

## Senator causes riots but stays in office

Senator Packwood has finally made it to Oregon. Hide your valuables.

For those who have forgotten, Oregon is Packwood's home state. He was re-elected last November by a 53-47 majority over challenger Les AuCoin.

Unfortunately, Packwood doesn't seem to remember whom he's representing either. In the past week, he said he's only accountable to the Senate Ethics Committee, not the electorate. During a Tuesday protest at the Valley River Inn in Eugene, he dismissed protesters by saying, "I've been picketed most of my political life, so I'm used to it."

In other words, he's immune to people's criticism. He's no longer concerned with what his public thinks.

The uproar began on Nov. 22, when *The Washington Post* revealed sexual harassment allegations against Packwood by 10 women. The *Post* couldn't publish the story before the election because it wasn't complete. It was later revealed that Packwood tried to discredit the women before the election in an effort to preserve his image for the voters.

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The Tuesday protesters, whom police numbered at 90 or more, yelled angrily in the hotel lobby for Packwood to resign. Signs were spotted saying "Our senator by fraud," "Clear-cut women lovingly, Bob," and "Sexual harassment stinks."

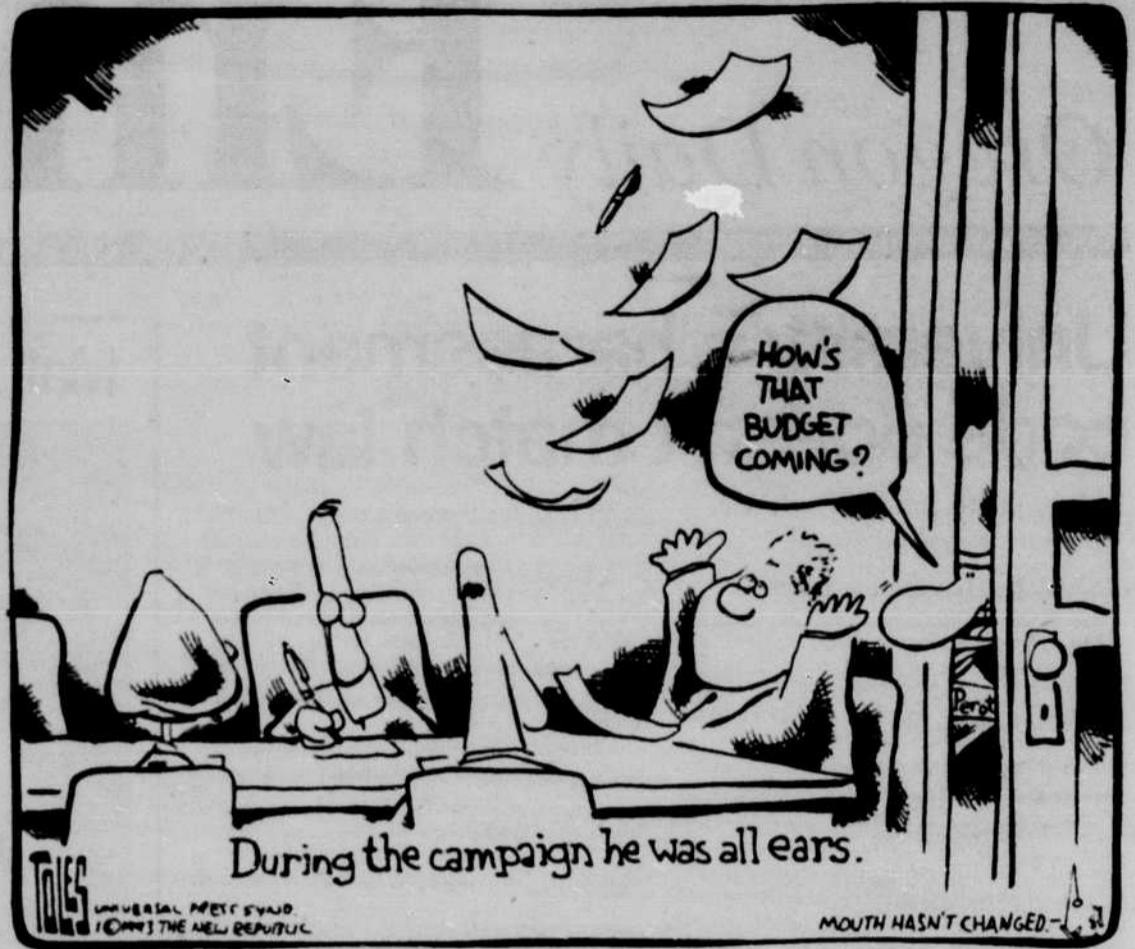
People have a right to be upset. Many newspapers have effectively argued that Packwood should resign for his actions alone. Sexual harassment is not a small crime, and his efforts to dodge the accusations are even more reprehensible. Had he admitted his problem right off, confessed he made mistakes and said he would do his best to change, perhaps he could have been forgiven eventually.

However, his only explanation was "I just didn't get it." Well, now he has an even better reason to get out of office — nobody wants him there.

If a senator can't travel freely throughout his own state without causing riots wherever he goes, perhaps he should give some thought to resigning. He complained Tuesday that no one was covering the issues important to him, specifically the timber crisis. But that's exactly the point. His past actions have obscured everything he now says.

As a representative of the state, people need to trust his opinion and judgment. He can't, however, represent the state's best interest if no one trusts him. He was elected by the majority because people wanted him in office. Now that the facts are known, people don't want him in office. Simple respect for the wishes of the people, a trait most politicians say they strive for, should be Packwood's reason for resigning.

To put it bluntly, he should quit being so self-absorbed and do something for the people — which was why he was elected.



OPINION

## Schott's offense within her rights



I'm a sports fan. I admit it here and now. I'm not ashamed of this admission, I just know that some of you out there (especially many of my friends) aren't. Well, it involves being an admirer of people's athletic prowess and enjoying the excitement of good competition.

But what I'm writing about goes beyond this because it deals with basic constitutional rights — rights which we all are entitled to under the Constitution of the United States of America.

Which rights, you might wonder, could I be referring to in association with being a fan of jocks? 'Ol basic right number one, the right to freedom of speech. Marge Schott has it and there's nothing we can do about it; at least there shouldn't be.

For those of you unfamiliar with the situation, allow me to fill you in. Schott, the owner of Major League Baseball's Cincinnati Reds, appears to be quite the little racist. Quite the hater-monger, in fact.

She is said to have made many racist comments about African-Americans as well as owning a Nazi swastika that she occasionally wears around for the fun of it. Now I'm tempted to make a lot of sarcastic remarks here, but there are probably a few of you out there who wouldn't get it (or find any humor in them) and would label me a racist or accuse me of condoning Schott.

Well, I'm not and I don't. If you must know my feelings about what she has said and done, I think it is sick and twisted and she should burn in hell for those feelings. They're

wrong, really wrong.

But as horrible as her statements and feelings are, she has the fundamental constitutional right to make them. Freedom of speech is one of the fundamental features of representative democracy because the system is based on choice. The free flow of information is essential to political choice (democracy) as well as consumer choice (capitalism), and any infringement on it is a step on a slippery slope that threatens those basic institutions and practices.

There is a call out there among the "politically correct" to reprimand and punish Schott for her statements. For instance, there is talk among the other baseball team owners (a way politically correct group of men) to require her to sell her share of the team.

Two wrongs don't make a right. One constitutional right should not be violated in order to violate another. Just because he or she is a stupid person, saying stupid things, doesn't mean you can separate someone from their property.

The best counter to an evil argument shouldn't be the arm of the state, but rather a better argument. The danger of this new sensitivity, which has been labeled "political correctness" is that a fundamental right, freedom of speech, will be sacrificed on the altar of some new, unstated right not to be offended by others.

Are we willing to give up on of the fundamental rights of a liberal democracy in order not to be offended by hate speech? There is a plethora of things that could be done to reprimand

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her, for instance, like the other baseball team owners coming out with a joint, unified statement strongly criticizing her for her ignorance and stupidity (as if baseball owners could ever actually agree on anything, but that's another story).

There are also many things that we, as fans, can do. We could start a letter writing campaign to let her know of our disgust at her statements. Fans in Cincinnati and other major league cities could organize boycotts of Reds' games, thereby striking at the heart of all baseball owners — their pocket-books.

Free speech is an important right that must be protected. In our era of new sensitivity, it seems as though if speech isn't correct, it's not worthy of protection. But the precedent that could be set if the owners really do attempt to separate Schott from her property because she exercised her right to free speech, however inappropriate, is dangerous.

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Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

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