

## Convene legislature for workers' comp

Special sessions of the Oregon Legislature are rare. In fact, the last one was in 1984. But if some people have their way, lawmakers will meet sometime this year to do something about the state's crumbling workers' compensation system.

Workers' compensation has been a big topic in the media the last few months. The state-owned SAIF Corporation, which provides workers' compensation insurance for thousands of Oregon businesses, lost an estimated \$30 million last year. The loss forced the company to drop 9,562 small businesses already, with another 4,146 companies due to lose their policies April 1.

The issue has reached a crisis point. For once, Democrats and Republicans both agree there are serious problems with workers' comp. But of course, both sides disagree on what must be done.

The Democrats' task force wants to reduce medical costs, cut out most litigation and be more responsive to the workers' needs. Most Republicans want to slash premium rates, tighten the laws on defining injuries, and allow workers to negotiate benefits with their employers. Both want to force SAIF to take back most of the businesses it has dropped.

Both Democrats and Republicans want to have a special session to work things out.

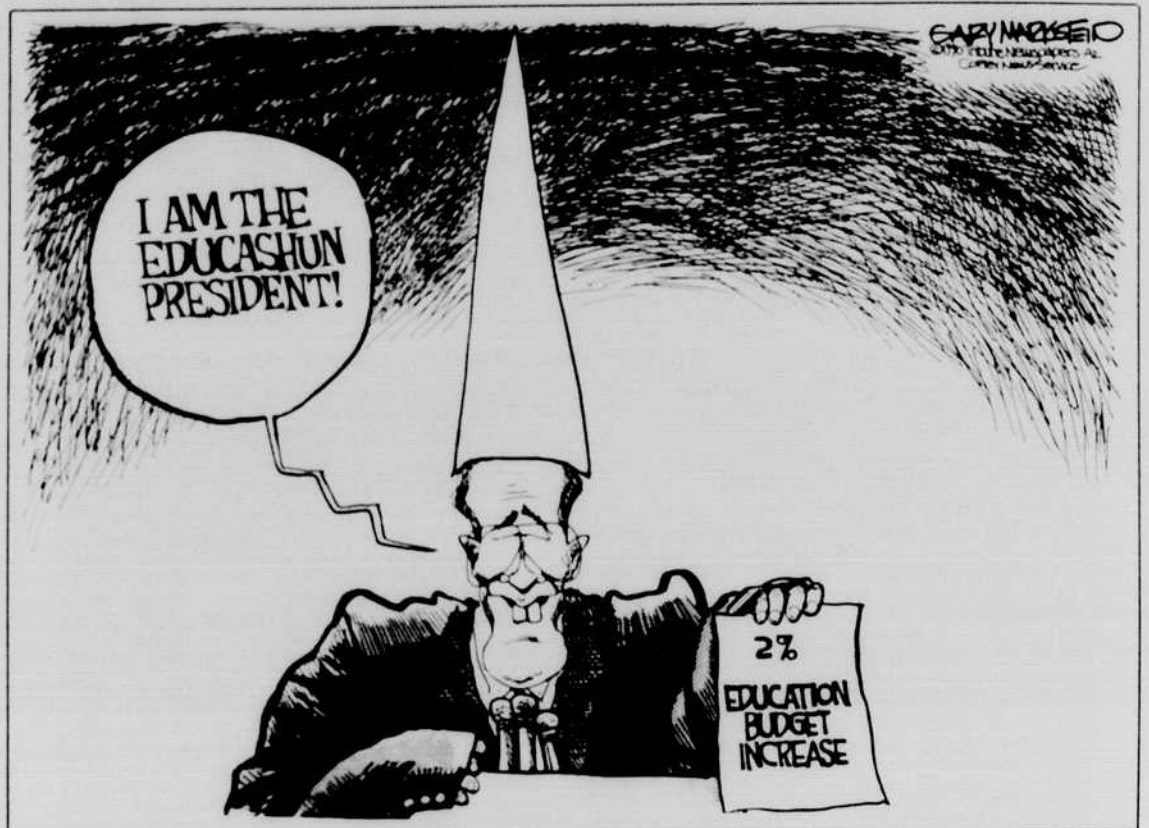
Oregon Speaker of the House Vera Katz (D-Portland) is leading the Democrats' charge for a special session, while attorney general and gubernatorial candidate Dave Frohnmayer is championing the Republicans' cause. Both have made appeals to Gov. Neil Goldschmidt to call a session.

By state law, the governor, or the House and Senate can call a special session if the need arises. Almost every year between the regularly-scheduled biannual sessions somebody calls for a special one. But rarely is the reason as important — and necessary — as it is now.

Oregon businessmen have enough problems right now: they don't need to face the prospect of losing their workers' comp insurance. Without that insurance, many businesses will be forced to fold simply from the threat of a worker's injury.

Goldschmidt has gone on record saying he won't call a session until he sees a concrete plan. Wanting to see the Legislature perform quickly and efficiently is a noble goal, but Goldschmidt must be careful about how long he stalls.

The problem will only worsen in the next few months. If something isn't done by April 1, the whole thing could explode in his face. Politically, it means nothing to him. Since he announced Wednesday he won't be running for re-election, he has become a lame-duck governor. Solving the workers' compensation fiasco would be a fitting way to go out of office.



## Governor's announcement disappointing

"Political surprise" is traditionally considered an oxymoron. By the time an actual announcement is made, it's usually well-known—either discovered by investigating journalists or leaked by over-anxious aides. But Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's decision not to run for re-election Wednesday caught nearly everyone unprepared.

As a general rule, incumbent governors run for re-election if they can. Only if they've made severe political blunders or have alienated most of the state do they drop out. Despite what some people would have you believe, Goldschmidt has done neither in the last three years.

It's impossible to criticize someone for dropping out of a gubernatorial race because of the imminent breakup of their marriage. Running for office is difficult enough without having personal troubles clouding the issues. Goldschmidt readily admits he wouldn't be in the correct frame of mind for what was shaping up to be a tough campaign.

Goldschmidt was sketchy on details Wednesday, but drawing on past statements and present conditions enables some inferences to be drawn. The governor obviously made the decision recently. During his State of the State speeches, he talked as a political

candidate, not an outgoing governor. He outlined future policies. He made plans. He spoke like he would be in Salem in 1991.

The decision has left a political void in the state, particularly in the Democratic party. Goldschmidt has stripped himself of much of his power. People no longer have to fear his being in office for another four years. Opponents will become more strident with their objections.

State politics for the next year were completely turned on end in the space of one sentence. Goldschmidt's policies will suffer much from Republicans eager to take advantage of the sudden power vacuum.

In the next few days and weeks, there will be rumors, speculation and controversy about who will become the Democrats' candidate. Secretary of State Barbara Roberts is the first name that has surfaced, but others are not far behind. Whoever does emerge, however, will come into the campaign laps behind Republican flag-bearer Dave Frohnmayer, who has been stumping on the political trail for months.

However the situation turns out, it is still disappointing to see the top Democratic figure in the state drop out of the running for a job in which he was completely capable of being effective.

## Letters

### Mind control

Tuesday afternoon as I sat in an overheated classroom gazing longingly at the snowflakes outside, my mind was suddenly pulled back from its wanderings to the immediate realization of exactly where I was and what I was doing. As it happened, I was in a Principles of Advertising class, and my professor was explaining market research, advertising planning and development, targeting an audience and discovering "what their buttons are."

Exactly why I'm in this class is complicated, but I'll just say it's not because I plan to go into advertising any time soon. So, I'm often disturbed at what I'm learning (though I was very aware of media power before; I'm still astounded at how consciously manipulative the field is), about "psychographics," and "share of mind," and philosophies like "the only valid purpose of a business is to create a customer."

But this day, as I sat there increasingly warm and anxious to be outside, I was more uneasy than usual — and glancing down at the *Emerald* on my lap I was struck by the ominous headline, "Priest warns of mind control techniques used by cults; subtlety, deception common." (*ODE*, Feb. 6) and the first line of the article, which began with the misprint, "News kinds of cults."

Whatever you may make of this, I was profoundly elated when the bell rang and I was free — or was I?

Marcia Dibble  
Journalism

### Waiting in vain

This may seem like old news, but I feel that it still needs to be addressed. On Jan. 15th, the *Emerald* ran an editorial criticizing the ASUO's lack of involvement in the Martin Luther

King holiday. I waited for some type of retraction or apology, but it never came.

Did you even take the time out to ask anyone in the ASUO what they were planning to do before you wrote that article? Obviously not, because if you had, you would have found out that without their help, the Black Student Union would have never been able to bring Dr. Harry Edwards to this campus to speak for the King holiday.

Without the involvement of Andy Clark and the ASUO staff, the event would have never gotten off the ground. I think your criticism could best be directed toward those who have the power to make Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a school holiday, which would show the respect that is due to him. I thank the ASUO for taking the time out to help.

Ernest Brown  
Director  
Black Student Union

### Interference

Chris Kelso supports anti-abortionists' attempts to "prohibit abortion of convenience." (*ODE*, Jan. 31). Our question is: when and why do women decide to terminate an unwanted pregnancy? Their personal convenience is certainly not the major criterion.

The woman herself is the only person who can clearly weigh the reasons for and against her pregnancy. No matter how she decides, she'll have gone through a lot of serious thoughts and emotions. The accusation that women who previously had an abortion are more likely to be potential

child abusers is ridiculous and an outright lie.

Instead of degrading women to second-class citizens by refusing them the right to decide for themselves, we should provide an environment that gives a woman the most positive support for whatever she comes to consider the appropriate decision. By the way, no pro-choice person rules out adoption as a legitimate choice for a woman, Kelso.

Nobody and no government agency has the right to interfere with a woman's body.

Kathy Yonker  
Sociology  
Patrick Forster  
Student

### 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.