

Editorial

Mental health care a priority issue

Last week the Oregonian ran a series of articles on the conditions of the state's mental health institutions. The reports brought many mental health care problems to the surface. Unfortunately it also realized how difficult it will be to solve them.

Oregon once was known for its progressive mental health programs, but these ideas have not been carried out recently. The concept of deinstitutionalization, for example, is the primary policy implemented in the state. It believes patients can receive equal treatment and lead fuller lives if they are integrated into the community. But lack of community support and substandard housing for the patients have hampered the effectiveness of this policy.

However, deinstitutionalization has helped to reduce overcrowding at state institutions. This, in turn, relieves some of the pressures on an already overworked staff.

Violence is still a major concern, though. Both patients and workers have been injured in attacks by other patients. For this reason, staff safety was an issue during the Oregon Public Employees Union strike in September. According to the Oregonian, last year employees of Dammasch and Oregon state hospitals filed almost 340 injury claims and the state spends almost \$6 million for workers compensation.

This problem is a direct result of understaffed institutions — there are not enough employees to watch over the patients.

"When you got four (psychiatric) aides, it's hard to cover 30 to 40 patients on all parts of the ward," Chuck Forward, an Oregon State Hospital psychiatric aide, told the Oregonian.

Hiring more staff would be a simple solution to this aspect of the problem, but it is not possible until the Legislature reconvenes in 1989. Already this year the Emergency Board granted \$900,000 to move 50 Dammasch patients into community care. However, the board denied another \$700,000 request for general psychiatric staff at the Oregon State Hospital.

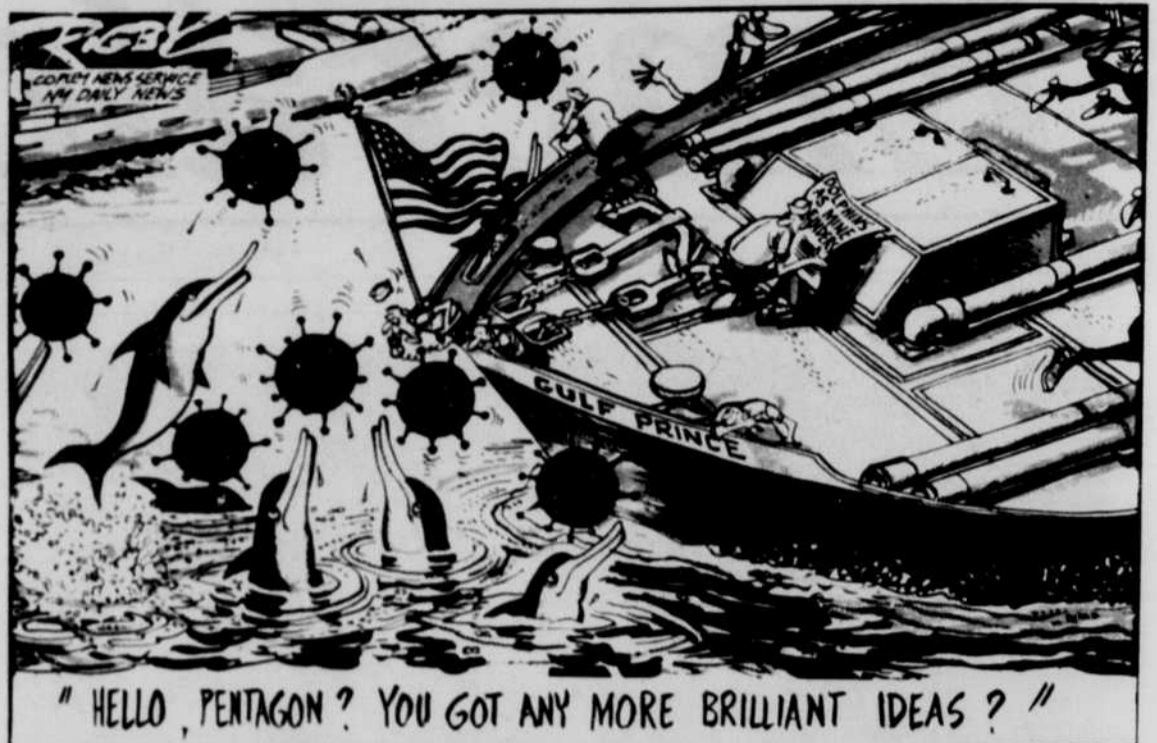
The Emergency Funds are running low. Almost half of the reserve has been allocated to fighting forest fires.

Governor Neil Goldschmidt has acknowledged the need to repair and maintain quality mental health care in Oregon, and will make it a priority when the Legislature meets. But Goldschmidt faces 10 years of neglect.

The state Human Resource chief, Kevin Concannon, stated the lack of action will be difficult to overcome. "It's an unrealistic hope that the governor will make up in 10 months for 10 years of pent-up demand," he said to the Oregonian.

Efficient and safe mental health care is a problem that has been overlooked too many times. The Oregonian's series has played an important and much needed role in advocating a proper, quality system. The articles should not be ignored. Instead they should be seen as a potential solution to solving many of the problems.

If Oregon is truly concerned about caring for its mentally ill, it will address the issue as soon as possible in the Legislature. It is possible for the state to regain its famous, progressive programs, but people need to realize it will take time, money and dedication.



Letters

Gulf policy

In June 1986 when the U.S. Navy arrived in the Persian Gulf to reflag Kuwaiti oil tankers, the Department of State announced three major objectives of U.S. policy in the gulf: 1) To protect the unimpeded flow of oil; 2) to stand by American friends in the gulf; and 3) to limit Soviet influence.

Now that more than three months have passed since the reflagging policy began, one can question the achievements of U.S. objectives in the gulf.

First, not only has the flow of oil not become unimpeded, but tankers are now, more than ever, subject to indiscriminate attacks (by direct and indirect belligerents). According to Lloyd's of London, in the six months before the U.S. arrived in the gulf, only 58 attacks were recorded on more than 400 commercial ships using the gulf daily. In the three months since the reflagging policy, there have been at least 53 attacks on commercial ships. This clearly indicates that commercial shipping now is twice as dangerous as it was before the United States arrived in the Persian Gulf.

Second, the American friends in the gulf (countries who support Iraq in the Gulf War) are now, more than at any other

time, in danger of direct conflict with Iran, and their conditions are far from being safe. The latest Iranian attack on the Kuwaiti Sea Island main oil terminal attests to this. Now for the first time since the beginning of the Gulf War in 1980, Kuwait has become directly involved in an act of war with Iran. With the escalation of the war and more pressure on Iran, Saudi Arabia and other gulf kingdoms will become targets for further Iranian attacks.

Third, the military pressure from the United States can put Iran in an impossible situation, and open the door to direct Soviet involvement in the country. Relations between Tehran and Moscow have already progressed far beyond the level of "flirting," and a direct confrontation with the United States can easily throw Iran into the open arms of the Soviet Union. This would be contrary to the U.S. policy of "Soviet containment."

Gulf security, which is the main objective of the U.S. policy, depends greatly on the achievement of peace between Iran and Iraq. As far as peace is concerned, the present U.S. military exercise in the gulf has, so far, proved to be counterproductive.

Masoud Kheirabadi, Ph.D.
Geography Department

Ignorance

The letters appearing in the Emerald in response to the Soviet Free Zone poster displayed by the College Republicans are at best disappointing. I find it very hard to believe that these letters were written by University students (on a liberal arts campus at that!). It is disappointing that students who are learning to think critically cannot make the connection between the Soviet Free Zone and other Free Zone legislation. Is the idea of political satire dead?

How is it possible that "students" from this liberal arts university that has a social science requirement cannot understand that "Soviet" refers to a government, not a race of

people. Is a Republican a racist because he or she does not agree with the democrats?

How can students of a university that has a history of activism not make the connection between the poster and the Soviet invasion and subjugation of the Afghan people? Prior to the Soviet invasion, I'm sure that the Afghan nation (and race) would have welcomed being declared a Soviet Free Zone.

The greatest disappointment of all is that there are "students" here who do not understand the importance of the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of speech. To suggest that anyone not be allowed to express their opinion in public, and should confine their opinions to "the privacy of their own bedroom," is an attack on the very principle that allows our university to exist as an institution where the exchange of ideas is promoted, strengthening our nation as a whole.

I would like to see the College Republicans display a new poster. It should read: "Ignorance Free Zone: No Misconceptions Allowed!"

Daryl Nichols
History

Don't stress

In response to the article on stress (ODE, Oct. 28):

Happiness. Isn't that what makes life worthwhile? Yet most college students put themselves under tremendous stress for future rewards (e.g. a good job). Does it make sense to flog yourself academically so you can feel the comfort of the "good life" when you graduate?

Education is a joy unless it dominates life, just as work can become tedious. Life has so much to offer, and it is a shame that we have become slaves to our textbooks.

So take as long as you need to complete your degree. Work, play and live life to the fullest along the way. Only you can create stress — and only you can avoid it.

Allen Hancock
PPPM

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