

## Public library purchases 'Playboy' despite protest

**■ OUR OPINION:** The magazine contains valid journalism and should not be removed

"I'd like to check out some naked women please."

People in Lake Oswego are protesting a recent decision by the city's public library to add *Playboy* to its list of 490 periodicals. Within the first week of putting the magazine on the shelf, it vanished and is now providing hours of enjoyment to some prepubescent boy.

In response, the library has moved *Playboy* behind the counter, and patrons have to ask to see it. No age limit is required to gaze at the glossy photos.

So, it's not surprising that this has caused citizens of the Portland suburb to rise to the occasion with the usual smattering of no-public-porn protests and objectification-of-women arguments. As heartfelt as their moral outrage may be, their ire is misguided. *Playboy* should be part of the library's collection.

Lake Oswego's librarians examine magazines and journals on a regular basis to decide what will and will not be purchased with public funds. Why, some may ask, would they consider a skin-exposing mag such as this one to join their collection?

*Playboy* is more than nudity and sexual cartoons. Each issue includes interviews with politicians and other newsmakers, short fiction, book excerpts, essays and other serious journalistic endeavors. Despite the age-old joke, it is possible to read *Playboy* for the articles.

In addition, cataloging the

magazine and keeping back issues allows researchers in several fields to examine how women have been packaged for male consumption through four decades of publishing, how a culture determines what is sexy, when women of color became part of the American male's erotic fantasies, which political leaders felt comfortable talking with the magazine and what their moral positions were then and now, etc.

In short, *Playboy* cannot be considered pornography because it does not appeal solely to prurient interests. It appeals to intellectual interests as well.

As for the no-age-restriction access, it might behoove the library to allow only adults to see the magazine, but it isn't necessary. The chances that a 10-year-old boy would have the courage to ask some stern, sshh-ing librarian for a peek at the naked ladies are slim to none. If a hormone-driven teenager wants a little visual stimulation, the last place he'll want to enjoy it is in a public space.

Controversies such as this one often center around the public funding of offensive material. People opposed to *Playboy* don't want their tax dollars spent on it. But this is part of living in a democracy. We pay for roads we will never use and wars we don't want fought. Yet people choose to get irate about a magazine that costs each of them less than 1000th of a percent of a single penny.

If the citizens of Lake Oswego are bothered by the content of *Playboy*, the solution is simple: Don't ask for it.



### LETTERS

#### Developing nation

I would like to raise some concerns over the commentary by Mr. Shin Yasui (*ODE*, Jan. 6) regarding human rights issues in Indonesia.

Mr. Yasui's opinion alleged that the government of Indonesia suppressed human rights and the rights of laborers. Also, Mr. Yasui alleged that our president, Mr. Suharto, is the dictator of a regime that mercilessly suppresses any unrest and labor strikes.

We believe there is no evidence to support Mr. Yasui's opinion.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation in the world consisting of more than 17,000 islands and 300 different ethnic groups. The political system is based on democracy; it has three political parties, and a regular national election every five years.

There are also three branches of political body: legislative, executive and judicial. The president is elected by the people (every five years) through their representatives in the People Consultative Assembly (MPR).

As a democratic country, freedom of speech and expression are guaranteed by our constitution. Labor rights and trade unions are also guaranteed by the constitution. Therefore, the alleged suppression of labor rights in Indonesia is hardly true.

Today, Indonesia continues to make efforts to develop the nation. After 50 years of independence, the results of that development is evident; Indonesia is becoming one of the newly industrialized countries. The U.S. Department of Commerce categorized Indonesia as one of the new large emerging markets.

In developing the nation, we invite and encourage foreign investments. Most foreign companies are keen on investing their capital in Indonesia because it has a potential market, highly productive laborers and a long record of government stability. We believe that the need to create more employment can be fulfilled through foreign investment.

We admit that there have been some inadequate policies in the process of Indonesia's development. However, we have tried every effort to improve both policies and implementation toward the welfare of the people of the country. We have learned a lot from such a process.

I hope this gives you a better idea about Indonesia.

**Ahmad Fauzie Gani**  
Consul General of Indonesia

#### Rich get richer

Happy as I was to see our *Emerald* investigate the ongoing destruction of our commonwealth by the class weapon of Measure 5, I remain perplexed.

You reported that Measure 5 restricts property tax rates, but ordinary home owners actually paid

increases based on escalated assessments. Nevertheless, the state now suffers a shortfall in revenues for its general fund — all gleaned from property taxes. I wonder, who gains? Well, what class of individuals financed the Measure 5 campaign? Giving your readers the full story would have completed the equation and better informed them.

With less public funds, public schools at every level have to frantically cut expenses and charge more for education services. Our tuition and other costs (technology fees, etc.) climb, while our course choices dwindle. Students pay more and get less. But the affluent pay less and get more! The state's largest individual and corporate landholders reaped a windfall with Measure 5. The result is that a weakened Oregon public joins the nationwide trend: The rich get privately richer while the poor get poorer, and the rest get nowhere.

Meanwhile, well-paid "analysts and experts" say the economy is improving. They might want to add, "for those who own one, that is."

**Chris Brady**  
Eugene

#### Taxation flood

It was pretty hard to stay calm while reading Larry Haftl's opinion column on the utility tax (*ODE*, Feb. 19). Affordable housing for anyone, homeless or not, is a laudable goal. And a 1 percent utility tax sounds small and manageable ... just a little expense for everyone.

That kind of well-intentioned, small and "insignificant" taxation (always for a worthy objective initially) is why we suffer under such an ever-escalating, increasingly suffocating and eternally more complex flood of bureaucracy and taxation.

And, like unemployment, the homeless are still here. Taxes go up, but the problem doesn't go away. Taxes are like rain drops; a few give us drinking water and green forests — too many and we get a flood of destruction. Dam the money in a bureaucracy and, like water, it evaporates.

If you want to feel hopeless, you need not be homeless. Just be a 50-year-old working guy paying over 50 percent of your income into taxes for things you didn't even know existed. No children — because I feared I wouldn't be able to afford them. Meanwhile, I'm paying for all those who refuse to afford theirs or take care of themselves.

Mr. Haftl, if you want to house the homeless, plug one of those bureaucratic rat holes you mentioned — but not with another tax on hard-working people and borderline "very low income."

Here's a lead: Use Dan Williams' "rat hole" salary. You know, Mr. "bulldoze-the-low-income-Amazon-housing-and-haul-it-to-the-landfill?"

**Michael L. Horton**  
Eugene

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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