

Police wasting time with Cops in Shops

To what extent should police pursue lawbreakers if a law doesn't make much sense? That's the question police have to answer before fully implementing the "Cops in Shops" program.

"Cops in Shops" is designed to deter minors from purchasing alcohol. Police officers and Oregon liquor agents will be randomly placed in any of 130 participating stores in the Eugene area. Posing as store clerks, the cops will be responsible for curbing underage alcohol purchases, which would presumably lead to less underage drinking. A few agents will also survey the parking lots to make sure no alcohol transactions occur between minors and adults.

If the purpose of the program is to uphold the law, it will probably be quite successful. Minors frequently try to purchase beer at local grocery stores, and clerks are often too nonchalant to care. Cops will now have a new and more convenient way to bust lawbreakers.

Are minors really too immature to drink alcohol? No. Some may not handle their liquor well, but neither do many 40-year-old drinkers.

However, if the main purpose is really to curb underage drinking, the program should give up right now.

For years, minors have found ways to skirt the system. Adult friends sometimes buy the alcohol, or a minor can find a party where alcohol is served. By the time a person reaches the age of 18, he or she will usually have several friends over the age of 21, few of whom object to buying alcohol for a minor.

Saying all minors are drinking doesn't necessarily make it right. However, by keeping the drinking age at 21, lawmakers aren't bestowing realistic expectations on today's youth. People can drive at 16 and vote at 18, yet they aren't supposed to drink until they are 21.

In other words, minors can risk their own life daily behind the wheel of a car, or they can punch a ballot to change the direction of the country, but they can't order wine at a restaurant or have a beer at a bar.

Are minors really too immature to drink alcohol? No. Some may not handle their liquor well, but neither do many 40-year-old drinkers. At the very least, an 18-year-old has been around long enough to be trusted.

Some people argue that lowering the drinking age would mean more dangerous streets because of drunk drivers. But lest we forget, a team of University of Michigan researchers surveyed 15,500 high school seniors in 1991. Eighty-eight percent had used alcohol in the past. If minors want to drink, they do.

If people accept that the law is useless and isn't entirely fair, police then have to decide how diligently they should enforce an unjust law. If they want to prove a point with "Cops and Shops," they'll probably succeed in deterring a few minors. However, if they realize how pointless the law is, they should junk the program.



LETTERS

Commitment

In my five years at the University, I have had the pleasure of working with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and with Marshall Saucedo.

When I first came to the University in the fall of 1988, Saucedo was in charge of the Underrepresented Minority Achievement Scholarship Program provided by this state for minority students such as myself. His professionalism and sincerity as a caring individual are unmatched by anyone else I have worked with at the University, both student and administration.

His appointment by the University as director of the OMA after three years as acting director was based on his proven track record as someone who does a good job and actually gets something done.

Saucedo is such a great asset to this institution of higher education, and I am proud and thankful to see him where he is today.

John Patton
Journalism

Building blocks

Like many faculty and student leaders on this campus, I received a letter from Tom Givon of Linguistics. He wrote adamantly of his opposition to the proposed revision of the Race, Gender, Non-European requirement.

In his letter, Givon asks, "Why teach only about racism in this country?" The new requirement does not solely deal with racism in the United States, quite the opposite. It enables students to learn a more diverse spectrum of issues.

One of two courses will deal specifically with race issues in the United States, and the other will be a broader exploration of gender or race issues in a domestic or international platform. How can we study international race conflict without first understanding race conflict in our own backyards?

Our university believes varied requirements are essential for the development of well-round-

ed students. No one honestly believes that writing courses will make every student Pulitzer Prize winners, but they will learn basic writing skills.

The Race, Gender, Non-European requirement is equally incapable of solving all the race problems of the world and make us all "love one another," but we will take from these courses basic human skills. The requirement is not the final answer — on the contrary, it is a solid building block. I urge those with voting power to vote for this proposal and those without power to attend the University Assembly, April 7 at 3:30 p.m. in 150 Columbia to show support.

Dick Lee
English

No choice

Gordon Melby seems to have the misunderstanding that being gay is a choice. There is no evidence that supports this. There is evidence that no "environmental" factors (e.g. dominant mother, submissive father) play any role. And there is an increasing amount of evidence suggesting biological causes (pre-natal hormonal variances). A trip to the library would quickly convince you of this.

Gay people are a part of this society. According to the *Janus Report* (available at the bookstore), 4 percent of the U.S. population consider themselves exclusively homosexual, another 5 percent consider themselves bisexual and, finally, another 11 percent have occasional same-sex encounters. This adds up to a large part of society. The only request this part of society has is to not be discriminated against because of sexual orientation.

I do not want to impose my morality on anyone. Gay marriages have to be up to the individual church or religion. However, I can find no logical reason to discriminate monetarily between married couples and two people (gay or straight) who have been living together for an extended amount of time. Especially with the divorce rate in the United States closing in on

the 50 percent mark.

Finally, I don't think a lack of Melby's type of morality is going to destroy any society. As examples, consider the differences in teen-age pregnancy rates and the growing spread of HIV in Europe and the United States.

Bjorn Pettersen
CIS

For candidates

It seems to me there is little interest in the upcoming ASUO election — a low turnout of students running for office and an anticipated low turnout of voters. I believe student government, especially the ASUO Executive, have more of an impact on our brief student lives than most people think.

I write in support of Eric Bowen and Diana Collins Puente for ASUO President and Vice President. These two quality achievers have the experience and positive style to make the ASUO organized and influential.

I've worked with Bowen in the state Legislature, and he has an approachable, caring personality and a desire to get things done.

Bowen and Collins Puente have made a great commitment to students this year as ASUO Coordinators. As the ASUO Executive, they would maintain their high level of responsibility and leadership.

For community, equity and unity on this campus, vote for Bowen and Collins Puente.

Joey Lyons
Philosophy/Political Science

CORRECTION

In the April 5 issue of the *Emerald*, a letter by Marshall Saucedo titled "Pass race requirement" should have said, "We increasingly operate on a global economy that requires a worldwide perspective rather than one focusing primarily on the United States." The *Emerald* regrets the error.

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