

Ethics dictate: forget Packwood's diaries

Personal diaries, it seems, aren't so personal after all.

That seems to be the opinion of the Senate ethics committee, which voted last Friday to subpoena the diary of Sen. Bob Packwood, in an effort to uncover more evidence to support allegations of sexual misconduct that have been leveled against the senator by more than two dozen women.

Packwood, charging the ethics committee with attempting to conduct a "drift-net" search for information against him, has refused to comply with the subpoena. He also has issued a clear threat to those senators who would support the enforcement of the subpoena, stating that the diaries contain information not only on Packwood but also on the sex lives of other members of Congress.

Whether Packwood's warning will be effective in deterring the ethics committee is uncertain. A more important question is whether the committee has a legal and moral right to compel him to reveal the personal thoughts contained in those diaries.

Some observers in the case, including Larry J. Sabato, professor of government at the University of Virginia, have expressed the opinion that the committee can make Packwood surrender the diaries if they were produced and maintained with public money. If so, then Packwood's journals are fair game; they were transcribed from audio tape by staff members and were kept, once transcribed, in Packwood's Senate office in Washington.

However, the difference between what is within the committee's rights to subpoena and what isn't seems fairly arbitrary. We can assume Packwood would not have used his staff for the purpose of keeping a diary if he had known doing so would forfeit his right to keep that diary private.

Past attempts by government to force public officials to reveal their diaries have met with mixed success. In 1977, the Supreme Court upheld the right of former President Richard Nixon to keep his diaries out of public hands in the wake of the Watergate scandal. However, investigators charged with uncovering information on the Iran-Contra scandal of 1986 were successful in making President George Bush adhere to a subpoena requesting his personal diaries, the contents of which made headlines in December 1992.

Hypothetically speaking, if the technology existed for investigators to read a defendant's mind — if some invention made it possible to probe a person's innermost thoughts — no one would feel comfortable allowing that mind-reading device to be used.

What's the difference between private thoughts in someone's mind and the same private thoughts when put to paper (or audio tape)? If Packwood had relayed his thoughts to his doctor or his lawyer, instead of his tape recorder, every word would be protected. Why should it be safer for a person to talk to his psychiatrist than to himself?



LETTERS

Respect nudity

Attitudes, not naked flesh, encourage men to trivialize women. The man who harasses an employee after attending a nude bar is responding to attitudes like those recently expressed. He has been told that a woman who would bare her body lacks self-respect; therefore, he need not respect her. He has learned that respect for women is qualified, and that flesh is the qualifier. Other women have told him this. He learns that only a woman who conceals her body and her sexuality is to be taken seriously.

We have juries releasing rapists because the victim wore no underwear. Rampant date rape. Abused wives. Glass ceilings and pay disparity. Each of these shows, among other things, a lack of respect for the women involved. Until we demand respect for all women, we have little hope of change.

There is nothing degrading about dancing nude. The degradation comes when society, including other women, make second-class citizens of these women. Perhaps when we no longer divide women into classes by sexuality, we will not find a Playboy bunny unfit to be attorney general. Perhaps an Italian politician who happens to be a porn queen will not be so newsworthy. Perhaps women will begin earning respect the same way men do: by their accomplishments.

Shasta Willson
Physics/Mathematics

Crisis unreal

Some people support a sales tax because they think a "crisis" in school funding exists and kids will suffer. But the facts show otherwise. For example:

We currently spend more than \$7,000 per student per year. This is more (as a percentage of our income) than all other states except five!

Oregon schools want a budget increase of 9.4 percent. This is 3.8 percent more than inflation and enrollment rates would justify (Cascade Policy Institute).

Administration and central service costs rose 36.5 percent during the last 12 years(!), but teachers' salaries have only increased 18 percent.

No correlation between money spent on schools and a "quality" education has ever been established (Dr. Eric Hanushek, Educational Researcher, University of Rochester, N.Y.).

In addition to the above reasons for voting no on the proposed sales tax, the following should be considered:

Ballot Measure 1 creates a new tax-collection bureaucracy.

The Legislature can alter and increase its sales tax revenues by reducing present exemptions without a vote of the people.

Landlords' property tax increases will be passed on to renters who then also pay a sales tax. This hurts the poor renter.

Finally, the transfer of wealth (\$1 billion additional taxes) from productive private citizens to unproductive state bureaucrats helps destroy the ability of private enterprise to produce jobs, products and capital. For this reason alone, we should vote no on any new tax.

Tonie Nathan
Chairwoman
Libertarians Opposed
To a Sales Tax

Right of way

Undoubtedly, traffic regulations are necessary requirements: they ensure consistency and safety for those who take to the city streets. These rules form the basis of a social pact between motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. According to this pact, each person places a great deal of trust in others; we trust that complete strangers are aware of these same regulations and are following them so that no one receives injury.

The article appearing in the *Emerald* Oct. 18 hit very close to home for me. Ordinarily, I follow the rules, indulge in a helmet, and ride defensively. Despite all of this, I now find myself with a broken leg and various bits of hardware holding my ankle together. Why? Because a

motorist did not follow the rules, thereby endangering my life.

Consequently, I found a very serious omission in Tamara Jones' article. A warning to motorists, especially those driving anywhere near campus, would have been appropriate within the scope of her otherwise fair and enlightened article. Motorists need to be more aware of and respect bicyclists on the road; many of us do follow the rules and do not deserve the consequences of impatience.

And please, if you are involved in an accident, stay at the scene and wait for an officer to arrive! The consequences of not adhering to traffic regulations can be very unpleasant.

Elaine Lawson
Eugene

Double-speak

I have been shocked at the number of police crackdowns in the campus area. The commentary by Dennis Baker (*ODE*, Oct. 25) was typical of the sort of misguided justification of an all-out war on the most economical and environmentally safe type of transportation.

Baker says, "If some of the public resents traffic enforcement as a means of protecting people from injury and death, I cannot apologize for that," a classical police double-speak.

Crossing 13th Avenue in front of Gilbert Hall last week, I was nearly run over by a crazed motorcycle police officer accelerating at more than 30 mph to catch a bicyclist who had just run a stop sign.

Undoubtedly the bicyclist had endangered thousands of lives by not stopping at the stop sign. I don't believe the officer even saw me on the crosswalk. If it is safety that the police want to ensure then maybe it is time they start to consider their tactics. I would much rather be run over by a 30-pound bicycle than a 500-pound motorcycle. Perhaps Sgt. Baker won't apologize for threatening us with injury and death.

Shawn MacDonald
Finance/Management

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