

Campbell's tax plan offers no solutions

House Speaker Larry Campbell has finally made his plan public for fixing Oregon's budget problems. In a word (or two) — it's bad.

Campbell spent the past year derailing Gov. Barbara Roberts' tax proposal, which she devised after several meetings with Oregonians across the state. Campbell, meanwhile, devised his plan after meeting with, well, nobody.

Campbell refused to allow Oregonians even the opportunity to vote on Roberts' plan. No doubt his plan will find its way onto a ballot somewhere.

Campbell's plan does little to relieve the crunch of 1990's Ballot Measure 5 and actually may worsen the damage. Like Measure 5, Campbell's plan is an attempt at a quick fix, an attempt to dupe voters into believing something is being done about the problem.

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The proposal would generate a budget that covers only one year, instead of the usual two. Since the House only meets every other year, a special session would be required to create another budget in 1994. The special session alone means increased operating costs for the House, which is one of the very issues taxpayers are angry about.

Campbell's plan would cut between \$450 million and \$500 million from the budget, but it offers no clue as to what programs will be cut or to what degree their budgets will be slashed.

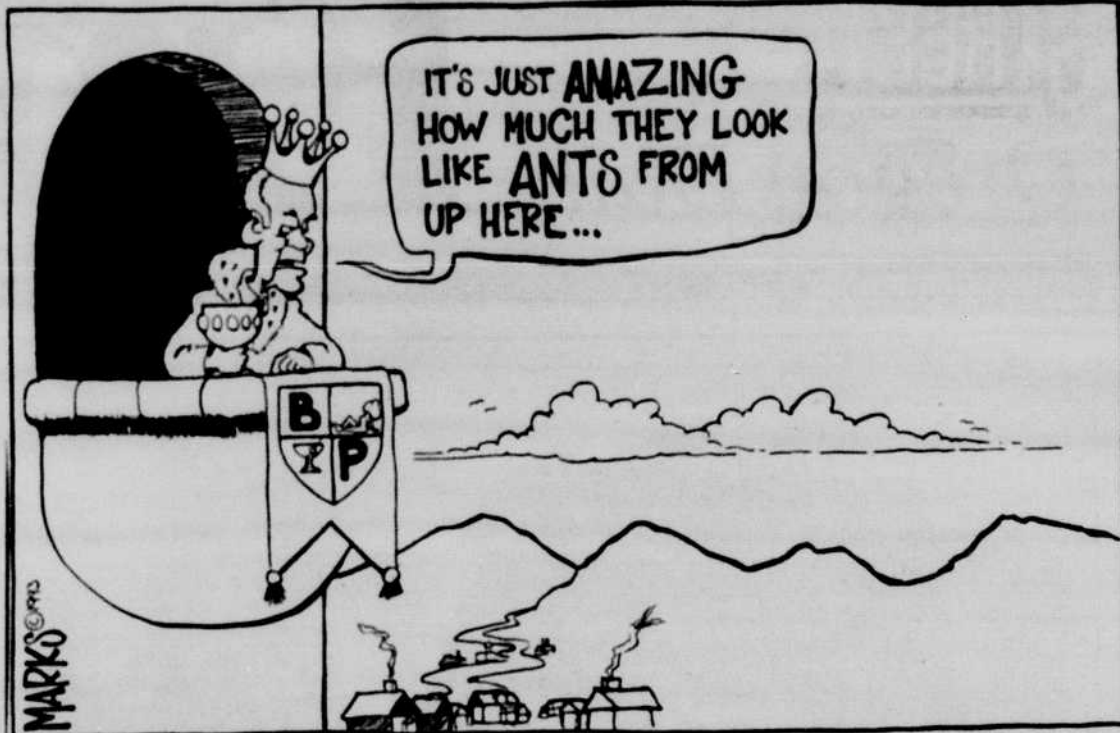
In an attempt to mimic California's disastrous Proposition 13, Campbell also proposes limiting increases in property assessments to 2 percent per year. This proposal would set artificially low tax rates and seriously reduce the ability of counties, cities and school districts to retain local control of their operations.

In a poor attempt at appeasing educators, Campbell's plan would allocate state lottery funds to K-12 schools. However, lottery funding is very unstable and would provide schools with a fluctuating source of income, preventing them from planning more than a year or two in advance.

The plan does contain at least two positive points. One is freezing property taxes at 2 percent of assessed value, rather than the 1.5 percent mandated by Measure 5. This would save the state \$1.5 billion in 1995-97.

Also, the plan would dedicate beer and wine taxes to education, research and treatment for alcohol and drug abuse programs.

Oregon doesn't need a quick-fix solution to its budget woes. It needs lawmakers who are not afraid to take political risks and make unpopular decisions.



COMMENTARY

Language isn't fun, but needed

By David Weingarten

I often wonder if our freedom — which we are most proud of in this country — will be our tragic flaw, eventually leading to the complete collapse of our country.

Plato believed humans were inherently good — that "evil" people were actually just deceived about what was good. Machiavelli, on the other hand, believed people were, by their very nature, evil and selfish.

Today, Americans are divided into two such factions. One group, frequently termed the "far-left wing" or "anarchists," seem to believe that, if left to their own devices, people will generally do what is right and good, both for themselves and for others.

The other group, respectively termed the "far-right wing" or "fascists," recognize that people do not usually do what is best, but rather what is easiest or most immediately gratifying.

Given that I am a registered Democrat who is vehemently pro-choice and strongly against "unnecessary" legislation, I hate to associate myself with any sort of conservatism. But in the case of higher standards for American education, I'm afraid I must.

The editorial in the Jan. 26 issue of the *Emerald* ("No clear mandate for requirement") is just plain ridiculous. The *Emerald* editors should ask themselves a couple of questions.

First, how many high school students did they know who actually liked going to school every day? How many people did they know in high school that took classes because it was "an easy A" or because they "need it to graduate"? The average U.S. high school student is about as far from motivated as humanly possible.

When I was in high school, I only took "hard" classes if I had to. I took AP classes only because they were more interesting, not because I was trying to become better educated. I pulled a 2.3 cumulative GPA. I was an average student.

In my first two-and-a-half years of college, I came to the realization that, damn, I didn't know a thing. I wished somebody had pushed me harder. I wished somebody had made me take more history. I wished somebody had made me pass algebra and go on to calculus. I wished somebody had made me take two years of Latin. I wished somebody had made me take physics.

Instead, I, like most of my fellow classmates, took yearbook. I took two P.E. classes per year. I circuitously avoided my school's foreign language requirement by taking art classes. (Yes, believe it or not, art was a valid substitute for language at my school.)

When I talk to people in other countries (which I do frequently, thanks to the InterNet, a computer service that, by the way, all University students can access), I am almost embarrassed to tell them I am an American.

Below the university level, America has one of the worst educational systems in the industrialized world. Our students, on the whole, speak no language other than English. Many cannot perform simple day-to-day mathematical functions without a calculator, let alone process complex calculus or algebraic functions.

Most do not even understand the workings of their own government, nor of global economics or international relations. The second most common question I get from foreigners is: "Are Americans as stupid as we hear?"

To say we cannot require foreign language because math and English skills are poor is a non sequitur of grand proportion. I failed English in eighth grade, but received a B-plus in my first term of Latin at the University. For that matter, it was not until I had taken Latin and Greek that I understood terms like "indirect object," "participle phrase" or "subordinate clause." Too bad they didn't teach Latin in seventh grade.

The supposition that if a stu-

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dent doesn't want to go to a post-secondary school, she should not be required to take a foreign language, is absurd. Having lived in New Mexico for two years (for those of you who didn't take high school geography, no, it wasn't a foreign exchange program), I know for a fact that speaking Spanish can frequently be the deciding factor in whether or not you get a job.

In the Northeast of the United States, French fluency is the "big plus" on a job application. This need for language fluency is becoming increasingly necessary in many states around the country.

Yes, students should want to take foreign language. They should also want to take history, algebra, calculus, physics, chemistry, biology, economics, writing composition and literature, if for no other reason than to broaden their horizons.

The problem is, they don't. They want to play sports or go dancing. They want to sit at home and watch TV or go out and get intoxicated.

Perhaps the state Board of Higher Education's new requirement is not worded perfectly. Perhaps it leaves out some necessary clarity. Perhaps it needs to be changed. I don't know. Because I only have second-hand reports of it, I have not read the actual documents.

But from the sounds of it, neither has the *Emerald's* editorial board. Regardless, I have little doubt that the OSBHE made the right decision, for a change.

David Weingarten is a Eugene resident.

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