

# PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
Ryan Frank  
EDITORIAL EDITORS  
Jonas Allen, Kameron Cole

**said**

"There's one regret I've had throughout my life — that I never became the heavy-weight boxing champion of the world. I would like my friend Evander Holyfield to know that today, I feel like the heavy-weight boxing champion of the world."

— Nelson Mandela, after receiving the Congressional Gold Medal Sept. 23.

"We are not in a world today where we can sit here in suspended animation as a country for eight and nine and 10 and 12 months while we pore over this day after day after day before we can make a decision."  
— Rep. Dick Gephardt, House minority leader, asking for a speedy inquiry into impeachment procedures for President Clinton.

"A lot of the best lobbyists are like paid assassins."  
— Jennifer Shecter of the Center for Responsive Politics on the death of anti-tobacco legislation.

"Our first president was a man who could not tell a lie. Two hundred years later we have a president who cannot tell the truth."  
— Ross Perot, at the Reform Party national convention Sept. 26.

"The president comes out at a time when we need cooperation from him...and he takes a gratuitous slap, jumps on a plane and runs off for three days of fund-raising. Is he the fundraiser-in-chief or is he the commander-in-chief?"  
— Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

## A Wealth of problems

*Moving from stipends to minimum wage could create major headaches for ASUO, students*

University students get involved in student programs for a lot of reasons, from experience to personal fulfillment to pure and simple altruism. What they don't do it for is the money.

The average stipend is indeed so small that many recipients don't consider it as getting paid, viewing the tiny monthly allotment as a means to buying a couple extra CDs, maybe some groceries.

Now it seems that the tiny stipends are creating a big controversy. The legality of paying stipends to non-elected student workers, such as those who work for ASUO-funded programs like the Women's Center or the student unions, is part of a complaint that the Designated Driver Shuttle has leveled against the ASUO.

At issue is whether or not student workers should actually be receiving minimum wage for the work they do.

This is where it gets sticky.

Consider that as of January 1, 1999 Oregon's minimum wage will climb to \$6.50 an hour, the highest in the country. If every student employee who currently receives a stipend were to be paid this wage, the results would be disastrous.

One possible outcome could be that the ASUO will be forced to seek outside funding to pay students. This opens the door to all sorts of trouble.

Most of the job descriptions for stipend positions call for between 10 and 20 hours of work per week, though the actual number of hours put in is often much higher.

ASUO would have to raise an incredible amount of cash just to pay what was mandated by job descriptions, never mind what student workers actually deserve.

Two of the easiest methods of doing this would be to hitting up alumni for fat contributions or finding some way to climb into bed with yet another corporate sponsor. Either course of action would divert energy that should be used for students and threaten the autonomy of the student government.

Even more disturbing is the idea that the ASUO might head for the old standby — the incidental fee.

Stipends are currently paid from the incidental fee each University student is assessed per term.

Some estimate that, if ASUO started paying minimum wage, fees could go from the current per student amount of \$157.96 each term to as high as \$450.

To suggest adding so much extra weight to the student burden is enough to garner a hearty belly laugh from most of the campus population. To ac-



Chris Hutchinson/Emerald

tually enact it would meet with decidedly less mirth.

So the final, most plausible option for the ASUO would be to eliminate all stipend positions and hope volunteers will take on the task of running student programs.

There are actually some people who favor eliminating stipends, arguing that the several hundred dollars in incidental fees could be better used to improve student services, and that no one who works for a student government program should be paid.

Sure, it's possible that students would do the arduous work of running the student unions and other programs in a volunteer capacity. But like a snowstorm in August, it's not very likely.

Let's face it: few students take a stipend position thinking that it's going to pay the rent. Anyone who did probably lost that illusion long ago.

Yes, the current stipends are paltry and inadequate. Yes, students do deserve much more money than they get. But they knew that when they took their jobs.

No one involved will ever be completely satisfied with the ASUO's stipend policies. There will always be something to complain about. Nevertheless, this is one of those rare situations where the best thing to do is nothing.

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