

Be a little careful until Perot speaks

All this attention and he's not even officially in the race yet.

Ross Perot (no H. anymore) has both the Democrats and Republicans scared. The Texas billionaire, by virtue of his loaded money clip and iconoclastic personality, has been anointed as a presidential contender.

He doesn't belong to any party — he's going to form one. He's appointed a temporary running mate, who probably won't be on the ballot come November.

So far, Perot's biggest asset seems to be that he's not George Bush or Bill Clinton — and his un-politician-like ability to keep his mouth shut.

The guy hasn't gone public on anything except for a speech March 18 in front of the National Press Club. No advertisements, billboards, circulars or posters.

The result? He beat both Bush and Clinton in a recent Texas poll, and was just a tick behind the president in California.

This silence thing seems to be working. Stick with it, Ross.

Both Democrats and Republicans are whining. They compare Perot to a new car — shiny and bright at first, but after you put a few miles on it, the grime sets in. Perot, apparently, is still under warranty.

So far, Perot's biggest asset seems to be his un-politician-like ability to keep his mouth shut.

In at least one thing, Perot believes in equality — stealing votes from other politicians. His supporters are a mixed bag; roughly one-third each from Republicans, Democrats and independents. He says he won't officially declare his candidacy unless or until he gets on all 50 state ballots. In the meantime, he isn't talking. Oh, maybe he is a little, but not much.

His background is ultra-wealthy. Horatio Alger, Annapolis and commando raids. But this makes him presidential timber?

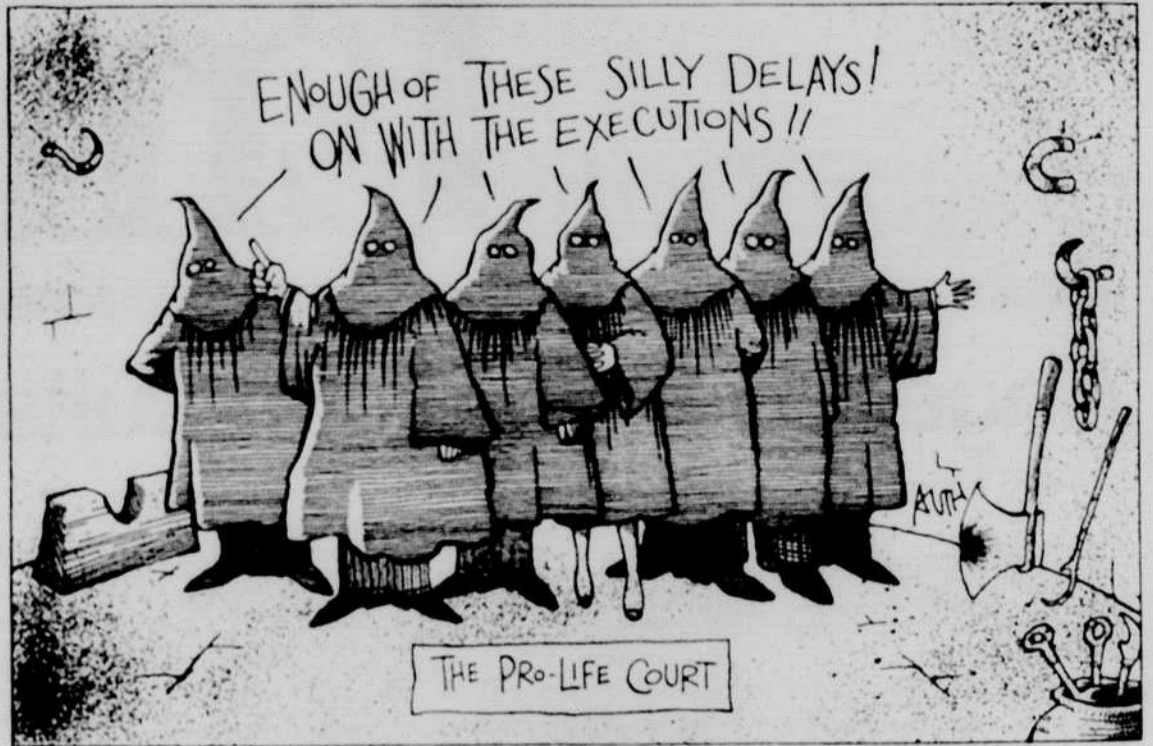
Who can tell? Perot ain't talking.

Sooner or later, Perot will have to take stances on issues. Some of his political views have leaked out already. He's pro-choice, wants to raise taxes on the rich, get a presidential line-item veto, and eliminate the budget deficit, to name just a few. But so far, he hasn't had to answer his critics, defend his ideas.

Only then can he be considered for president.

On one thing, Perot is at a direct disadvantage. He's a businessman — a business owner who's used to telling employees what to do and knowing they will follow his orders. That might work in the executive branch, but not in Congress. If they don't want to listen to him, they don't have to.

Until Perot begins to speak, there's no use speculating on his chances.



COMMENTARY

Students need to get involved

By Myles Brand

Recently, I met with a group of active and involved University students. It was a good meeting; the discussion was friendly and constructive. But I found one thing disturbing: Clearly, the students were not expecting me to discuss Measure 5.

While Measure 5 apparently wasn't on their minds, it was on mine. They received an earful about the significantly higher tuition that surely will come as Measure 5 continues to unfold. And they heard how this will keep still greater numbers of promising students from completing, or even beginning, their higher educations. I also told them how the University will become smaller if there is no remedy to the Measure 5 fiscal crisis.

These students were stunned. Most seemed either to know little about Measure 5 or to think that the issues involved are close to resolution.

Measure 5 is the most vital issue affecting the long-term future of the University. True, there are many other issues that concern students on our campus, and well that they should. Such issues are vital to the kind of diverse community that we are, reflecting high social and cultural values. But no issue has more far-reaching consequences for our community; no issue will more affect accessibility and quality of education on our campus than the fiscal crisis wrought by Measure 5.

If nothing is done to keep Measure 5 from running its full course, the University, as we know it, will disappear. If so, there will be little prospect of dealing with any other issues.

The situation today is frighteningly reminiscent of 1990, when I had my first encounter with students who failed to take Measure 5 seriously.

Back then, about 100 students attended an open forum before the November election in which Measure 5 was passed. I spoke on the measure's potential impacts on the University. The only questions, and the only topic of discussion for the remainder of the forum, concerned a separate and

passing controversy.

Then as now, too few were listening. The result? Resident tuition increased \$600, and colleges and programs were closed.

Recently, I convened another open forum to discuss Measure 5. About 40 people attended, many employed by the University and already generally aware of Measure 5's consequences. Few students attended.

Last week, I held a similar forum in Carson Hall. The turnout — while many more showed interest this time — was about the same.

The low turnout on these two occasions causes me considerable alarm. When it comes to Measure 5, it seems as though too many University students, frankly, don't give a damn.

I hope that I am mistaken. Students' voices are needed, urgently, if we are to avoid substantial tuition increases and further degradation of access to our campus.

Each and every person at this university can do something about changing the course of events. It is not beyond our control. Indeed, we are in this pickle because too many people — people who cared — failed to step forward soon enough once before.

What are the facts, and what can be done?

Measure 5 was passed by Oregon voters frustrated about an unfair tax structure. In particular, a disproportionate share of the tax burden was falling on residential property owners.

Measure 5, has three phases. The first already has been implemented; two are to come, unless there is a change.

The second phase is scheduled to occur in the 1993-95 biennium. The University is beginning its financial planning for the next biennium now. Along with the entire state system of higher education, we are required to submit a budget that reflects a 20-percent reduction in state funds.

Gov. Roberts has been working to motivate a special session of the State Legislature to develop a tax proposal that stabilizes state revenues. To date, she has not been successful, because it is widely perceived

that the body politic is not ready for a change. There is a significant, vocal sector of the voting public that would rather see additional cuts in state services, including higher education.

Any solution to this problem will require a general vote — either this fall, as the result of a special session this summer, or at the end of the next legislative session. There will be no change in 5's consequences unless Oregonians vote on it. Here is where you can help.

First, inform yourself about the issues facing the University and the state.

Second, register to vote. If there is a special session this summer, you need to be registered to vote in a September election. If you will be gone, cast an absentee ballot.

And third, vote your conscience.

The elected student leadership, ASUO, has been trying to raise students' awareness about Measure 5's effects.

In addition to recent teach-ins and voter registration drives, today at 1 p.m., at the State Capitol in Salem, ASUO and other student leaders statewide have organized a rally to relay their message directly to legislators. Free bus transportation will leave from East 13th Avenue and University Street at 10:30 a.m.

As these efforts illustrate, ASUO is playing a key leadership role.

But ASUO cannot do it alone. The administration and faculty cannot do it alone. Students have the largest say in the future of this University through their ability to vote on tax-structure proposals and to influence their elected representatives through direct communication.

When tuition increases significantly in the fall of 1993, and when access to classes decreases, it will be too late. The time for action is now and during the next six to 12 months. Once the state removes University funding, no amount of protest will reverse the situation.

This is a wake-up call.

Myles Brand is president of the University of Oregon.

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