

Some issues still controversial 100 years later

By Darla Jackson
Emerald Contributor

Who would have thought that citizens of today would be concerned with virtually the same issues that were controversial more than 100 years ago?

On Wednesday, evidence to support this theory will be presented at the Lane County Courthouse and Public Service Building.

A brief historical drama titled "Voices of the People," which deals with two of Oregon's important constitutional decisions, will be presented Nov. 2 at 7 p.m. in Harris Hall. The program consists of two short plays recreating separate scenes in Oregon history. The plays will be followed by discussion and debates, and the audience is encouraged to participate.

The forum is part of the statewide Oregon Constitutional Debates series, which is being offered this fall in nine Oregon cities. The Eugene program will be introduced by Oregon Attorney General David Frohn-mayer and will feature Edwin Bingham, University professor emeritus of history, as the discussion leader and moderator.

The plays, by playwright Dorothy Velasco and writer Charles Deemer, are set in 1857 and 1898. The first drama will concentrate on the issue of quality of life vs. economic development, a controversial subject when the Oregon Constitution was written in 1857.



Courtesy Photo

Actors Joseph Gilg (left) and Bill Douglas will portray prominent figures from Oregon's history in the upcoming production of "Voices of the People."

Eugene actors Bill Douglas and Joseph Gilg will portray Judge Matthew Deady and John McBride, who were representatives to the Oregon constitutional convention.

The second play in the program will feature the conflict between legislative power and the ballot: whether citizens or legislators should make laws and restrictions. In the second drama, the actors will portray William S. U'Ren, a state representative, and John H. Mitchell, a U.S. senator.

Both topics in the program remain of real concern to Oregon citizens today. The state is

still strongly concerned with the protection of natural resources while at the same time expanding the economy, and several ballot measures will be put to voters in the upcoming election.

After each play, "pro" and "con" groups will form to prepare for the 30-minute debate that follows. Audience members who would like to participate are encouraged to pick up a background essay from the Eugene Public Library.

Local sponsors of "Voices of the People" are the Lane County Bar Association, the League of Women Voters of Lane Coun-

ty and the Friends of the Eugene Public Library.

Sue Girardeau, president of the League of Women Voters of Lane County, said she hopes people who attend the program will leave with an appreciation of how the Oregon Constitution works.

The program is interesting because it raises questions that

are still of great concern, she added.

"In one of the plays, a fellow thinks we should have one tax — a property tax. I wonder if that's how we got saddled with our big property tax of today," Girardeau said. "So it just goes to show that we're still worried about the same issues that they were worried about."

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