

Legislators creating police state in haste

Oregon lawmakers seem to be suffering their own version of "John Tower syndrome" — they are intoxicated with an eagerness to make good last year's campaign promises to take a tough stand against crime.

In all the rush to do something about the state's rise in crime, lawmakers seem to be acting hastily — putting the bills through the process without close scrutiny.

But legislators should be wary of the hangovers they're sure to incur by passing such laws. The bills being passed not only border on the unconstitutional, but will only create further problems in the overextended state prison system.

Some of the measures brought to the floor in the House last week create new categories of crime; others call for stiffer penalties; still others will attempt to make arrests, convictions and sentences easier for police and corrections departments. Waiting in the wings are measures that would apply the death penalty to new crimes.

There is, for example, the "stop-and-frisk" bill (HB2250) giving police the right to stop and frisk a person they believe "is about to commit" a crime, even if the person has taken no concrete step toward breaking the law. This bill, which passed with a 47-11 vote, was moved out of the House Judiciary Committee with no public hearing before reaching the House chamber.

Not surprisingly, one opponent of the bill has called it the "I-don't-like-the-looks-of-your-face-and-skin-color-law." If this bill becomes a law, anyone could be stopped without a good cause and held in custody, just because police officers thought this person "was about to commit a crime."

Another concern about this anti-crime spree is the impact this legislation will have on the state's prison system. Right now, more than 5,800 inmates are housed in facilities designed for 2,800; another 1,000 are on temporary leave. New prison beds approved by the 1987 state Legislature are just being pressed into use, and Gov. Neil Goldschmidt has proposed funding to house another 1,100 by 1992.

But this won't be enough, particularly if the legislative spree continues. Lawmakers already are revising plans for new prison beds. But under the new sentencing guidelines, the state will fall at least 200 beds short of their mark by the time Goldschmidt's plan is completed.

The state Legislature should think twice about creating new felonies when there is a problem locking up current felons. Oregon is not a police state. It's time legislators stopped treating their constituencies as though it is.

Air system threatened by lack of government action

We'd like to rebuke President Bush for missing a chance to order federal mediation between the Machinists union and Eastern Airlines, which once again proves corporate sabertooths can rampage unchecked in the free market jungle.

Eastern said when its 3,600 pilots and 5,900 flight attendants walked off the job in sympathy with the Machinists union, which includes ground crews, mechanics and baggage handlers, they violated the 1926 Railway Labor Act.

This act requires a union to participate in federal mediation before ordering a strike. Machinists' attorneys dispute this allegation. Legal question aside, the union's decision shouldn't be too surprising in view of Eastern's labor relations record.

Texas Air Corp. Chairman Frank Lorenzo has been running airlines this way for quite a while. Texas Air owns not only Eastern but Continental Airlines, which Lorenzo drove into bankruptcy in 1983 to break a pilot's strike.

Besides additional airline workers who may decide to strike in sympathy with the Eastern Machinists, unions representing employees of three railroads in the Northeast have appealed an order barring them from honoring any Machinists picket lines at railway stations. A decision to honor the picket lines could foul up daily travel for more than 320,000 rail passengers.

Like a steel-toed boot kick to the face, the government may not see it coming, but it will feel the results of allowing the free market too much freedom.

Bush remains firm in his opposition to government intervention in the strike, saying he would veto a bill sought by the union that would compel him to appoint an emergency board to recommend a solution to the dispute.

Ostensibly, the executive branch has regulatory powers to make sure everyone, labor and business alike, has a fair chance in business. But the government clearly has shown that its pro-corporation stance doesn't account for harm to the economy or public convenience and safety.



Letters

Evil stain

February was Black History Month. It gave everyone the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Black American's culture and contributions made by Black Americans toward the uplifting of humanity.

Celebrating Black History Month not only enables us to better understand the multicultural heritage of the United States, but brings us one step closer toward race unity.

The Baha'i Association of the University would like to encourage each individual member of the University community to examine his or her own attitudes and actions toward achieving interracial unity. We cannot afford a moment's hesitation. We feel that the advice given in the Baha'i writings establishes healthy guidelines for dealing with racism:

Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved. Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken. Let neither think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of the common country.

While this statement specifically addresses blacks and whites in the United States, it can be applied to people of all races in all countries. Let it be this generation which ushers in a new era of interracial unity.

Mohamed Fahnbulleh
University Baha'i Association

Norm departure

This week I got a copy of the Oregon Commentator and read it through immediately. The articles were exceptional. I'm comfortable that many (on campus) would disagree with my assessment of this new (4 issues published) magazine. I've

lived in Eugene for 16 years and I like it here. One of the things that has characterized the qualities of living in this area is a consistency to the free exchange of ideas. We have needed to interact with other people's ideas and opinions no matter how diverse or logical or illogical. I found the Commentator to be well written and, of course, challenging for probably everyone. This publication is a welcome departure from the norm. You know it's not the consensus that we need to hear from in every locale, because we're familiar with it.

Daniel Rarick
Springfield

Parking

I am tired of hearing these cries of racial and sexual discrimination in cases where there wasn't. The Myrna Bobb incident for example was not an act of racism, sexism, or any other -ism. The simple truth, since I was a witness, is that Myrna Bobb drove into a parking place that the supposed "David Duke" was patiently waiting for. Of course he was pissed off, and I am not condoning his very abusive behavior and racial derogation, but the apparent ploy used by Bobb was just as bad.

Bobb's article, perhaps intentionally, misled the reader. She tried to portray the assailant as a typical white male, when actually his skin was as dark as hers. With the false identity she gave, it is apparent that she had no intention in finding the man, but rather the intent of publicizing the incident. She has tried to pass the whole incident off as racism, but it wouldn't have mattered if Bobb were black, white, brown, male or female; the assailant would have been just as upset.

I'm tired of every incident being labeled as racist or sexist without any examination of the facts. I know groups like the NASU want and, in fact, need incidents like this to capitalize on. In order to instill the fear of racism so key to their existence, they will twist, as Myrna Bobb and Aguerre Amarys have, just about any situation. Let's not stand for the labeling of our entire University as racist due

to twisted incidents like this. Once again I state that I am not condoning the racial overtones of this or any other incident, but this incident has more to do with the parking problem than racism or sexism.

Cary Stephens
Student

Dusting?

In response to Chris Bouneff's article "Custodian says candid talk on job led to firing," (ODE, Feb. 28), I cannot verify or refute Mr. Contre-ras' experience with the Physical Plant, but I can say that the buildings on the University campus are the dirtiest that I have seen at any University in my 20 years of academic employment. Ms. Stampe mentions dusting? I would be ecstatic just to have my office in PLC swept; it has never been done since I started work here last fall. Trash removal is the only service provided to my office, and the plastic liner of the wastebasket became so smelly that finally I threw it away, only to find it was never replaced by the custodian. I eventually scrounged a liner from another wastebasket in the building.

At the American English Institute we work with international students who form their strongest impression of the United States from their contacts here on campus. They are the present or future business and political leaders of their countries in many cases, and we will be dealing with them as a nation in either a friendly or a cool fashion some day. Students repeatedly have commented to me that they find the dirty state of University buildings distressing and unhealthy, and that university buildings are kept clean in their countries.

I don't know if the root of this problem is lack of funding, shortage of personnel, mismanagement, or lack of pride in work, but it's depressing to have to work in a filthy environment, and it's embarrassing to have visitors from other campuses and countries witness it and go home to tell the tale.

Martha Low
American English Institute
Wednesday, March 8, 1989