

## School board says no on Measure 15

The Eugene School Board tested brave waters when it voted to oppose Ballot Measure 15, the so-called "Kids First" initiative. We salute the board's decision.

And University students, faculty members and administrators should be grateful.

If passed, Ballot Measure 15 would force the state to maintain current funding levels for education in grades K-12 and community colleges. Higher education and any state-funded program for children younger than kindergarten age are not included.

The measure is backed by the Oregon Education Association, as well as 80 percent of school board members from around the state who were polled at a recent regional conference. Its opponents include University President Dave Frohnmayer and the Oregon Student Lobby.

Eugene School Board members realize the world doesn't end and begin in grades K-12 and voted unanimously to oppose the measure at a meeting two weeks ago. School board members say the measure, which is being sold to voters as a "Kids First" initiative, is actually a step backward for education and child development.

Members of the school board were able to look past a measure, which some view as a salvation for public education, in order to look out for the good of the entire system. And they are able to point out valid reasons to oppose this measure — going beyond the simple argument that higher education isn't included.

Any benefits gained at the public education level by Ballot Measure 15 are seriously offset by cuts that will be suffered in other areas. The measure could force other institutions, including public colleges and universities, to take cuts of up to 30 percent. Social service programs, such as those aimed at protecting juveniles and helping the homeless, will face a serious loss.

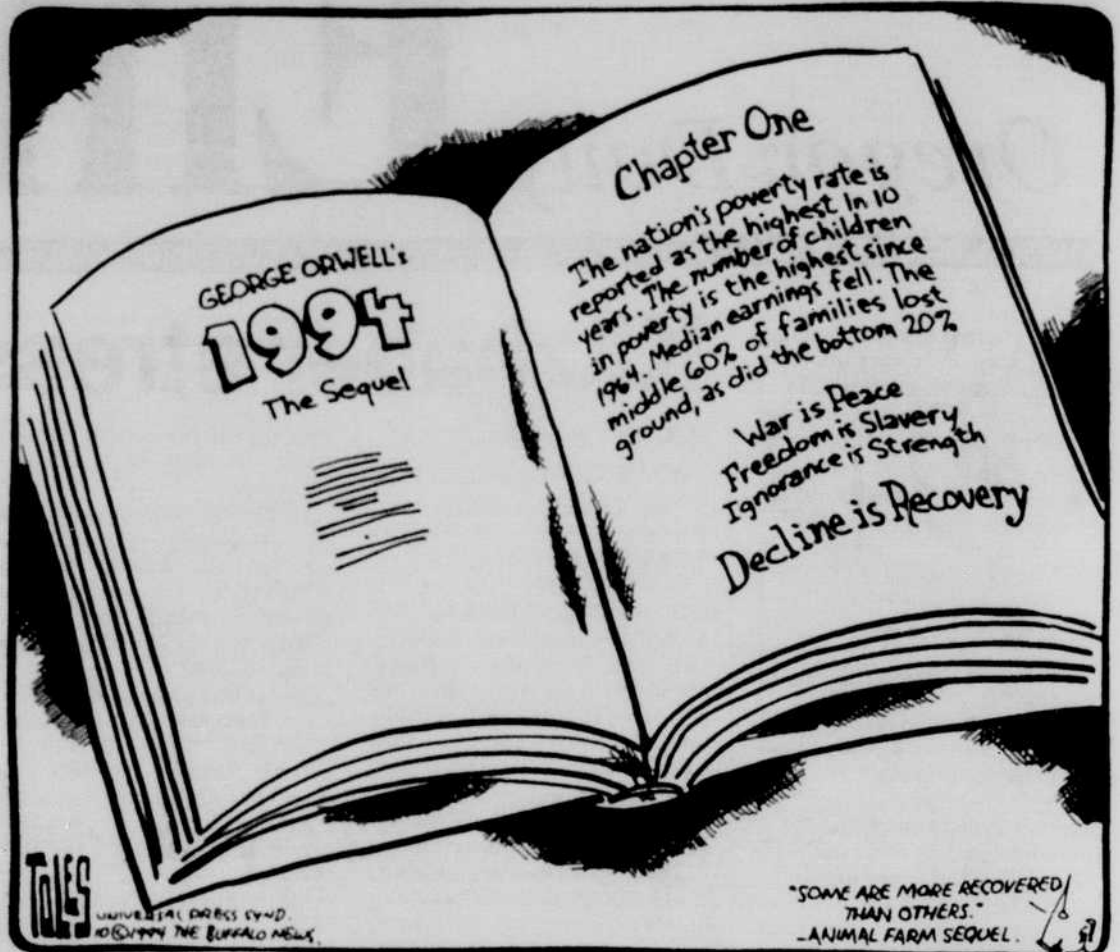
And programs aimed specifically at preparing children for education could be cut. The school board should be supported in its argument that education means much more than grade school or high school. What good does locking-in funds for schools do, when the program kids need to get there could be eliminated?

Philip Barnhart, a school board member, opposes the measure because it really won't provide more money for schools. He doesn't see a gain for public education from locking funds, even for grades K-12 and community colleges. Setting a minimum for funding usually means setting a maximum.

Barnhart and other school board members can see how irresponsible this measure is and their views need to be recognized. Straying from the popular vote might be difficult from some school boards, especially at a time when everyone agrees that something needs to be done to step-up funding for education.

But Eugene School Board members are willing to look past the quick-fix solution. They put themselves in the positions of others who would suffer from the measure.

The school board should be applauded for considering the welfare of the entire state.



### OPINION

## An alarming way to get a story

The rules for filing a good story in comparison with a great story vary from newspaper to newspaper. Journalism, to some, knows no bounds.

Suppose the editor of the *Oregon Daily Emerald* wants a photograph of the latest equipment available to Engine Company 3 on Agate Street. The editor pulls a fire alarm at the EMU, and within minutes, E3 is on the scene. The photographer on staff is then instructed to get out there and take a picture.

Sound impossible? In New York City, anything goes. Ruth Halikman, a student at Columbia University, pulled a false alarm and sent a photographer to take a photo of the new truck arriving at the school.

Her action reflected the attitude that she was above the law, revealing an immature arrogance bordering on stupidity. She thought she could get away with something generally regarded as a common-sense no-no.

Besides the fact that no student at this University would do something as stupid as that, the *Emerald* staff does not advocate practicing professional suicide!

When the editor in chief at the *Columbia Daily Spectator* allegedly pulled a false fire alarm Sunday, Oct. 9, just so one of her photographers could get a shot of a new fire truck, many questions — including why — arose.

At the *Emerald*, in a situation like this, editors expect from a reporter or from themselves that:

1. Reporters will call the fire department and ask for permission to take a picture for the newspaper.
2. If the fire station can't give permission for a photo, call city hall. Ask an official there for permission.
3. Follow the fire truck. It's in the public domain, and unless a police officer prevents media access, a reporter can get a shot of the truck being used at a fire.
4. Call the manufacturer. Get the truck's make and ask for a publicity photo, if all else fails.



ANNE MOSER-KORNFELD

Assuming the *Spectator* lives by the golden rule, "Get the story at any cost," the editor could have been trying to follow through on what she thought was the right protocol.

On Monday morning, though, she found herself writing a letter of resignation on the advice of her managing editor.

The photographer taking the pictures also agreed to leave the paper but denied knowing about the false alarm. Later in the week, the *Spectator* printed an editorial explaining how its editor got scorched.

She may have been following up on what she heard was a hot tip.

Probably, since guessing is all that can be done in this case, what happened is the editor at Columbia, besides not thinking that setting off a fire alarm was against the law, also didn't know how to tell her employers she wanted to quit her job.

She may have forgotten how she could have resigned from her job in a more dignified manner.

Yeah, that's it, and her status in a society that doesn't want women to succeed undermined her self-esteem so that she was compelled to act in this manner.

Uh-huh. Better yet, the job stress from being editor of the paper at a prestigious Eastern school may rank really high. In a school where students are expected to have a GPA of at least 3.0 to meet admission standards, well, that would mean the competition just overwhelmed the editor's ability to make a rational decision.

Right. OK, so her action was, at best,

unexpected. Or simply, dumb.

She was able to leave behind job pressure and unlimited stress. She was ultimately asked to resign. Columbia may file disciplinary charges against her. Halikman left the city for the weekend before the fire marshals could talk with her further.

By falsely reporting an incident, she could be placed under arrest, charged with a misdemeanor and punished with a fine to be decided by a judge.

No matter what gets covered in this paper, no matter how the staff prepares stories and no matter how opinionated the opinions get, the standard of excellence stays within the boundaries of the law.

Most University students know the difference between activating a fire alarm that alerts a fire department to an emergency and activating an alarm ultimately determined to be a prank. When Halikman pulled the alarm, the vehicle became unavailable in the event of an actual emergency, creating an unnecessary risk. For that, her actions shouldn't be looked upon lightly.

The choice between living in a city like New York, where students claim ignorance as an excuse for pulling a fire alarm, and living here, where there is a greater appreciation for community safety vs. cutthroat ambition, seems clear.

But Halikman made a point, one students nationwide can find amusing. She gave students a chance to find something truly funny to laugh at during the beginning of the school year.

Still, if anyone is looking for work, can serve as a qualified editor, and wants to spend time in New York, it's early enough in the school year to consider a move. The *Spectator* has a job opening — no doubt the paper will be taking applications soon.

Anne Moser-Kornfeld is a columnist for the *Emerald*.

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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