

On first and goal, GOP keeps jumping off-sides

■ **OUR OPINION:** Back to back embarrassments plague the Republicans

Right smack in the middle of an important presidential election year, and only a year-and-a-half after Republicans became the majority in Congress, the Republican Party still can't seem to shake its bad public-image problem.

The party's image ailment has attached itself to the GOP like a lingering, aggravating head cold that refuses to go away.

A depressed political immune system aside, the dust barely had time to settle over the uproar caused by U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood's public disgrace before U.S. Rep. Wes Cooley (another Republican) came tripping and stumbling onto the national stage.

Now the national media are scrambling all over themselves to report on a never-ending laundry list of the man's misdeeds. It's no wonder Cooley's personal and political life has turned into a journalistic feeding frenzy — the guy is a walking media event.

Cooley is being grilled, roasted and raked over the coals because he allegedly falsified marriage documents in order to remain eligible for a government loan; he claimed at one point, under oath, to have earned a law degree and a master's degree (both untrue) and because he has made statements about being a part of some 007-like top secret underworld. These are just a few of the allegations Cooley is facing.

Where did the Republicans find this guy? How did

he get elected? Possibly the same way former U.S. Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, a Democrat accused and convicted of several improprieties, did — by a lot of people forgetting to check and verify his background.

Whoops. Yes, a person's past can catch up with them. Especially if that person lives under the intense scrutiny of the public eye.

Thanks to the blessings of an open society and a public and media that serve as watchdogs, the truth is bound to come out sooner or later.

And in the middle of this political free-for-all (or is it a free fall?) Bob Dole has pulled out all the stops in his bid for the presidency.

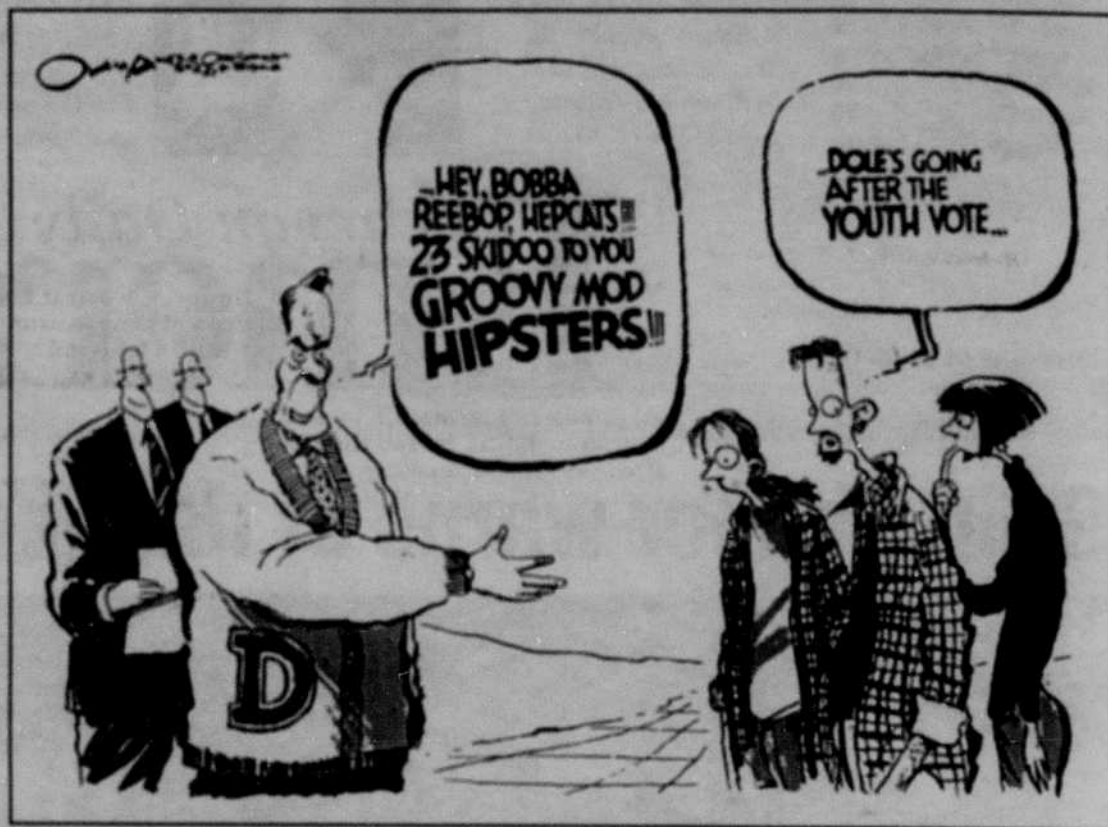
Like him or not, the man should be respected for his recent move from Congress. While his move is all political, it's still a gutsy and wise one.

Dole has effectively distanced himself from Republican-controlled Washington and will be able to claim that any further GOP miscues will have been made without his presence or influence.

Though Dole's power play might not be enough to bring him from way behind in the polls for a victory over Clinton, it is an all-or-nothing attempt and Dole is playing it for all he's worth.

This is Dole's one and only chance at the White House. Though the odds are stacked against him, it's always fun to watch someone try to pull off a dazzling trick play.

We can only watch to see where Dole's Hail Mary ends — in the end zone or out of bounds.



LETTERS

Save the press?

The Lane Press Club is at an important crossroads. The club has steadily decreased in membership since its founding.

We, the core group of people that has held it together, do not want to see the club die, but unless some others are willing to shoulder some of the work we think the chapter is terminal.

The press club has limped along with little means of support. The \$10 membership dues have barely covered postage for newsletters.

To be honest, our most successful programs have been underwritten by the Willamette Valley Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. SPJ is fiscally sound. The chapter is planning to hold professional development programs in Lane County and fill the gap, if the press club is phased out. Three of the five Lane Press Club board members also sit on the SPJ board.

By serving on both boards we often feel as though we are duplicating services and doubling our work. It is the current board's feeling that, with the SPJ chapter still growing, the two organizations are working at cross purposes.

Should the club be revived? Merged with the Willamette Valley Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists? What do you think?

Gwyne Copeland
Lane Press Club President

Small problem

Americans are very angry with the large increase in gasoline prices. As bad as price gouging by the large oil companies is; it is far from their worst actions.

Shell and other oil companies support the brutal dictatorship of Sani Abacha in Nigeria, who executed playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa and many other activists. Shell has caused terrible environmental devastation in the homeland of the Ogoni people; sometimes running pipelines right through people's yards.

Unocal and others support the brutal military dictatorship in Burma.

Phillips, Texaco, Shell and many other oil companies have

long been involved in Indonesia and support the regime of Suharto, who slaughtered a million of his own people in 1965.

In 1975, the regime was involved in an invasion into East Timor killing 200,000 East Timorese and imprisoning thousands of others, including women and children in concentration camps where they often died of starvation. This atrocity is still occurring and the oil companies are over there exploring for oil in the Timor gap between Australia and East Timor.

These are the real crimes of oil companies! Price gouging of American consumers is of small consequence in comparison.

Gary Sudborough
Bellflower, California

Inauguration

On May 20, Lee Teng-hui was inaugurated as Taiwan's first nationally recognized president to be elected by popular vote. Obviously, the transformation of Taiwan to a democratic country has been tremendously enhanced by this act.

Two months ago, just before Taiwan's general election, China attempted to cause the Taiwanese not to vote through the use of intimidating "war games" and missile tests.

Ironically, the opposite happened. The Taiwanese people united in the election of the new president.

The unification was seen at the University when the Chinese Student Associate and the Taiwanese Student Organization cooperated in a protest demonstration against China's aggression. Both organizations, though separated on some philosophical and political issues, represent Taiwanese students.

TSO would like to send our best wishes to President Lee Teng-hui.

We would also like to thank CSA for its concern for Taiwan during its time of crisis and acknowledge CSA's participation during this truly momentous time in our country's history.

Shing-Jye Chen
President of TSO

Secret taping

Sen. Bill Dwyer and Commissioner Jerry Rust called a press conference on May 13 to announce their collaboration in defending the right of clergy to have privileged, confidential discussions with inmates in Lane County and state corrections institutions. The letter said:

We are here to defend our freedom of religion. We are here to ensure the proper separation of church and state. To that end, we call for the following five actions.

- We hereby call for an independent investigation to determine how long and to what extent has the secret taping of inmate confessions to the members of clergy been going on. Under whose instruction? How many cases could this apply to?

- It has been intimated in our brief discussions with church officials that this may have happened in other counties in Oregon. Therefore, the district attorney's investigation should be statewide. In addition, we would ask the attorney general to issue an advisory opinion regarding surreptitiously taped inmate confessions.

- The immediate destruction of all materials, notes, transcripts, tapes from this confession and any other confession that was obtained in a like manner is mandatory.

- The district attorney and the sheriff must voluntarily adopt a policy that would prohibit such taping in the future. If necessary, I will ask policy/ordinance to be enacted in Lane County to prohibit such taping in the future.

- Sen. Bill Dwyer will seek a state statute that will spell out in unmistakable language that such taping is to be prohibited in the state of Oregon.

- The quality of justice in Lane County has been badly compromised by this incident. Apologies from all officials upon whose watch this occurred should be made. If confession is good for the soul, then a confession of error by the district attorney is in order.

Bill Dwyer
Former state senator
Jerry Rust
Former Lane County Commissioner

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3715 EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board; signed columns represent the opinion of the columnist.

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