

Patience key for all in work stoppage

Oregon Public Employee Union members began striking earlier today as part of a statewide show of determination for a salary increase. Almost 18,000 union members will be striking Monday, including a number of employees from the University. Those affected include many Oregon Hall, University Housing, Office of Public Safety and other employees.

The strike will make life difficult for everyone during the next few days. Many University services will have longer lines, less staffing and slower service. It will, as many would expect, be a trying time for the University community.

It's important that students and faculty realize that the strike is not directed toward the University or higher education in Oregon, but toward the state of Oregon as a whole. It is important that the education of students at the University continue as normally as possible

during the work stoppage. Faculty must continue to teach and students continue to learn.

The community must also be patient with those students and supervisors who are working during the strike. Students and most supervisors are not union members participating in the strike but are, in many cases, people who are just trying to do their regular jobs and to keep offices and other services available to students. Offices won't be as efficient as usual and service won't be as good, but people will be working hard to ensure that the University will function as well as possible during the strike.

The strike will make life harder for everyone. It's important to realize that, while the strike will most likely end Wednesday, the pay of state employees represented by OPEU hasn't increased since 1993. While University students and faculty will endure hardships for 72 hours, OPEU-represented employees have lived through several years without raises. If state employees can deal with that, University students can rough the hardships of the strike for three days.

The ideal situation would be for the state to agree to the union's request for a 6.5 percent wage increase for represented employees. The state can't solve its budget problems on the backs of its employees. The state offered workers a 2 percent increase late last week and met Sunday for additional talks, which shows that the two sides are still talking. However, workers deserve the full 6.5 percent increase.

With the cooperation of everyone, the University will continue to function on a somewhat-normal basis during the next few days. However, as students will notice during this work stoppage, OPEU-represented employees are vital to the success and efficiency of operations of this University and the state.

Perhaps legislators will recognize that someday.

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COMMENTARY

Non-voters fueled Recreation Center

Robert Mahon

Last Thursday (April 27) was a sad day here at the University, a day none of us students will learn to recognize. What is known as Measure 7 (the recreation center initiative) passed with a narrow margin of 713 "yes" votes to 675 "no" votes. Let's count the difference there; that's a 38-vote difference.

There are many sad facets of this newly passed ballot measure, one being the actual voter turnout. Let's count the voter turnout: 713 people plus 675 people equals 1,388 people who voted on this measure. (I'm trying to explain this in a voice that fits the mental capacity of the people who didn't vote.) Let's take notice of the 700 extra people who voted for president and not for the said ballot measure. Let's count the difference just because we're good at adding: 700 extra people plus 713 "yes" votes and 675 "no" votes equals a grand whopping total of 2088 votes.

Now, a sad figure in and of itself of the total student population, I think those 700 extra people could have made a difference. Maybe those people were confused, stupid, or simply didn't have the time to irk a speck of graphite on a space no bigger than the dirt that resides under their dirty fingernails.

Or, perchance, they may have been perturbed by the jargon itself on the voting sheet, which stated: blah, blah, blah, blah, thirty |] blah, blah, blah. The word that the author of the question sheet forgot to add to this measure was the word "years" (that's right, a "typo" of all typos). Even in the ODE's "Hails, rails on ballot initiatives" (April 25), they forgot to tell their readers the true underlying facts of the issue — or did they really forget?

I co-wrote a letter to the editor pertaining all the details of Measure 7 and handed it in on April 18, enough time for them to read it a few times over eight days of soggy cereal. I waited and watched as my letter never surfaced. My fellow co-writer went to the ODE's office and talked

with the editorial editor [Robbie Reeves] last Thursday (April 27). For some reason, the editorial editor couldn't find the letter we had written. It mysteriously vanished and so goes the world of slanted media.

My concern now isn't the media, however. It is the people here at the University. The students here are said to be the most politically active anywhere; we are said to be educated and righteous. But in what direction are we going when we let the computer fees be tagged upon us over the summer with a "no voting" process, when we let the facts of a particular initiative go unsaid or distorted — or never even seen? Both these devices are politically smart things to do — it's called "lying."

Let's add up all of the political garb: students aren't here in the summer, they don't get the chance to vote yea or nay over a wimpy extra 50 bucks each term. Now, let's add up all the facts over the "recreation center": students voted for future students they will never know (a good political tactic). A grand total of 713 people voted for (16,000-plus students times 30 paying years) a total of 480,000 paying-student-years. Let's say that nice and slowly: we voted for 120,000 people (480,000 divided by four) whom we will never know. They will be paying for a combined total of 480,000 years, or three times 480,000 terms of this incidental fee.

There is no joy in this. No proud ambiance will be reckoned, no true celebration will occur even by the measure creators. The simple fact is that 713 students voted for a \$10 million incidental fee that we will never have to pay. We voted for a future 120,000-plus unheard voices who

will go unnoticed until the fall of 1997. Tell me, what joy is there in this brutal act of injustice? Most of us have nothing against paying incidental fees, but let them come through us in a democratic arena before we cast our votes. The Measure 7 creators tried to be democratic; they made flyers and put a peon in the EMU to give us information.

But it is that which lies unsaid on the flyer that does the most harm. I understand that the University is trying to raise the "standard" compared to other Pacific 10 schools, but what sort of standard are we raising — an athletic facility? Everything they are going to build with our money we already have, except for the 37-foot indoor rock climbing wall. I'd have to admit, the committee who devised that one was creative. Why not make it 100 feet high? Why not climb on some real rocks? What's a matter, chicken?

If the creators of this measure want to raise the "standard," isn't the best way to do it through the academia? I would have no trouble paying \$23 a term for a certain department. Why not charge a \$23 per term fee to bring back the education department so we can educate some of our nonvoters? Why not use the money to pay our OPEU workers a decent wage? Why not use the money to pay instructors and professors better wages? Maybe some extra University scholarships. Why not use the money wisely, in a way in which everyone will benefit?

For only a catatonic few will the recreation center be catered toward, while the actual voters reap none of the slim advantages.

Robert Mahon is an English major at the University.

COMMENTARY POLICY

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Commentaries should be between 600 and 800 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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