

Seattle should push spousal equivalency

Just as it was on the verge of making history in the Pacific Northwest, Seattle chose to back down.

Last week, the city's Human Rights Department found that it was unfair to not include unmarried domestic partners in health benefit plans — a civil right that only three California cities (Berkeley, Santa Cruz and West Hollywood) have had enough guts to stand up for.

The irony behind the whole controversy is that such a program would work to the benefit of everyone, and not just gays and lesbians as opponents claim.

In Berkeley, a city with 1,325 civic employees, about 108 people have claimed benefits for their spousal equivalents. Of these, the vast majority, 85, are heterosexual.

The difference between the Seattle program and the Californian programs is that the city's plan would include the employees of private firms — a first of its kind anywhere.

Two federal roadblocks were behind Seattle's decision to back down. First, HRD's proposals included extending benefits to employees of private companies, which is against a federal law.

The second is an IRS code that would tax both the employees and the city for the benefits they receive. Such taxation could burden Seattle with its 10,000 person workforce.

In light of these, the Seattle City Council met Monday and decided to effectively suspend the implementation of the ruling from the city's Human Rights Department.

This is unfortunate. If Seattle had taken a strong stand on the rights of people to be recognized as domestic partners without a traditional marriage, it would have provided an excellent example to regional cities, encouraging them to recognize the fact that the "traditional" family structure of years gone by is no longer the norm.

A similar struggle has been taking place here at the University. The ASUO has strived to obtain recognition of spousal equivalency from its insurance carrier, Prudential. University of California, Berkeley is one of the few universities with a health plan for student spousal equivalents.

The ASUO's efforts have so far been in vain. ASUO President Karen Gaffney said she hopes the next ASUO and its insurance committee will continue to lobby for spousal equivalency. We hope so too, and if Prudential keeps turning the ASUO down, perhaps it is time to look for a new company.

We stand firm on our support for insurance coverage for spousal equivalents — regardless of sexual orientation — and urge the ASUO and Seattle to continue their efforts towards obtaining fair coverage for all their constituents.



Recall reactor's history, don't glorify it

There's a place up in Washington where history — and bombs — were made. If this history must be remembered, so must the bombs.

The Hanford B Reactor, from where the plutonium came for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki at the end of World War II, was recently ruled eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Despite the mention by members of the Washington Department of Community Development that such a landmark would boost tourism in Richland, no nomination has yet been made on behalf of the reactor. We hope one never is.

Hanford B has already earned recognition as a technical marvel; it was designated a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1976. It was the first full-sized nuclear reactor in the world, put together just a year and a half after the nuclear chain reaction was accomplished in 1943.

And certainly Hanford B has an important part in history. This is the place that the final end of a baleful world war was constructed in the device that would kill 40,000 Japanese civilians. This atrocity, and all war's atrocities, can best be guarded against

by constant reminders of their existence. In West Germany, many landmarks have been made from Nazi death camps and military bases to remind Germans of the horrors of war.

But in the United States, it seems to us that historic landmarks tend to glorify myths of war and bravado, rather than scrutinizing them with hindsight; they exist only to promote tourism. There are many monuments to war in this country; but an inspection of Civil War battlefields in the East or the Arizona Monument in Hawaii confirms that these attractions fatten pocketbooks more than they trouble consciences.

Hanford is also too sterile to be a monument. When one sees the preserved German death camps, one experiences first hand the atrocities that were committed there. Visiting solid, gleaming Hanford B could never capture the devastation and death that occurred an ocean away.

There's also no evidence at Hanford B that we have learned anything from our past. Besides adding the lethal instrument to the Nagasaki bomb, plutonium from Hanford continues to be used in the nation's contemporary warheads today. The irony in making Hanford B a monument would be sickening.

Letters

Wrong tree

I am sure there is no doubt in anyone's mind at this point that a great environmental tragedy was caused by the foundering of the Exxon Valdez. But those individuals who chose, or choose, to display their anger by demonstrating at area Exxon stations are, to employ a well-worn metaphor, barking up the wrong tree.

It is true that these dealers are indeed affiliated with the Exxon corporation — they distribute its products; but it is untrue that these station owners or workers at the local level had anything to do with the actual disaster, although they are now considered by some to be guilty by association.

It would seem that a concentrated effort or attack should be leveled at the corporate base of Exxon, rather than at some rather unfortunate local businessmen who are caught in the middle of the scandal because of their franchise interests.

Though the protest at local

Exxon stations attracts media attention to the fact that there is much more than casual concern amongst society in regard to the atrocity of the Exxon Valdez spill (and spill is too polite a word) — the strength of such a demonstration is being wasted on the wrong target.

Gerry Parson
Junior

Assumptions

In response to "Babes and Owls" (ODE, May 5):

Nothing wrong with your poached eggs! I think not, Brandon Shepard. First of all, pro-choicers are not the only pro-environmentalists. Many pro-lifers are also, for they believe in the right to life for everything. Secondly, those eggs you would be eating are an endangered species. They need to be protected. The human race is far from being extinct, but rather over-populated. What are the normal actions for these situations? Protect the endan-

gered and hunt and kill the over-populated. But that, of course, would be ridiculous to hunt humans.

As for hypocrisy Shepard, take a look in a mirror. You claim these pro-choice environmentalists are regarding a bird's life as more important than an unborn child. Well let me ask you a question: Who has more rights, a full-grown adult, such as yourself, or an unborn child, a mere mass of cells?

And in defense of those "Enviro-feminists" who don't like the responsibility for self-gratifying sexual acts: Can you honestly tell me you have never indulged in these "self-gratifying acts" without the intent of conceiving a child? Be realistic Shepard. Why should a woman be made to take the responsibility of a decision made by two?

Shepard, do not make "typical" assumptions about pro-choicers. You should know what they believe in if you used to be one. Were you also a pro-environmentalist? With an

attitude like yours I doubt it. So don't assume two are one.

Rene Jones
General science student

Party ban

You're in a fraternity, you're old enough to consume alcohol, you want to have a party. What do you do? You invite four hundred of your closest friends over for cocktails to your private home. The music gets loud, cops come and people get hurt. I'm not exactly what one would call pro-fraternity, but if those boys don't get their beer back soon, parties like the one at 14th and Ferry, and the one across from

Hilyard Street Market a couple of weeks ago are just going to continue.

So kick the Betas off campus, give the other violating fraternities a nice probation, and give back the rest of them their booze. Sure, we're conceding Alder Street to the frats, but at least the huge crowds, the broken glass, the noise pollution and the police will be there instead of everyone else's backyard.

Ban alcohol in the frats? We might as well ban parties in Eugene altogether.

Sean E. Smith
Senior
Telecommunications and Film

Letters Policy

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