

Law school should heed ABA's threat

Just when you think things can't get any worse, along comes something else to kick you right in the teeth.

By now, most people know the Oregon State System of Higher Education is in dire financial straits caused by inadequate funding from the state legislature. But last Friday, the issue took on a new twist when it was learned the University's School of Law has been threatened with the retraction of its accreditation.

Law School Dean Maurice Holland recently received a letter from the American Bar Association, which certifies all law schools, detailing ways in which the school is deficient.

To summarize some of the ABA's concerns: the law library budget, poor faculty-to-student ratios, no "externship" program and low faculty salaries.

Boiling all of these things down, money — or the lack of it — is the root of the law school's problems. Inadequate funding is damaging the reputation of what is considered one of the best law schools on the West Coast.

Holland said the letter amounts to a hollow threat, and only a slim chance remains that the law school will actually lose its accreditation. The ABA rarely removes its stamp of approval and has never done so to an Oregon school.

The University's law school is not the place to start.

The ABA first came to the law school three years ago. Apparently, it was not happy with what it saw. The letter is just another step in hounding the law school into cleaning up its act or clearing out of town.

Even if the accreditation is left intact, the warning should not be taken lightly. Reputation is an extremely important part of any school. If prospective students feel the University's law school is going downhill, they'll take their studies — and their tuition — elsewhere.

To his credit, Holland has taken the warning seriously. He called a meeting with the law school faculty and administration to discuss the problem and is honest enough to admit there are problems.

However, admitting mistakes and actually doing something about them are two different things. The ABA is not going to make idle threats forever. Push it far enough, and the ABA may turn the unthinkable into reality.

If it seems we're harping on the lack of money in the higher education system, it's because we are. We don't think the law school deserves to lose its accreditation, but even the threat of it cannot be ignored. Higher education and legislators are receiving a pretty clear message:

The University, along with the rest of the OSSHE schools, needs money. Fast.



Oregon is ahead of the game in recycling

This week is Oregon's Recycling Awareness Week. Gov. Neil Goldschmidt initiated the event four years ago when curbside recycling was implemented around the state.

The purpose of the event is to help create awareness of various recycling programs in the state, to help preserve the beauty of the state, and to send out a clear message that Oregonians are concerned about their state and environment.

The name of this year's event is "Recycling: It's the Oregon Way." And it's true — Oregon is a national leader in recycling. Curbside recycling is offered to almost 75 percent of all Oregonians. Residents here recycle 65 percent of their newspapers as compared with a national figure of 34 percent.

So what's the big deal about recycling anyway? Some people think it takes too much time and trouble to tie up their newspapers and crush all their tin cans.

Well, in some respects they are right — it does take some extra time and energy. But, it also saves a lot of energy. Department of Environmental Quality statistics show that recycling one ton of office paper saves the equivalent of 380 gallons of oil.

The amount of garbage that is produced in this country or even just in this state is astounding. The United States makes up about five percent of the world's population but

produces 15 to 38 percent of the garbage.

Recycling is vital to our survival on the earth. Millions of trees are cut down every year to fulfill our paper needs. A vast majority of this paper can be recycled. Sunday papers are a good example; 88 percent of them are not recycled, and it takes 500,000 trees to produce the nation's Sunday papers.

Creating awareness about how, what and when to recycle is important, but more important is making it easier for people to recycle.

Recycling on campus has been on the upswing these days. Recycling bins on campus have increased. This is due largely to the efforts of the people at Pearl Buck Recycling, who run the on-campus recycling program. One person picks up recyclable paper from over 180 different spots on campus every week — truly a superhuman effort.

The Survival Center is also working to enlarge the campus recycling program and to encourage students to take more responsibility when it comes to recycling. Recycling creates continually renewable resources, which are rare commodities in an age of quickly deteriorating natural resources. Remember, all those products that are so easily disposed of can often be recycled, and if they can't, we probably won't be able to dispose of them for hundreds of years.

Forum

Civil liberties latest victim in war on drugs

By Michael Colson

Politics makes strange bedfellows, but so, it turns out, do drugs.

In a Supreme Court opinion involving the court's archliberal, Thurgood Marshall, and its archconservative, Antonin Scalia, a similar warning was sounded: In the war on drugs, civil liberties may turn out to be the latest victim.

Commentary

Scalia thundered down from the right in a case involving the government program to administer drug tests to all employees of the U.S. Customs service, which the court upheld. Safety is not an issue here. The government wants something called a drug-free work-

place, and while that is a worthy goal, the question is at what cost? Is it worth a clear invasion of privacy?

Scalia, on the losing side of a 5-4 decision, said it is not. And he is right. In the first place, he has the facts on his side. There is no indication that drug use is a problem among Customs workers. Some 3,600 workers have been tested and only five tested positive, hardly a cause to humiliate a whole group of federal employees by marching them into the bathroom, paper cup in hand.

As with other federal workers slated for drug testing, the government wanted to make a point: Drugs will not be tolerated. But Scalia also wanted to make a point: "I think it is obvious that this justification is unacceptable; that the impairment if civil liberties cannot be

the means of making a point."

When the left (Marshall) and the right (Scalia) combine, the rest of the court ought to pay heed — and so should the nation. The war on drugs is not, for all the rhetoric, a real war. The drug problem is different. It is a tragic social malaise and an urgent criminal-justice matter, but not all proposed remedies are apt.

Take, for instance, the District of Columbia's attempt to impose curfew on teenagers. This was proposed as part of the war on drugs — an attempt to appease the public that something was being done. It hardly mattered that the rights of a whole class of people would be restricted because a few of them pose a danger.

Recently, Vice President Dan Quayle raised the specter of McCarthyism in condemning

the Senate's rejection of John Tower. Quayle had his analogies all wrong. If it is a latter-day McCarthyism that he seeks, Quayle ought to turn his attention to drugs.

Here, as with communism in the 1950s, we have a public panic, a willingness to condone violations of civil liberties, because another threat is perceived to be much greater.

Drugs remain a serious problem. But not so serious that we have to engage in wholesale infringements on civil liberties and a loss of perspective — es-

pecially when the "remedies" are more symbolic than real. Wholesale drug testing, curfew, and the death penalty — these are all placebos, not panaceas.

Scalia on the right and Marshall on the left have sounded a warning that should not go unheeded. The shots being fired in the war on drugs are ricocheting, riddling our civil liberties and endangering us all.

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Commentary Policy

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