

## 'Work-privilege' tax inappropriate, unfair

The Eugene City Council would be wise to reconsider a vote made by some of its members at its July 13 meeting.

By a 4-3 margin, the council endorsed a new "work-privilege" tax, which would be levied against individuals who work, but do not live, within the city limits.

Council members favoring the tax appeared to see it as a possible solution to the city's budget woes, worsened by the failure of a May bond issue that would have helped pay for a number of needed services, including building maintenance, an expanded library and the opening of a new fire station, already built.

As important as these projects are, paying for them with a tax on nonresidents is both inappropriate and unfair.

The tax is inappropriate because it assumes — quite incorrectly — that nonresidents working in Eugene are getting a free ride when it comes to the use of city services. But taxes are not the only way to make a contribution to the city; nonresidents support Eugene in other ways.

Take the library, for instance. Nonresidents have to pay \$55 per household for library privileges, each year. That hardly constitutes a free ride.

Before the library issue took center stage, the city pushed other expensive projects such as the building of the Hult Center and the expansion of the Eugene Airport. Both of these depend heavily on the patronage of nonresidents. These facilities are regional in nature, and could not survive without the help of nonresidents, who buy plane tickets and symphony tickets, too — just like residents. If no one outside the city took advantage of these facilities, there is no way they would have the success that they currently enjoy.

People living in neighborhoods that are covered by Eugene fire and sewer services, such as the Santa Clara-River Road area, pay additional taxes to receive those benefits as well. There is no free ride.

Of course, many of the nonresidents from more outlying regions receive virtually no benefits at all from the city. So a tax on them is even more inappropriate.

A "work-privilege" tax is also unfair.

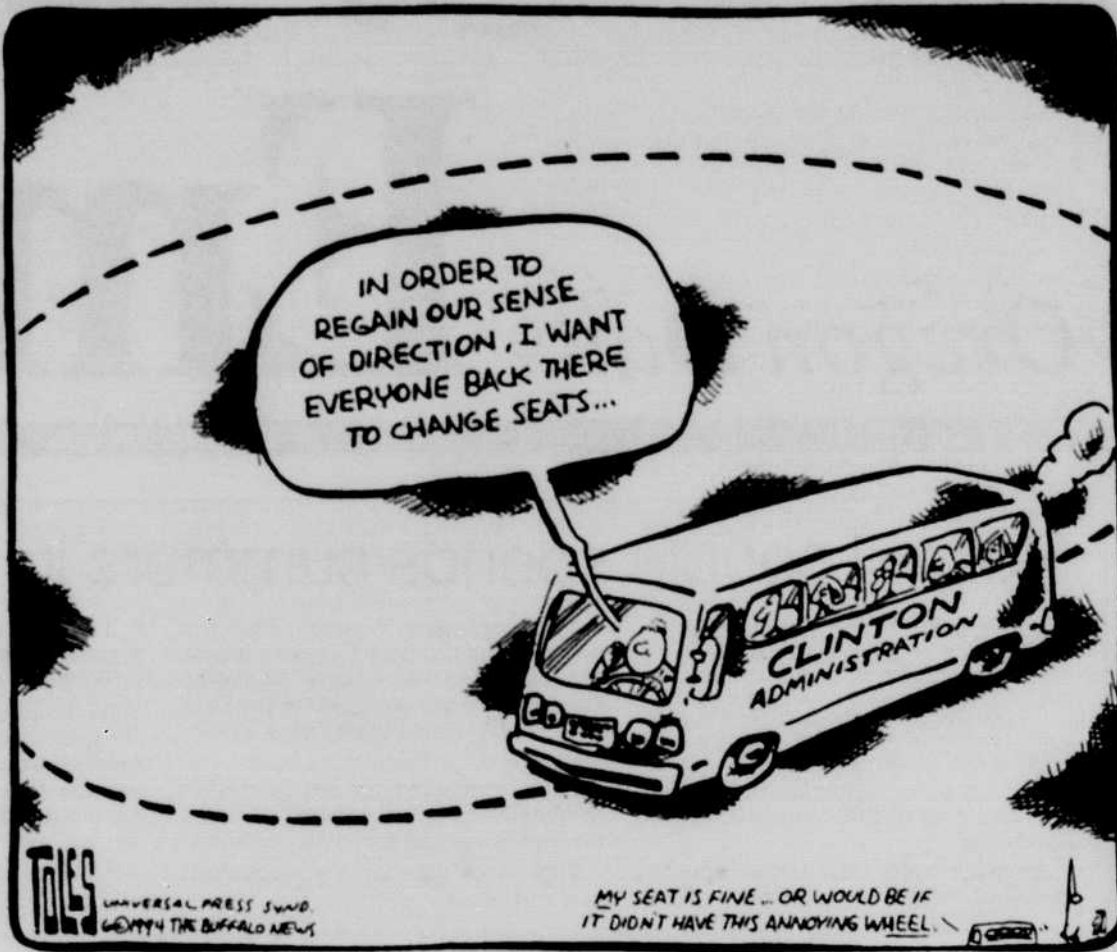
Many of the tax's opponents have taken up the Revolutionary War rallying cry, "No taxation without representation," in speaking out against the tax. Such a charge is fitting. Indeed, the nonresidents who would pay the tax have no legal say in the matter — they have no representatives on the council and have practically no legal authority to repeal the tax.

Nonresidents cannot prevent the tax; they also cannot avoid it. Jobs are relatively permanent things. Most people do not have the luxury of quitting a job and finding another where the taxes are more fair.

If the city passed a restaurant tax, for example, people could eat elsewhere. But if the city passes a "work-privilege" tax, nonresidents will just have to accept it. The city has nonresidents over a barrel, and there's nothing they can do about it.

The "work-privilege" tax was proposed by a council which would like to spend more money than the city takes in. When the voters of Eugene would not agree to more taxes — as was shown in the May election — the council decided to try to tax a group that couldn't say no.

It isn't fair. And nonresidents should continue to oppose the "work-privilege" tax — through letters, phone calls and, if necessary, boycotts of Eugene businesses.



## LETTERS

### Inquisition

In response to Loretta Neet of the OCA (ODE, July 7): It is just this sort of twisting of the idea of natural law under the guise of compassion that fueled crusades like the Inquisition. As a society, we have moved away from ideas like natural law for the very reason that it is open to manipulation by groups which purport to interpret it for the rest of us using a narrow vision growing out of fear and rigidity. An excellent distillation of the natural law was posited by Richard Maybury in his book, *Whatever Happened to Justice?*, wherein he reduced it to two basic laws: "Do all you have agreed to do" and "Do not encroach on other persons or their property."

When groups like the OCA encroach on the freedom and privacy of individuals who are harmlessly expressing who they are, they are violating the most basic of natural laws. All of us struggle as individuals in society to survive, to be as much ourselves as we dare, to be vulnerable, to connect, to love. In short, we are all seeking to live up to our divine nature. Having people like Loretta Neet pass misinformed judgment on intimate aspects of our journey makes the realization of ourselves that much harder.

Please tend your own garden.

Julie Masters  
Law

### Metz off base

In response to the article by Chris Metz (ODE, July 14): You obviously don't understand the game of baseball if you believe that 1994 is a good year for the game. Yes, the All-Star game was great, but that seems to be the only shining light in this guaranteed strike year.

With the re-alignment of the divisions, comparing today's Cleveland Indians to the Cleveland team that last won a pennant in 1954 is like comparing apples and oranges. And the fact that a sub-.500 club like Texas can actually win a pennant, let

alone the World Series, shows how the new system will make mediocre teams into world champs. The reason the season lasts for 160-plus games is to determine who deserves the chance to be considered great, not to have losing teams become champions.

While the "big three" (Griffey Jr., Thomas, Williams) are superstar players and deserve to be recognized in the record books, it must be done with asterisks. Today's game is done with a five-man rotation, as opposed to a four-man rotation previously, and with the induction of the expansion teams, the pitching in baseball isn't as strong from top to bottom as it once was. These changes in the game have cheapened the marvelous feats from the likenesses of Maris, Mantle and Ruth, just to name a few.

I'm afraid what once was a child's game played by adults is now an adults' game played by businessmen. There is only one reason behind this mess in baseball (strike included): America's desire for mediocre television has made America's game mediocre as well. The TV audience wants shorter games, yet they also demand more runs, and common sense will tell you that these can't possibly coexist.

Baseball will continue to change so long as corporate TV America makes decisions that satisfy its own needs, including adding even more cities to get more TV revenue to pay even more .220 batters multi-million dollar contracts.

I hope a strike does not happen, but if it does, it won't make much of a difference to me. Just as a "juiced" ball doesn't matter to you, I could care less to see a "wild card" team win a pennant, or to see pitchers giving up home runs after home runs. And

yes, there was a game a few weeks ago between California and Baltimore that included more than 10 home runs.

I only hope purists like me will tell the stories to our children and grandchildren about the great ones that once played a game known as America's game. Baseball.

Robert Polk  
Eugene

### Piercing

Open Letter to Anne Moser-Kornfeld (ODE, July 14): So you don't like body piercing, huh? You've made this perfectly clear. Someone else doesn't like the way other people dress. Maybe someone else hates the way other people talk. And we bother to wonder what's wrong with the world today? I believe there are more important things to worry about than someone else's pierced nipple.

What you've done is killed two birds with one stone. Problem is, one of the birds was mine. You've derided other folks for no good reason (your bird). Gee, that must be OK; people do it every day, right? But piercers are exercising a legal right which does not infringe upon yours (my bird). Get this through your head: it's all right for people to be different than you. It's a scary idea (for some), but a mature one.

The unfortunate fact is many people have attitudes similar to yours. Different things bug each one of us. For you to write (and us to read about) useless complaints is a waste of energy.

Please try to complain about something worthwhile next time, if complain you must. Otherwise, attempt a more interesting perspective on the subject.

Peter Shair  
Eugene

## LETTERS POLICY

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