

House bank scandal needs full disclosure

When the House rubber-check scandal first broke last September, nobody thought much about it. So a few Representatives didn't keep careful track of their checking accounts. Big deal.

However, as the depth of the financial chicanery came to the surface, it turned into a big deal. Constituents wanted to know how their Representatives, who control billions of taxpayer dollars, could be so blatantly fast and loose with their personal finances.

So the House Ethics Committee (to borrow a worn-out cliché, a contradiction in terms if there ever was one) convened to decide what to do with the most heinous abusers of the now-closed House bank.

After months of scrutinizing records and agonizing over details, the ethics committee finally gave its conclusion: It would release the names of the 19 current and five former Representatives who had the worst bounced-check records during a 39-month period.

The collective sigh you just heard coming from Foggy Bottom was the 331 other past and present members who won't have their names released.

Once again, Congress has revealed what it really thinks about the American public. Voters aren't capable of making rational judgments on the issue, or so the thinking goes.

What are the Representatives afraid of? Are they scared that if their names are on the list, the constituents back home won't take too kindly to it? That they might even vote the financially wayward member out of office?

You bet their bounced checks they are.

By releasing only 24 names, the committee members are covering their backsides. By sacrificing the 19 comrades left in the House, the committee has taken some heat off of the other abusers. Better to lose a few than a lot.

Adding an ironic twist to the decision is the fact that the committee members don't know the names of the offenders. All the records are coded to prevent the committee from making decisions on a personal basis. By limiting the amount of names released, the committee members are doing their best not to zap their friends.

The gang of 24 ran up some impressively bad financial records, and there is no doubt they belong in the public dog house. To get on the list, a member had to have overdrafts totaling more than their next paycheck 20 percent of the time during the 39-month period.

In addition, the *Washington Post* has reported that one bouncy member wrote close to 1,000 bad checks, and 45 wrote more than 100.

Almost 1,000 checks?!!

No wonder the ethics committee is worried.

The decision to release only 24 names was not a unanimous one. The vote from the bipartisan (seven Democrats, seven Republicans) committee was 10-4. All the Democrats and three of the Republicans formed the majority vote.

It shouldn't be curious why the Republicans are pushing for complete disclosure. After all, Democrats have a 102-seat majority in the House — they, by sheer weight of numbers, have more to lose by a full release of the names.

No matter what their motives, the Republicans are right. A full disclosure of the names is necessary. A democracy allows the people to decide what is important and what isn't. By making all the offenders known, the voters will have a comparison upon which to make a decision.

A Representative who bounced one check probably isn't going to get tossed out of office because of it — voters can forgive small aberrations. But a Representative who consistently abused the system and wrote bad checks on a regular basis should and probably will get the boot.

By not releasing all the names, the ethics committee has taken on the responsibility of telling voters what is and isn't important. It didn't work for Jennifer Bills and JoSonja Watson, it shouldn't work for Congress.

A Representative who consistently abused the system and wrote bad checks on a regular basis should and probably will get the boot.



OPINION

Lenin and Joe Camel: What a team



THE FINE PRINT

BY DON PETERS

Flipping through the paper Tuesday, I came across two interesting stories.

The first was about how the U.S. surgeon general and the American Medical Association have slammed R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. for using its "Joe Camel" to promote Camel cigarettes.

The second equally fascinating story was about how the Kremlin has been flooded with letters ever since *Forbes* magazine announced last November that the preserved body of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was for sale. Offers ranging from \$1,000 to \$27 million have found their way to the Russian Security Ministry.

In and of themselves, the stories seem to have little to do with University students. But wait, look a little closer. Both could bring untold riches to our little neck of the woods.

We all know what kind of financial shape the University is in. With a large infusion of cash, it might get upgraded to "miserable." And we all know how slow the state will be in getting us some of those necessary funds.

Well, wait no more. It's time to take responsibility for ourselves. If the state won't fork over the money, we'll just have to go get some, scruples be damned.

When I first heard about the Camel decision, I was a little skeptical. To me, the idea of the surgeon general and the AMA deciding what is and isn't good advertising seems fishy. No doubt they think any cigarette advertising is bad, but "Joe Camel" is even worse because it is a highly recognizable figure among young kids.

However, I'm not even going to get into that argument. If I write one more smoking column, the anti-smoking zealots on campus will probably fire-bomb my truck.

So after careful consideration, I am going to back the attempt to oust Joe Camel from the advertising scene. Quite simply, he will make one hell of a mascot for the University.

Sure, the Duck is an interesting and unique mascot, even if it's a bit wimpy. But Joe Camel

gracing the football team's helmets ... well, there's a heady concept. Of course, all the students would need T-shirts with the new logo. Change the mascot and watch the money start rolling in from the memorabilia.

Are you listening Myles Brand? Go talk to the Camel people. Maybe some kind of deal can be arranged. Maybe "R.J. Reynolds Court." That ought to do it.

Part two of my plan is much simpler — the purchase of Lenin's tomb. Quite simply, the University should get in on the bidding.

After all, the University is going to spend \$30,000 to move some statues. Surely the administration could come up with some cash for this important purchase, right?

Now I know we can't afford to match the \$27 million a Minnesota amateur historian has offered, but the University does have an inside edge. This is a institute of higher learning. The Kremlin would certainly see the merits of putting the father of the Soviet Union in scholarly repose.

Would Lenin be happy being put on display by some circus huckster, or gracing the entrance lobby of a multinational (capitalist) conglomerate? I think not.

And once Lenin was at the University, wow, the possibilities are limitless.

Think what a draw the tomb would be. He would be unmatched as a recruiter. And the slogans would be fantastic. How does this grab you:

"At other universities, you study Lenin. We have him."

Not bad, eh?

We could stick old Lenin in front of the EMU. Or better yet, put him in Suite 1 and charge admission. Poof, no more financial worries. At a buck a look, Lenin would make up the purchase cost in a matter of days.

So see, the University's financial woes can easily be solved. All it takes is a little aggressive marketing. Diversity is constantly stressed here at the University. With Joe Camel as mascot and Vlad in the EMU, the University would certainly be about as diverse as it could get.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3150, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Managing Editor	Pat Malach	Editor in Chief	Christopher Bair	Chris Bounett
Editorial Editor	Cathie Daniels	News Editor	Chris Bair	Don Peters
Graphics Editor	Jeff Paslay	Sports Editor	Pat Malach	Jake Berg
Entertainment Editor	Layne Lakelish	In Touch Editor	Pat Malach	Mike Freeman

Associate Editors
 Student Government Activities: Daralyn Trappe
 Higher Education Administration: Carrie Dennett
 Community: Rene DeCair
 Features: Lisa Mlogan

Reporters: Tammy Batey, David Charbonneau, Karen Engels, Jayson Jacoby, Rivers Janssen, Gerrit Koepping, Kirsten Lucas, Hope Neason, Colleen Pohig
 Copy Editors: Dan Eisler, Karen Engels, Fred Hagen, Paul Halvorson, Sheila Mitha, Kathy Sherlock

Photographers: Sean Poston, Michael Shindler
 Advertising: Jean Bradley, Scott Dana, Leslie Fial, David Gauntlett, Jennifer Huckins, Brittain Kilburn, Tom Leach, Randon Riley, Catherine Royce, Dustin Stadel, Vicki Tobin, Sharon Vaz

Classified: Peggy McGinn, Manager, Alan Curtis, Sheila Lorenzo
 Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor, Judy Connolly
 Production: Ingrid White, Production Coordinator, Sarah Clark, Corine Frier, Kristine Grandner, Susan Head, Jennifer Huey, Dee McCobb, Stacy Mitchell, Matt Morin, Jennifer Roland, Jennifer Smith, Anne Stephenson, Jennifer Vaie, Todd Williams

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Advertising Director: Bryan R. Coppedge
 Production Manager: Michele Ross

Newsroom: 346-5511
 Display Advertising: 346-3712

Business Office: 346-5512
 Classified Advertising: 346-4343