

Whistle-blowers 1, Hanford company 0

Inez Austin probably thought she was doing her civic duty as a whistle-blower, but her employer made her feel differently.

As an engineer working for the Westinghouse Hanford Co., she complained that she had been harassed by supervisors after she refused to authorize the pumping of two storage tanks that contained the chemical ferrocyanide. Austin believed the tanks could explode if temperatures topped 400 degrees Fahrenheit during the pumping process.

After her refusal, she was told by company officials to see a psychologist, her workload was reduced, she failed to receive work-related mail, and was moved to a smaller office.

She filed a harassment complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor against Westinghouse Hanford. After all, Energy Secretary James Watkins toured Hanford six weeks ago and promised whistle-blowers they would be protected and rewarded.

Austin and Westinghouse Hanford agreed to a settlement earlier this week, and though the company did not admit any wrongdoing, its settlement agreement shows otherwise.

Under terms of the agreement, Austin will receive one month of paid time off. She will be offered a choice of new transfer assignments and get a pay raise.

A letter of reprimand will be removed from her files, and she may review all her company files and remove any defaming information about the incident. Finally, her \$5,000 lawyer fee will be paid by the company.

After all this, a company vice president said the company encourages whistle-blowers.

Unfortunately, Westinghouse Hanford will not be penalized in any way for its actions. It obviously subjected Austin to large amounts of stress and tried to edge her out.

That is not an overwhelming endorsement for whistle-blowers. While Austin came out OK in the settlement, others who feel their employers are conducting illegal activities might not feel the effort is worth the risk. The only way a whistle-blowing program can be carried out successfully is to ensure fair treatment of the whistle-blowers.

One solution is to fine companies an enormous amount of money and set up a fund for whistle-blowers. That's the only thing those conglomerates understand — capital.



Proposal rattles Congressional travelers

Rep. Bob Carr, D-Mich., sent a scare through the House this week when he suggested taking the authority for overseas junkets (trips that are paid for by tax-payers) away from committee chairmen and forcing the junkets to be approved by a majority vote of the House members.

Although Carr withdrew the proposal the same day he offered it, he may have gotten the attention of some of his co-workers in government. Carr said he was satisfied that the proposal would be enough to make committee chairmen more accountable for the overseas junkets. He said if he continues to see abuses of the junkets he will work harder to push the proposal through the House.

Carr was responding to reports that the House Ways and Means committee took a junket, including wives, to Barbados at a cost to taxpayers of \$100,000. The committee was secretly filmed by ABC News spending the majority of their time engaging in recreational activities.

Although the timing and support for the proposal may not be in place yet, Carr has a good idea. Committee chairmen can be overruled on most matters by a majority of the members of the House, according to House rules. However, there are no such provisions limiting the chairmen's power to authorize travel.

And that authority has obviously been abused.

Under Carr's proposal, all committee-sponsored overseas trips would have to be approved by a majority vote in the House. Committees would need to submit detailed itineraries, the purpose for each stop on the trip, the name of everyone making the trip, the estimated total expense and the trip's anticipated benefit to taxpayers.

By taking the authorization for these taxpayer-funded junkets out of the hands of the parties that want to go on them, and by bringing the expense and reasons for the trip into the open, abuses of the junket privilege will be curtailed.

LETTERS

Bicycles

I am glad to know that the University's Office of Public Safety is concerned enough about the problem of vagrant bicyclists to post full-time mobile officers on mountain bikes (in case there is need for hot pursuit) at strategic locations on campus.

These bicyclists who do not dismount at every yellow rectangle and lock their bikes in undesignated areas pose such a threat to campus security that a full-time staff to eliminate these dangerously relentless individuals is totally justified.

These officers are so inspired to make a difference that they will hide in the bushes so they can punish even the most unsuspecting terrorists. To show the determination of OPS, one officer said, "It's just like working at Burger King, only I get paid more." I wish all police were this dedicated.

It is good to know that OPS has chosen to focus on these heinous bicycle crimes rather than efforts to stop rape, and sexual and racial harassment on campus.

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I can feel safe now walking on campus without the fear of being run down by a lunatic bicyclist, but a woman cannot feel safe walking on campus at night.

Gary Rosenstein
Student

Attitudes

I'm writing to express my disappointment in the coverage (ODE, Nov. 25) of OSPIRG's report on consumer attitudes.

As coordinator of the survey at the University I should point out that the goal of our survey was to prove that consumers have been led to believe that cosmetic criteria are the most important considerations in judging the quality of produce and that given more information about the use of pesticides, post-harvest chemicals and their health implications, most shoppers will make different choices.

The main issue is that most of our produce has been pre-selected for us by the industry, and we have no way of knowing where and under what con-

ditions it was grown.

Consumers deserve the right to make their own food choices for themselves. They need to know the complete story about their food supply and how it is chosen for them.

Further, in order to make true choices at the retail level, consumers need to have a variety of alternatives available to them, including food produced without pesticides and other chemicals.

We're lucky in Eugene in that we have a number of markets supplying organic produce at average prices, but what about communities less fortunate that have no choice but to eat pesticide-laden apples glossed over by a crust of wax?

For more information on pesticides and local sources of organic foods, please contact OSPIRG in the EMU, Suite 1, or phone us at 346-4377.

Caitlin Twain
OSPIRG

Do it right

Having volunteered for the campus recycling program, I am well aware of some of the

problems facing recycling at the University.

Interest in recycling at the University is at an all-time high. The vast majority of those recycling their paper are doing a great job.

However, there is a minority of the campus population that continues to recycle incorrectly. This pertains to recycling items such as post-its, envelopes with plastic windows or adhesive labels, paper cups and plates, candy wrappers, cardboard and magazines.

None of these items can be recycled on our campus. Continual efforts to remove them considerably slow down the process and may even jeopardize the long-term existence of the program.

To combat this, educational

information has been posted at nearly every paper recycling station. It seems, though, that many haven't taken the time to read it.

For example, the recycling informational set-up outside Suite 1 of the EMU is perhaps the best on campus, but the condition of the bins at this station are among the worst on campus.

Take a minute and read the information if you are unsure about the recyclability of something. If you see someone recycling improperly, educate them as to the proper way.

For recycling properly is the only way to ensure the long-term continuing and success of our program.

Greg Papciak
Sociology

COMMENTARY POLICY

The Oregon Daily Emerald welcomes commentaries from the public concerning topics of interest to the University community.

Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission.