

Editorial

OSPIRG report stresses toy safety

Last week the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group released a report listing 12 toys currently on the market that present a danger to small children. During the Christmas season, this study places special emphasis on caution and supervision in selecting gifts for children.

OSPIRG examined toys found in stores around Portland, Eugene, Springfield and Corvallis and tested them for choking hazards. Choking is a particular danger for children less than the age of three.

By using a "choke-test tube," a cylinder 1.25 inches in diameter representing the approximate size of a 3-year old's throat, OSPIRG found many toys have small parts that can be broken off and swallowed.

According to federal regulations, any toy labeled for children three years or younger should not have parts that fit into the cylinder. However, OSPIRG found three toys labeled for the three year or younger age range containing small objects or parts that could break apart easily.

OSPIRG also found toys with sharp objects or pieces. These pieces present a danger to children who could cut themselves or poke out an eye.

From these findings, the group emphasized the need for better age labeling. Most toys do not have a suggested age, but nonetheless are dangerous to small children who tend to put things in their mouths.

One problem that must be overcome is that of federal funding. The Consumer Product Safety Commission, created in 1972, began with 18 regional offices nationwide. Because of lack of funding, there are only five offices now and only one full-time staff member for Oregon.

On the local level, the state Legislature has not funded a safety enforcement program in 10 years. This leaves safety enforcement and warnings up to individual groups and parents.

Ideally, money should be allocated to the safety commission and stricter laws and enforcement avenues should be implemented in Oregon. OSPIRG recommended requiring toys to be age labeled and that the dimensions of the "choke-test tube" should be increased. However, this isn't a realistic assessment of what may happen.

While stricter regulations may be established for children's toys, attaining funding for enforcement groups is difficult. Toy-related deaths are increasing — in 1983 there were 16 deaths compared with 22 in 1985 and 35 in 1986. But sad as it may seem, toy safety is not a major priority in government spending.

Reports such as OSPIRG's on dangerous toys are beneficial and parents of small children should take heed before buying toys for their toddlers. Ultimately it is the parent's responsibility to examine a new toy before the child plays with it and supervise the first time the child does play with the toy.

Parents must be willing to take the time to examine the toy and explain the potential dangers of sharp objects to their children. With care and supervision, children can safely enjoy their Christmas toys.



Letters

Not a bad place

This is in response to the letter written by Daniel Monk-Kowalsky (Replace Olum, Nov. 23).

First, if President Olum is responsible for the hiring of faculty, the faculty certainly must be qualified. If they've developed personal problems such as tardiness or a drinking problem as Kowalsky stated, how is this President Olum's fault? When you buy milk how do you know it's not sour?

Secondly, check any college bookstore and basically they're all the same. I've been to a number of colleges and I personally think the University's bookstore is one of the finest.

Thirdly, as for the use of University funds to rent hotel rooms for the entire football team during home games, this is untrue. The Athletic Department, which gets its money from gate receipts from home games, pays for the hotel rooms. The entire football team does not stay in the hotel, only its first and second teams do. That is about half of the "entire football team." There are many meetings that the players need to attend on the eve of these

games, plus coaches don't have to worry about players being up too late. The players have bed-check at 11:30 p.m., and the players don't have to worry about oversleeping.

Finally, if Kowalsky can't handle the increased enrollment and the chance to meet and work with a wide variety of people with different backgrounds and nationalities, then it appears that it is he, and not the student body, who is anti-intellectual.

If Kowalsky doesn't like this campus and the job that President Olum has been doing, why then is he still attending the University? It must not be such a bad place after all.

Jeff Whitman
Student

Merge teams

In the interest of maintaining a decent level of football in the state of Oregon, we have a modest proposal.

Oregon State has a pathetic football team; the University of Oregon has a mediocre one. If the two were to be combined, perhaps we could field a team that might possibly attain respectability in the Pacific-9 Conference. Despite the history of ill-feelings between the two schools, it is time to let bygones be bygones and join forces.

Advantages of a merger would include:

- Less financial drain on both schools (therefore, more money would be available for items such as graduation costs and suites of office furniture for our vice presidents);
- A large savings in equipment, maintenance and training costs;
- Statewide support for a single team;
- A more efficient recruiting program in the state.

Games could be played in each stadium on alternate home dates, or a new stadium could be constructed between the two schools at a neutral site, say Peoria or Junction City.

Of course, the team colors would have to change to reflect this unification. We suggest

brown and grey to symbolize the everpresent mud and fog of our beloved state.

Also, after much thought, we have solved the dilemma of choosing an appropriate mascot. What better way to combine the features of the duck and the beaver than to use as our mascot *The Platypus*. This noble creature will surely strike terror into the hearts of our opponents.

Please consider our proposal. Speed is of the essence — we hope to avoid another dismal season and prevent both teams from dropping to Division IV-BB status. As any Civil War buff knows, "a state football program divided against itself cannot stand."

Tori Bruzese
Bob Harmon
Tom Luster

Scarlet letter

Normally I wouldn't bother, but I feel that someone has to take exception to what really is a remarkably uninformed editorial ("Scarlet letter" warning a sign of the times," ODE, Nov. 17).

Richard Bateman has been convicted of offenses which make him a threat to young children — the members of society least able to defend themselves against him. If a prison sentence will be so brief as to serve no purpose, and if he refuses other forms of treatment — as he has done and something the writer of the editorial was evidently not aware of — one can hardly blame Judge Baker or society at large for finding another way to try and put a stop to his completely unacceptable behavior.

Richard Bateman was given two admittedly unpleasant, but nevertheless distinct choices — treatment or "the scarlet letter" — and I do not think it is reactionary to suggest that he is responsible for all the consequences of the actions for which he alone also is responsible.

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Graduate secretary, English
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