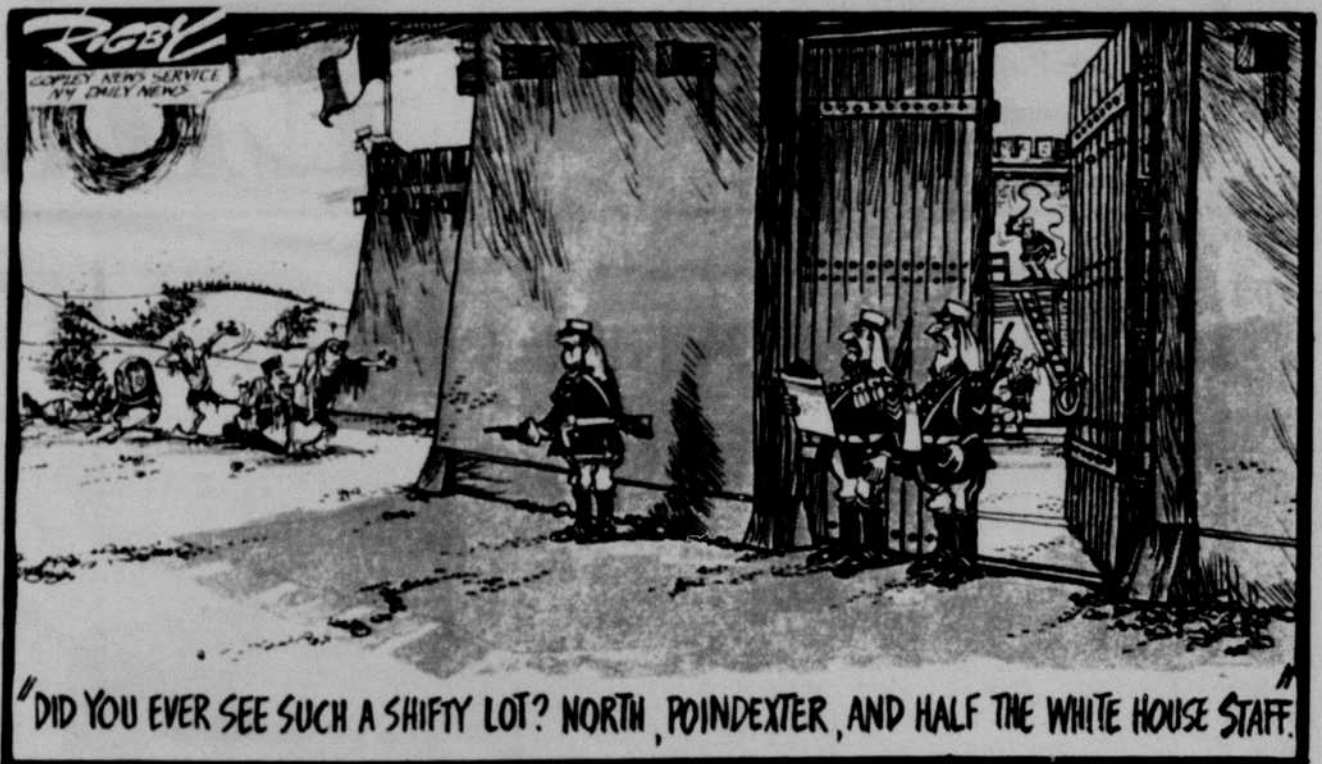
The amendment would require a unspecified "super" majority of Congress to approve tax increases. It also would require a statement detailing where the revenues for new programs would come from for the next five years.

However, this proposal is a contradiction for Reagan. He has promised a balanced budget since his 1980 campaign, but he has yet to reduce spending. Simply passing an amendment requiring a balanced budget will not reduce spending. Even with the requirement to assess revenues as they are allocated will not solve the problem. Stronger actions must be taken.

Reagan is adamantly against raising taxes. But this is one of the simplest ways to reduce the deficit. Even the people, represented by the members of Congress, are in favor of the increases.

If Reagan does raise taxes he will be providing for better domestic programs. This is something the private sector or large business would never tackle. His proposals seek to allow the private sector to take over some of the government's responsibilities. But welfare and education are not appealing aspects of the government and may get left by the way side.

These aspects of his "Bill of Rights" will create an elite government that will emphasize big business and leave the voice and wishes of the people behind.



# Commentary

## Emphasis on business closes minds

People on campus are talking about Allan Bloom's new book, "The Closing of the American Mind" — and for good reason. Allan Bloom, a political philosophy professor at the University of Chicago, elucidates a fundamental problem with America's system of higher education: Universities no longer emphasize a liberal arts education and students no longer seek one. Instead, higher education focuses primarily on teaching career skills for use in some particular area of specialization. According to Bloom, this emphasis on specialization results in an intellectually underdeveloped graduating class.

Commentary by  
Steve Hoenisch

Many of today's graduating students are illiterate in the humanities, including literature, philosophy and the arts. Rather than pursue a liberal arts education, career-oriented students are trained in business administration, computer science, or perhaps even leisure activities. For such students, the primary purpose of attaining a college degree is to facilitate a guaranteed position in the private sector of the economy. A college education is no longer the means to attaining intellectual enlightenment, but rather the means to acquire well-paying employment.

Here at the University, enrollment statistics confirm the preoccupation with career-oriented courses of study over strictly intellectual endeavors. For example, during spring term 1987 there were 473 architecture majors compared to 28 humanities ma-

jors; 399 in computer information science compared to eight in classics, and 302 finance majors contrasted to 42 in philosophy. Furthermore, there were more pre-business administration majors than the total amount of undeclared students in the fourth week of spring term, 1987.

According to Bloom, students are compelled into specialized majors and away from the liberal arts by their initial confrontation with a multiplicity of courses and subjects that often are competing and contradictory in nature. Bloom writes: "when a student arrives at the university, he finds a bewildering variety of departments and a bewildering variety of courses. And there is no official guidance... about what he *should* study.... It is easiest simply to make a career choice and go about getting prepared for that career."

One of the reasons that students are graduating with less of a liberal education, Bloom points out, is that many universities dropped requirements during the 1960s, succumbing to pressure for a deregulated curriculum. Although the University does have "core" requirements that help promote a liberal arts education, many major departments do not require additional courses in specified subjects, such as comparative literature or English.

The University School of Journalism, however, is one exception to this rule. By requiring students to take 136 credits in disciplines other than journalism, the journalism school has become a paradigm for other departments in compelling students to study the liberal arts.

The adversity to the liberal arts is perpetuated further by the federal financial aid policies of the Reagan administration. The decrease in the availability of federal aid over the last few years has produced a disincentive regarding the pursuit of more intellectual, yet less applicable courses of study.

By reducing the proportion of the federal budget allocated to education, the burden of paying for college has been shifted to students and their parents, bringing forth a reevaluation of the cost and benefits of college in terms of post-education income. As a result of this shifted cost burden, many students find it worthwhile to attend college only if it significantly will augment their

perceived future income level. Unfortunately, a liberal arts education does not supply the specialized training required to guarantee economic success in the future.

Overcoming the formidable barriers deterring students from seeking and accomplishing a liberal education will be difficult but possible, calling for changes in university requirements and federal education policy.

One potential way of solving the problem is a renovation of the curriculum requirements of America's universities. Although the University has made significant steps in this direction, efforts should be made to step up the number of core requirements in all the diverse branches of knowledge, especially the humanities. Furthermore, individual departments should increase the number of specific requirements, much like the journalism school has done, to promote a liberal education.

At the prescription of Allan Bloom, the classic works of philosophy, literature, and science should be reintroduced on a university-wide level. In fact, Bloom claims that "the only serious solution is the one that is almost universally rejected: the old Great Books approach, in which a liberal education means reading certain generally recognized classic texts..."

Perhaps, as Bloom believes, reading classic texts is the solution, but other measures may help as well, particularly changing the federal financial aid policy. If federal aid in the form of grants, subsidized loans and work study could be increased significantly, rather than cut, then students would be more inclined to pursue a liberal arts education with less fear of future economic backlash. While proposing to decrease federal financial aid by \$3.7 billion, the Reagan administration seeks to increase defense spending and Strategic Defense Initiative funds by a combined total of \$21.1 billion for 1988. These misconceived, unprecedented spending increases are at the expense of domestic social programs such as education, and should not be tolerated by the public.

In this way, the Reagan administration is doing its share to close the American mind—and as a result it may take more than a few great books or even a crowbar to pry it open again.

## Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403. Daily publication will resume with the fall term.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

### General Staff

Advertising Director Susan Thelen  
Production Manager Michele Ross  
Classified Advertising Alyson Simmons  
Assistant to the Publisher Jean Ownbey

### Editor

Managing/Student Govt Stanley Nelson  
News Editor Carolyn Lamberson  
Editorial Page Editor Eden Godbey  
Photo Editor Angela Muniz  
Night Editor Shu-Shing Chen  
Mike Drummond

### Associate Editors

Higher Ed/Administration Mike Drummond  
General Assignment/Entertainment Aaron Knox  
Community Stephen Maher

### Advertising: Janelle Heitmann

Production: Sandra Daller / Ad Coordinator  
Kelly Alexandre, Eliot Knight, Diana Moy, Angela Muniz,  
Ingrid White, Serena Williams

### News and Editorial

686-5511  
Display Advertising 686-3712  
Classified Advertising 686-4343  
Letter Perfect Graphics 686-5511  
Production 686-4381  
Circulation and Business 686-5511

### Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in.