

City needs money from restaurant tax

On March 23, voters will decide whether a 3 percent restaurant tax is in Eugene's best interest. The tax would be used to balance next year's city budget.

The city would tax food bought in restaurants or from caterers and certain grocery store items, such as ready-to-eat hot food or salads from salad bars. Other store-bought items would be exempt.

The City Council estimates Eugene will pull in \$4.25 million the first year and an annual average of \$5.3 million during the first five years.

At first glance, there are many reasons to be wary of such a plan. Opponents argue that eating out is not a luxury and that fine dining constitutes only 13 percent of meals purchased outside of the home. This means that most meals are purchased out of necessity, such as a quickie lunch bought during a break. Certainly buying lunch at a restaurant is not always a matter of choice.

Another argument is that charging for restaurant food is unfair to individuals with disabilities or seniors who lack the strength to shop for grocery items. Again, this is a valid concern; people who can't make their own food have little choice but to go out.

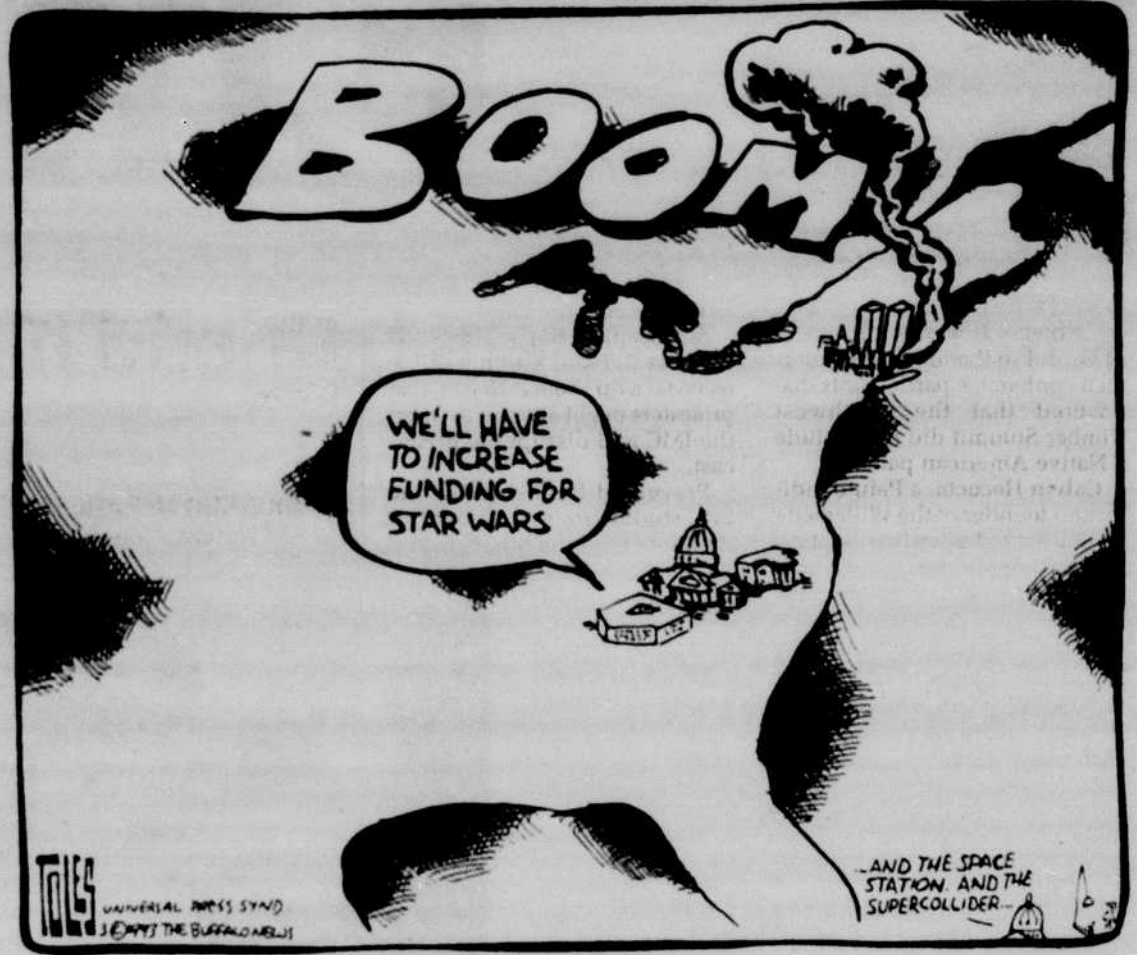
However, these arguments ignore the fiscal realities of the situation. Eugene has an imbalanced budget. With the closure of the Trojan nuclear plant, the city could lose an additional \$3 million during the next couple of years. The City Council also has a few projects in the works that will hopefully revitalize the Eugene Mall, which would in turn help the local economy and bring more money into the city's budget.

The council has tried to come up with alternatives to a restaurant tax, such as a progressive income tax or a decrease in services. But voters would destroy the income tax proposal; they believe it's just as bureaucratic as a property tax because it's taken directly out of one's paycheck. And decreasing services, such as the Eugene Celebration or local swimming pools, would make it pointless to live in the area in the first place.

The restaurant tax is the only sensible solution for a pressing dilemma. While it is certainly true that it singles out people who eat out a lot, it's also true that 3 percent isn't very much. It would cost an extra 30 cents for a \$10 meal. A \$40 dinner would bring in an extra \$1.20 for the city. And although it doesn't translate to much money for the consumers, once it's added up it could help the city immensely.

A few opponents argue Eugene should wait for the state to solve our problems, presumably with a sales tax. However, state legislators haven't demonstrated any problem-solving skills so far. Rather, they've created more. Eugene needs to take action to save itself before it's too late.

Certainly a restaurant tax isn't an ideal solution. Nobody wants to pay more money for the same products. The question, however, is whether citizens are willing to give up their city's livability for a few cents every meal.



LETTERS

Bad taste

What democracy has given, bureaucracy may take away.

Oregon legislators recently mandated the use of bittering agents in antifreeze. For half a cent, antifreeze (a tasty poison) can be made so bitter children can't drink it. Legislation was necessary; U.S. manufacturers, who embitter what they sell in foreign markets, have refused to protect our children.

It's important. Antifreeze kills. In 1991, three died in Indiana after drinking it. The county coroner said a bittering agent could have saved them.

The problem: An antifreeze firm is quietly lobbying for an exemption. It must not be granted. Please write to the Poison Prevention Task Force, Oregon Health Sciences University, 3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, Portland, Ore. 97201. Support terrible-tasting toxins. The child — and the guilt — you save may be your own.

Edith Harrison
Salem

No change

In the season of the birth of the Prince of Peace, himself from the Middle East, a group of Palestinian men was taken blindfolded and handcuffed by the occupying Israeli army to a barren no-man's land in Lebanon. The next day, Dec. 18, the United Nation's Security Council passed a resolution condemning the deportation of these men from their ancestral homeland.

The U.S. State Department document on global human rights states the Israeli armed forces' killing of Palestinians increased 62 percent in 1992 from the previous year. Israeli practices such as the transfer of prisoners outside of the occupied territories and demolition or sealing of houses as a form of "collective punishment" violates international law.

The men, 396 of them, continue in misery in the no-man's land. And Israeli soldiers continue to kill Palestinians and demolish their homes.

Aside from condemning and reporting the atrocities, the new American administration has not changed the old order. But does anyone care? Where are those media pundits, professors and lawyers hungry for justice?

M. Reza Behnam
Eugene

Bike fees

If you're one of the many people who commute by bicycle, or someone who simply cares about the environment, this letter concerns you.

Recently, there's been a bill referred to the General Government Committee that would establish a bicycle registration fee and collections system, creating a new bureaucracy within the Department of Transportation.

HB 2430 would not create any new bicycle facilities or alleviate the state's budget problems. Its implications are obvious.

It would be costly to collect the fees and enforce the registration, and as if that's not bad enough, all of the money generated would go to street and highway maintenance. Requiring people to pay a fee to register their bicycles would curtail commuting by bike at a time when environment-friendly transportation should be encouraged. I hope you agree that HB 2430 is a bad bill.

There is something you can do about it. I urge you to write: Rep. Cedric Hayden, State Capitol, H-480, Salem, Ore. 97310. Express your disapproval of HB 2430. If you have any questions, call OSPIRG at 346-4377, or come to one of the Sustainable Energy Campaign's weekly meetings on Tuesday nights at 7 in the EMU's Century Room B.

Matt Vassallo
OSPIRG

Glad to leave

What a shame that David Wagner will be forced to leave the University this summer. I still remember the exuberance and dedication with which he taught an introductory botany class a couple of years ago.

One "lab experiment" was making curry (to learn about seeds). Another was a field trip to the McKenzie River trail.

I, for one, am selfishly thrilled to be graduating in spring, before 1990's Ballot Measure 5 steals any more fine professors and classes.

Koalani Roberts
Journalism

Letter of love

Sin is anything that separates us from God. Lust, greed, deceit, homosexuality, boastfulness — these are a few of the sins that the Bible mentions.

I am a sinner. If we're completely honest with ourselves, we have all sinned (I John 1:8, 9). I am a sinner. "For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Lucky for us God hates sin but loves the sinner.

This letter is not a letter of conviction, but a letter of love — the greatest love anyone can experience. I see so many people on campus every day hurting and searching for peace and purpose in life. Hopefully this has penetrated your heart. Don't miss out on God's plan for your life.

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Aaron James
Pre-Journalism

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159 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.

Editor: Pat Malach
 News Editor: Jake Berg
 Editorial Editor: Martin Fisher
 Graphics Editor: Jeff Paslay
 Entertainment Editor: Freya Horn
 Freelance Editor: Hope Nealson
 Editorial Editor: Rivers Janssen
 Sports Editor: Dave Charbonneau
 Supplements Editor: Calley Anderson
 Night Editor: Jake Berg

Associate Editors: Tammy Batey, Student Government/Activities; Daralyn Trappe, Community; Colleen Pohlig, Higher Education/Administration

News Staff: Scott Andre, Chester Allen, Matt Bender, Justin Brown, Sarah Clark, Dylan Coulter, Meg Dedolph, Amy Devenport, Amanda Ferrie, Teresa Huntsinger, Lisa Kneefel, Lisa Mauri, Demian McLean, Rebecca Merritt, Steve Mims, Tiffini Mueller, Trista Noel, Matthew Schuster, Ellen Shaw, Michael Shindler, Erick Studenicka, Marion Sutor, Michele Thompson-Aguilar, Amy Van Tuyl, Todd Williams

General Manager: Judy Riedl
 Production Manager: Michele Ross

Advertising: Tom Leech, Sharon Vaz, Sales Managers: Shawn Berven, Office Manager: Jane Irola, Teresa Isabelle, Philip Johnson II, Chris Kanoff, Jeremy Mason, Van V. O'Byrne II, Gillian Oh, Rachael Trull, Angie Windheim, Brian Windheim

Classified: Peggy McGinn, Manager: Barry Logan, Sharon Sauvne

Distribution: Rebecca Brooks, Kristi Van Gorder, Anthony Wynn

Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor: Judy Connolly

Production: Ingrid White, Production Coordinator: Kristine Granger, Dee McCobb, Stacy Mitchell, Jennifer Roland, Jennifer Smith, Anne Stephenson

Newsroom: 346-5511
 Display Advertising: 346-3712

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

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.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.