

CONTACTING US

NEWSROOM:
(541) 346-5511
E-MAIL:
ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
ONLINE EDITION: www.uoregon.edu/~ode

ADDRESS:
Oregon Daily Emerald
P.O. BOX 3159
Eugene, Oregon 97403

PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Sarah Kickler
EDITORIAL EDITOR
Mike Schmierbach
NIGHT EDITOR
Mike Schmierbach

Work to protect labor lobbyists

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

Proposals to limit unions' political power by limiting their use of dues should be stopped

Like many corporate apologists, George Will is a profoundly ignorant human being. The latest demonstration of his foolishness appeared Sunday in The Register-Guard.

In his column, the bespectacled business lackey argued in favor of a California ballot measure that would prevent unions from spending a member's dues on political activity without explicit written consent.

According to Will, the bill isn't about preventing unions from spending such as the \$35 million they dedicated to political causes in 1996. Rather, he claims the proposal is intended as revenge for particular campaigns, such as a local school board hearing in which a teacher's union spends more than \$70,000.

In this case, Will is probably right. As a whole, corporations outspend unions by a massive margin — both Democrats and Republicans receive far more of their funding from corporate donors than they do from labor. Apparently, it is those four or five campaigns (out of thousands) in which labor money outweighed other forces that the anti-union forces are determined to prevent.

The California bill is part of a larger vendetta against unions as a whole and political action by labor in particular. In Oregon, the ever-dangerous Bill Sizemore is pushing a bill that would prevent public employee unions from using dues for political lobbying. While Sizemore claims his concern stems from the fact that state money is spent to manage payroll deductions that go to unions and from there to political causes, it seems more likely that bitterness directed at labor is

once again a factor.

Sizemore's hatred of property taxes has been matched only by his vile animosity toward public employees. Possibly because public employee unions lobbied against the financially destructive series of property tax bills that Sizemore loves, he was associated with a measure that would have eliminated state contributions to public employee pensions.

In a rare victory for the forces of good, the measure was defeated. Apparently, this still haunts Sizemore's dreams because his proposal, like the California measure Will labels the "most important voting this election," would cripple what little strength labor still has.

Similar proposals to attack labor's lobbying power have been made at the national level and are likely to be considered in Congress this year. While it would be nice to think these actions are a reaction to recent labor victories (including this summer's UPS strike) the truth is that political leaders, funded by labor's corpo-

rate foes, have been fighting to kill unions for decades.

Along with moves that would cripple the ability of unions to lobby (thus making it difficult for them to combat the other political plotting against labor), Congress has still not passed a bill protecting striking workers from being permanently "replaced."

The measures to block union lobbying are troublesome for several reasons. First, the requirement that unions receive written consent for any lobbying would create nightmarish paperwork and most likely prevent even politically sympathetic workers from easily using their money for lobbying.

Second, the proposals ignore the structure of unions. While many national labor organizations could stand to reorganize in a more bottom-up fashion, the need for a leadership structure still exists. People join unions because those unions represent their interests as workers. That representation may take the form of negotiations with management,



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

but it also must take the form of political activism to prevent anti-worker candidates and legislation from further dominating Congress and local governments.

Will argues this is irrelevant because some workers do not voluntarily join unions. Regardless of the closed nature of some companies, workers still choose to enter that job and they still benefit from the union's presence. Dues, like taxes, cannot be voluntary.

Finally, use of dues for political causes is analogous to other political spending. Donations to activist groups, for example, indicate support for the cause (as union membership indicates support for labor) but not necessarily for every bill backed by the group. More significantly, corporations spend stockholder money as well as the profits reaped from the public and the company's employees without any concern for the politics of the people providing the cash.

In addition, it is crucial to protect and strengthen labor in the United States. In a nation where politics and pro-corporate economics have become increasingly intertwined and campaign finance reform is a distant vision, labor spending is a rare source of money to fight free-trade, anti-worker policies.

Even more important, labor acts at the local level to help strengthen the community and provide a base from which to fight company policies that ignore the needs of the area in favor of the need to impress Wall Street. Political lobbying is crucial to help ensure labor's survival.

Clearly, unions will have to have community support to fight the latest round of anti-union proposals. Perhaps they should also lobby to replace George Will's insipid blithering with writing by someone who knows what it's like to be in the bottom 90 percent of our economy.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DeFazio welcomes input

Last week Congress reconvened in Washington, D.C., following a lengthy district work period. After last year's battles over the budget, Medicare and tax cuts, it was great to be back home in Oregon. It was especially good to hear from people who took the time to attend my town hall meetings or stopped to chat in the grocery store or on the street.

For most of the coming year, I'll be traveling back and forth between Washington, D.C., and my home in Springfield. Last year, I made the trip 27 times — on average, two to three times a month. I'll continue to hold town hall meetings as often as the congressional schedule permits (last year I held 24 town hall meetings in communities from Brookings to Albany). In addition, my field staff will continue to hold periodic outreach meetings throughout the district, which I publicize in advance.

It really helps to hear from folks back home while Congress is considering the nation's business. The thousands of messages I receive keep me in touch with the day-to-day concerns of working people in Oregon. I also do everything in my power to help residents of the 4th Congressional District when they have problems with agencies of the federal government.

You can reach me with a card of letter, by phone, fax or e-mail. Write to me at 2134 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, 20515. Send your e-mail to Peter.DeFazio@mail.house.gov, call one of my offices in Eugene, Coos Bay or Roseburg, or feel free to use my toll-free phone number, 1-800-944-9603, to contact my Eugene office.

Again, thanks to everyone who has taken the time to contact me. Please keep it up.

Peter DeFazio
U.S. Representative

No rape charges

In regards to the Dontá Graham-Preston case, I'm deeply appalled at the public slandering that has taken place on this campus. The Emerald has repeatedly printed this young man's name in a very one-sided presentation of this case. Now, the Emerald has gone on to print that Dontá is a rapist. The charges against Graham-Preston are for sexual misconduct, not rape. Therefore, neither the Emerald nor anyone else on this campus has the right to call this young man a rapist. I would expect the Emerald to have better judgment than to print such a stigmatizing word without a conviction, but I see I was wrong.

If the stories of these two women are really the truth, then Graham-Preston committed

rape. Rape is a crime and should be taken to the police. Why, then, hasn't the University reported these cases to the police for criminal prosecution? I know the reason: neither of these charges would hold up in court. All the evidence presented by these two anonymous women is hearsay. Without any concrete evidence, one cannot prove the event even took place.

I am a woman and as a woman I would like to believe the stories of these two women. Yet, something about both of them doesn't add up. "Not participating" does not constitute saying no. These accusations sound like plots for revenge and not acts of violence and violation of one's privacy.

This isn't a case of sexual misconduct. This is a public lynching of a very bright young man. If the accusations of these two women are true, take it to the police. Let the law and a jury decide who is telling the truth. Otherwise, let him finish school in peace. Stop printing his name if you are not going to print the names of the accusers and, most of all, stop calling a person a rapist before they are convicted of the crime. This is America, and one is still innocent before being found guilty. Even on the University campus.

Nicole Nickerson
Journalism

FYI

Correction

In the story "Eugene activists gather at forum" (ODE, Feb. 5), local activist Jan Spencer should have been quoted as saying that many of Eugene's foremost organizations were present; however, all were not able to attend. The Emerald regrets the error.

Letters Policy

The Emerald accepts letters from members of the University and Eugene community, preferably under 400 words. Shorter letters will receive higher priority. Op-ed pieces will only be printed, at the discretion of the editor, if they are written by an authority about a pertinent issue. Letters can be submitted in person at EMU, Suite 300, mailed to P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR, 97403, or e-mailed to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu. Please include your full name and telephone number for confirmation. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for length or style.