

Supreme Court set for another session

This past week, the U.S. Supreme Court opened up a new session, and expectations of an even more dramatic shift to the right than last year are running high.

With the smoke cleared, conservatives hold a solid 5-4 majority on the court. Ronald Reagan, in appointing two conservatives to the bench during his eight year tenure, put a definite rightward slant on the court.

And with another conservative, George Bush, occupying the Oval Office, things don't look good for the liberals.

Supreme Court nominations are for life. Three of the liberal Justices are more than 80 years old. It is possible at least one of these seats will become vacant during the next four years.

The conservatives left no doubt they were in charge last session, when they made several decisions on such key issues as abortion and civil liberties.

However, the liberal cause is not all lost. Last year Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was not as hard-line conservative as some of her cohorts would have liked. On issues such as abortion or religion, she is a definite swing vote.

Abortion will once again be a major part of the court's docket. Last July, the Justices gave states greater regulatory powers. The decision got mixed reviews, with both pro-and-anti choice advocates claiming victory. Three cases are scheduled and should clear up the court's stand one way or another.

A new dilemma is euthanasia. For the first time, Justices will debate whether terminally ill patients can choose the right to die. Their decision will set a precedent.

Two Constitutional rights, that of freedom of speech and separation of church and state, will be up for review. The court will decide on the constitutionality of a federal act which opens public schools for student religious group functions.

Other issues, such as obscenity, criminal law and race discrimination, will be up for discussion. These decisions will affect national politics, as the abortion decision has affected politics.

The conservative bent of the court has already influenced the caseload for the session. Liberals are taking their arguments to state courts, in the hopes of getting interpretations more to their liking.

State legislatures are also getting into the act. The Supreme Court seems content to let legislatures make the tough decisions on volatile issues. Even the U.S. Senate is getting involved. Several senators are talking about legislation to overturn court decisions.

Whatever side of the political spectrum one subscribes to, this year's court session promises to be one of the most influential of the past decade.



Reward outweighs risk for Galileo probe

Once more, controversy over the space program has leaped onto the front page of the national scene. This time it's over the Galileo probe, due to be launched on the space shuttle Atlantis Tuesday morning.

Problem is, Galileo carries nearly 50 pounds of plutonium, which is used to power the \$1.4 billion spacecraft. The power supply, known as a radioisotope thermoelectric generator, or RTG, carries 18 modules. Each is filled with four golf ball-sized pieces of plutonium dioxide encased in iridium shells.

Environmentalists are worried about a repeat of the Challenger tragedy. If there were to be another shuttle accident, opponents contend Galileo's fuel source would spread into the atmosphere.

A federal judge ruled against the anti-nuclear group, and barring any more delays, Galileo will finally be on its way, after 15 years of stalling.

After much soul-searching and thinking, we support the Galileo program.

Opponents say there is a 1-in-350 chance of another shuttle disaster and of Galileo spreading its deadly fuel source over central and southern Florida. On the other hand, NASA contends even if the shuttle explodes, the chances of plutonium threatening the ci-

vilian population is slim.

We recognize the dangers of the program. However, we also realize there is no alternative fuel source. Galileo is set to orbit Jupiter, and solar power diminishes at that distance, making solar panels unattractive to use.

In addition, Galileo offers the promise of knowledge to fight environmental problems on Earth. Part of its flight will take it past Venus, whose surface, warmed by the infamous "greenhouse effect," is hot enough to melt a Buick. It is hoped by studying Venus' atmosphere, we can combat our own global warming.

With the new technology contained in the probe, we will, for the first time, get a detailed look at Jupiter.

Galileo will also make two flybys of Earth. Each time, a video camera will be pointed at the ozone hole over the South Pole. Maybe, just maybe, we can learn more about that too.

Space exploration in general has been criticized as a waste of both time and money. We disagree. No one will dispute we have serious problems on Earth. But by studying other planets — and their problems — maybe we can learn something about our own.

Letters

Fall guy

I'm relieved that the *ODE* (Oct. 9) believes Rep. David Dix was unaware of the alleged mishandling of funds by the Democratic Caucus. The *ODE* stated that one of the reasons they believe Dix is innocent is because he's cooperating with the investigation.

Dix is free to cooperate with the investigation because he has allowed the blame to fall on Carl Wiederaenders, his good friend and former Caucus Administrator. Forget loyalty, it's crunch time. Makes you wonder how loyal Dix is to the faceless voter when the going gets tough?

Dix and Wiederaenders worked side by side to promote the Oregon Democratic Party. On October 4, Dix was quoted in *The Oregonian* as saying, "(Wiederaenders) never told me what he was doing, and I've never asked, and I wouldn't even want to venture a guess." Wiederaenders worked for Dix

— Dix could have asked him anything. It sounds like Dix was afraid to ask questions. Or maybe, just maybe, Dix didn't have to ask.

But, I'm overjoyed that the *ODE* believes Dix. I was mortified that the people of Eugene, who are always on the move to promote justice in the world, might stop for a moment and look in their own backyard. Thank God they have not. I was afraid people might start asking questions — silly me.

Julie Huber
Journalism

Devastation

Many are by now aware of the tragic destruction occurring to the rain forests of Central and South America. Debt-ridden, export-driven economics are clearing land to, among other things, satisfy our desires for cheap beef.

Perhaps not as well known

but no less devastating is the disappearance of tropical rain forests in Africa and Southeast Asia. This has resulted in much suffering to indigenous cultures as well as the loss of uncounted flora and fauna. All this is done so that we may enjoy furniture or dinnerware made from teak, mahogany, ramin, and other tropical hardwoods.

In light of the above, what can a person do? Boycott products made of teak or other hardwoods, especially those labeled "made in Thailand." There is at least one business locally marketing furniture made from tropical woods, namely Scan-Design. Write or call encouraging them to discontinue these product lines.

Further, a local public station, KLCC, helps market these products through underwriter ads. This was brought to their attention repeatedly, and the ads were dropped before the last radiothon only to reappear without explicit mention of rosewood and teak.

For an ostensibly progressive voice to carry announcements of this sort seems highly inappropriate. If you have thought of contributing to KLCC, consider postponing sending funds. Call or write informing them of your decision. Alternatively, one might support KWAX or send a donation instead to the Rainforest Action Network, 301 Broadway, Suite A, San Francisco, CA 94133.

Gary Nolan
Staff

Morale

I read the article, "Morale at Physical Plant better with new

director" (*ODE*, Oct. 6) with relief. As one employed by the state for over a decade, it is gratifying to know that one of my fellow workers, Linda King, has found no evidence of "real" nepotism at the Physical Plant.

I can rest easier now that I know her husband was promoted to his position as grounds crew supervisor solely on the basis of his abilities. Thank you, King, for straightening that out, and for forthrightly pronouncing that, while the problem of people in power hiring their family and friends has not existed before, it will never happen again.

Bill Smee
Staff

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.