

No one is required to tell truth to media

The Sen. Bob Packwood sexual harassment scandal has taken a turn for the bizarre. A coalition of Oregonians allege Packwood defrauded voters by lying to reporters, and that he should not have been seated by the Senate.

Sexual harassment is a serious issue, yet these charges are so absolutely ludicrous they stand to tarnish the importance of the harassment charges.

Because he lied, the charges claim, the junior Oregon senator defrauded Oregon voters who supposedly may have voted for Packwood's challenger Democrat Les AuCoin, had they been aware of the harassment claims.

The basic flaw in this new charge is the belief that people are required to tell the truth to the media. Obviously, this is patently false. No person, regardless of his or her position in society, is required to tell the truth to reporters, even if they're from *The Washington Post*.

There is only one instance when a person is required to tell the truth and that is under oath, such as in a courtroom. And even then, the Fifth Amendment permits a person to refuse to incriminate himself or herself. Yet this is exactly what the sponsors of these new charges are claiming Packwood should have done.

University law school associate Professor David Schuman was quoted in an Associated Press story as supporting a test that would allow for a politician's removal if the candidate "directly and undeniably lied" about a "verifiable historical fact" and the lie "in all likelihood" altered the outcome of the election.

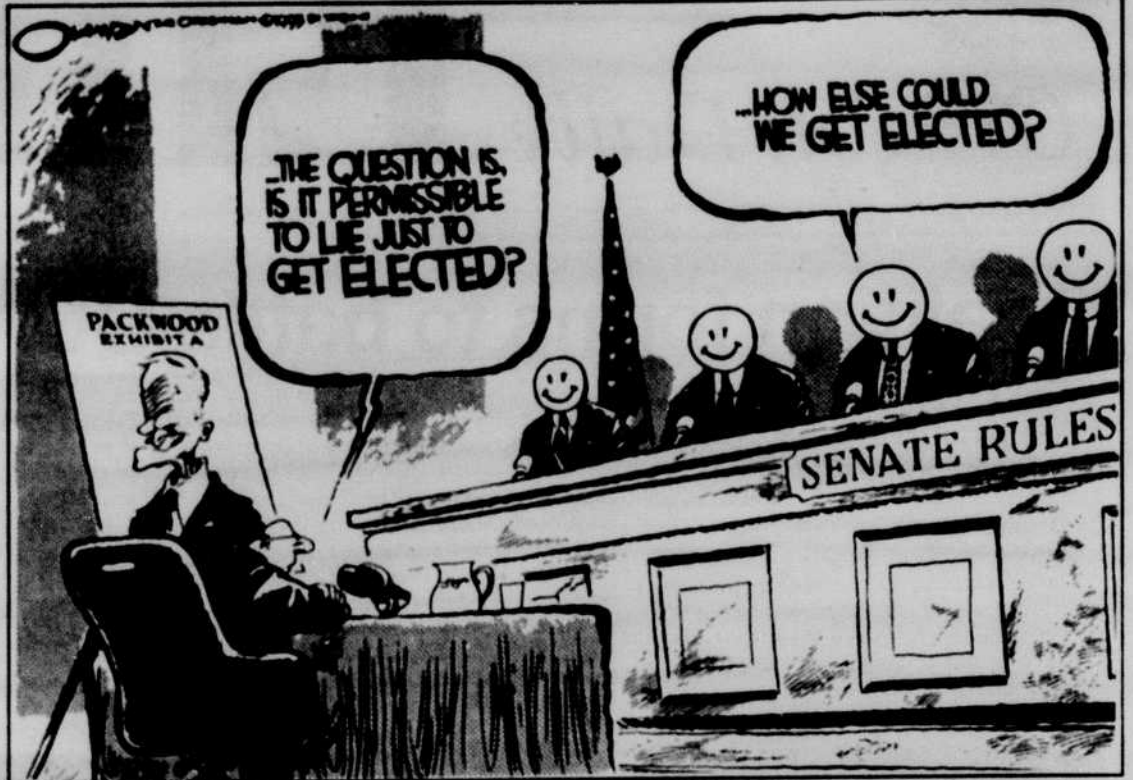
Aside from the fact that every person has a right to lie to the media and that the media's inability to verify a "verifiable historical fact" is the media's problem, it is highly presumptuous of any governing body to make a decision based on the "likelihood" of a different vote. Judging from history, government's powers of clairvoyance are questionable at best.

Under these new proposed guidelines, a female candidate would be required to disclose that she had an abortion after being gang-raped, because the disclosure could influence the anti-abortion vote even though it bears no relevance to her ability to serve. If President Bill Clinton had lied about having ever tried marijuana, under these guidelines he, too, could be removed from office.

If the rules committee agrees to hear this case, it stands the chance of setting a new standard to which politicians must be held (and virtually none can meet). And if they penalize Packwood for violating this new standard, they will open the floodgates for the retroactive application of this new standard upon all politicians — anarchy is a rules committee hearing away.

The media are not government-sanctioned institutions to which any person, citizen or politician, is beholden. Lying to the media is virtually a sacred, time-honored political tradition in this country — and it's legal.

No person, regardless of his or her position in society, is required to tell the truth to reporters.



LETTERS

Money problems

I, like many students, am coming up to that all-important graduation time. It's that wonderful time when students get to celebrate the accomplishment of graduating from college by ceremoniously receiving their diplomas, all at their own cost.

One would think that after spending more than \$20,000 at this institution, the University could at least cut the bill for the final graduation ceremony (\$24.50 with cap and gown). However, it would not appear as though the University has the interest of its graduates in mind.

In addition to the commencement ceremony fee is the \$25 processing fee that must be paid with the "Intent to Graduate" form by every senior. So the total cost to you, if you want to graduate and be in the official ceremony, is \$50 — quite a surprise to those of us who thought last term's tuition was the last hunk of cash we would be dishing out.

More important than these amounts is the principle of the whole thing. This school seems to have little, if any, consideration toward my once-in-a-lifetime ritualistic departure from it. That's not the kind of treatment that would warrant a great deal of financial support from its alumni on down the line.

I didn't expect the personal touch private universities give their graduates to be given at a university this size. One would believe, however, that at the end of four long years of hard work and great expense, the University would at least give the courtesy of a final ceremony to its graduates.

Todd Harris
Psychology

Embarrassed?

I am writing in response to the simple-minded, poorly thought out, insensitive editorial (*ODE*, May 7) written by ... ? Well, the author must have been too intimidated by some unknown force to write a letter or commentary that would have forced upon him or her some sort of accountability.

The *Emerald* assumes the students at the May 5 rally are the only ones concerned with the issue and the rest are "at least apathetic ... if not opposed (to the

requirement)." Well, I, for one, was in class at the time and rushed over as soon as I was let out. So, there goes your first point.

You say the most embarrassing part was the manner in which (associate professor) Robert Proudfoot stormed out of the assembly. Hmmm? Who was it embarrassing for? Native Americans? Racial/ethnic minorities? Supporters of the requirement?

Or was it embarrassing for those who supported the watering down of the amendment? Or for those who didn't and still don't understand why the language used during the assembly and the lumping together of our identities is so offensive? I can only thank Proudfoot for his actions that motivated me to do the same.

The *Emerald* says the only reason there is confusion over the two classes is the problem in distinguishing race and ethnicity. Wrong. It's not confusion. It's insensitivity and ignorance, "hooded" in talk of exclusivity and anti-Semitism to delay the passing of the motion.

Erika Armsbury
Women's Diversity Program

Respect history

It is ironic to me that on Cinco de Mayo, a day when we celebrate a short-lived victory of the oppressed over their oppressors, we would have to listen to ignorant, racist, so-called "professors" at the University Assembly deny the entire history of oppression in this country by stating that only African-Americans have suffered any kind of racism in this country, and that although the rest of us are "minorities," we have been, nonetheless, advantaged minorities.

That the experiences of Asian-/Pacific-American, Chicano/Latino and Native American people have been largely exaggerated, that these people have not been truly excluded

from society, is equivalent to denying the Holocaust ever happened — which I'm sure many professors at this university would like to do.

The issue of anti-Semitism has been almost completely ignored at this university, and yet one of the only professors who has addressed it by creating a class called "Blacks and Jews: The American Experience," is the same professor who has now been targeted as anti-Semitic for supporting this requirement.

The voices of hatred that rang out Wednesday are only a continuation of our experience at the April 7 assembly and reflect the terror that many members of the dominant society have of being forced to deal with the true history of this country, a history that incorporates all of our contributions.

Diana Collins Puente
Sociology

Relief

I would like to offer this brief letter as an alternate entry to all the redundant bitching that usually goes on about budget cuts, cultural awareness and whatnot.

Instead, let me ask a question. Did anyone else get the chance to see the fantastic lightning show that took place east of the Eugene-Springfield area Sunday night? If there is an encore performance, I suggest the view from the section of Birch Street that overlooks Springfield.

Scott Klomp
English

Senate bonding

I would like to suggest that the *Robert's Rules of Order* quoting, budget nitpicking, secret-ballot desiring body currently known as the University Senate change its name to something that more accurately reflects its true nature — Congress of Cowards.

Gretchen Adams Bond
History

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