

# COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, March 12, 2002

## Editorial

### Women take positive steps in fight with 'rape culture'

**K**udos are in order to the ASUO Women's Center for its valiant efforts to raise awareness about sexual assault on campus. Although the recent rally on March 5 was underpopulated, partially because of bad weather and midterms, it was a good step toward getting anti-assault messages out loud and clear. Perhaps the message was a little too loud for some ears.

Admittedly, the women are preaching to the choir — most of the people involved in the fight against sexual assault are well aware of its existence. But the Women's Center is not only launching its assault awareness efforts toward its own constituents. With a new program called the Sexual Wellness Advocacy Team, groups like fraternities, sororities and residence hall residents will be targeted with messages about healthy ways to prevent sexual violence.

The SWAT team will be composed of eight students, and the group will make multimedia presentations to potential perpetrators and victims of sexual violence. Although the effort may not solve altogether the overlying social issue of what some call "rape culture," it is a good first step at reaching out toward students who may otherwise feel excluded by boisterous demonstrations and rallies.

Another commendable step the Women's Center is taking to harbor a safe environment on campus is their Sexual Assault Communication Board, which is a poster board located outside their office. The board will feature reports from the Department of Public Safety on any assaults or attacks, a "word is" section where anonymous postings concerning known attacks or rapes on campus can be placed without questions, and general support services information and information on other Women's Center events.

Although reaching potential sexual offenders may be a difficult task, at least the Women's Center is taking steps to help both men and women educate themselves on the issue. The SWAT team and the communication board will combat sexual assault by educating people on the ramifications of attacks and get people thinking about the issue. Sexual assault is a complicated problem without any easy answers, and we should all work together to find solutions.

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#### CORRECTION

Monday's news brief about the diversity forum ("Visitor to discuss University's diversity recommendations," ODE, March 11) should have said that University President Dave Frohnmayer and Provost John Moseley would lead the forum.

The Emerald regrets the error.

## Taxing a pound of flesh

**A**merica is fat. We are a nation of belt-stretching, chair-breaking cows. Don't believe me? Take a good long look at the people around you next time you're at Denny's, the grocery store or the \$1.50 show at Gateway.



Aaron Rorick  
Columnist

Or, if you prefer more scientific evidence, take a gander at this: According to a Harris Poll released last week, an astonishing 80 percent of Americans over the age of 25 are overweight. That's up from 64 percent in 1990 and 58 percent in 1983.

So what? This means not very many people are going hun-

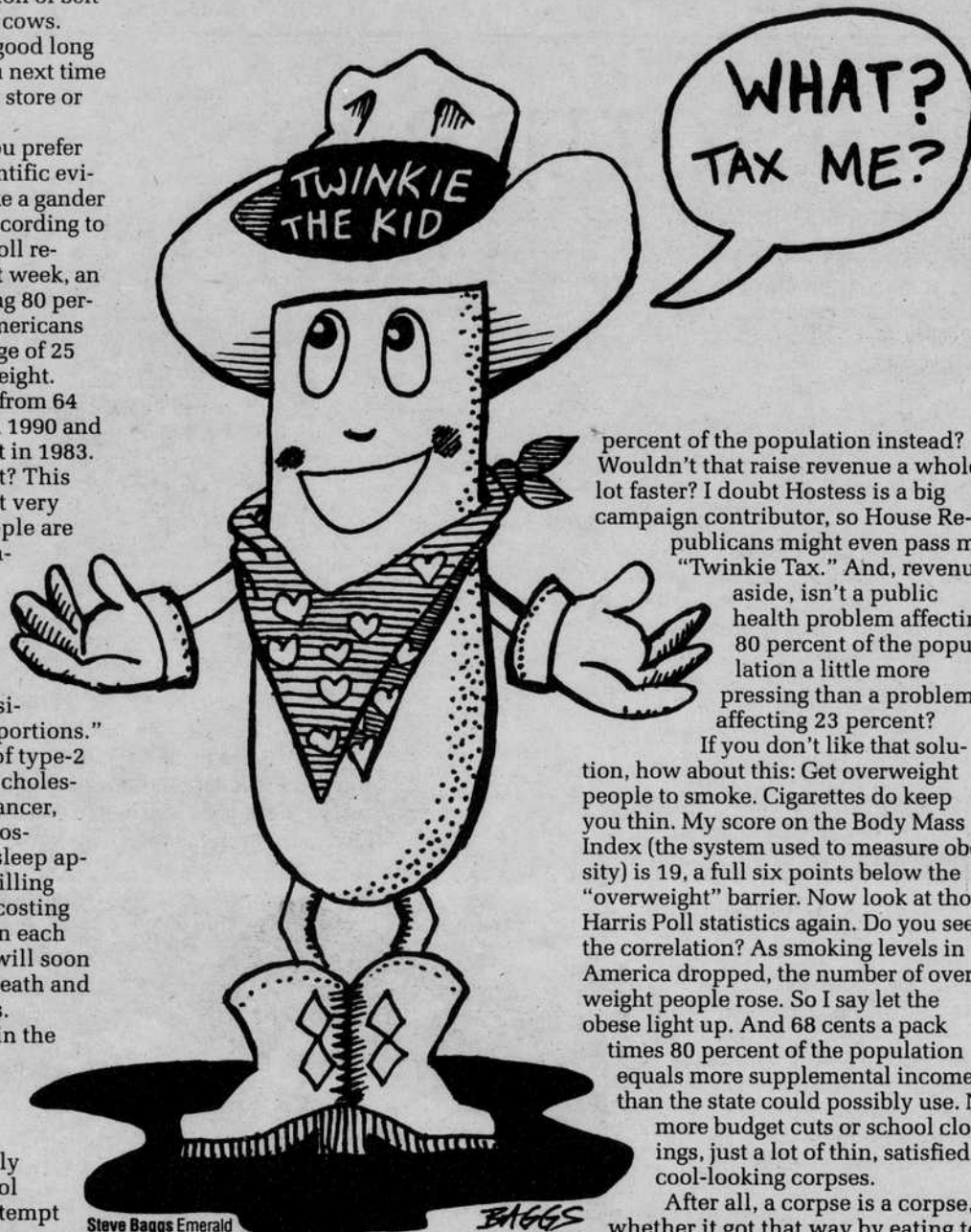
gry. Better to have a few extra pounds than a few too little, right?

Not according to United States Surgeon General David Satcher, who says obesity is reaching "epidemic proportions." Being overweight is a cause of type-2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, cancer, gallbladder disease, asthma, osteoarthritis, depression and sleep apnea, among other things; is killing some 300,000 people and is costing the United States \$117 billion each year. Satcher thinks obesity will soon cause as much preventable death and disease as smoking cigarettes.

Hum. Oregon is currently in the midst of a budget crisis. One proposed solution is Gov. John Kitzhaber's "sin tax" package, which would increase taxes on already grossly overtaxed tobacco and alcohol products. The most recent attempt was voted down in the Oregon House of Representatives, but another will likely come soon.

Now I haven't been to Sunday school in a while, but — if I remember correctly — gluttony is a sin, and a mortal one at that. I don't recall any mention of tobacco in the Bible.

Oregon's tax on the sale of cigarettes is 68 cents a pack. Oregon's tax on the sale of Twinkies? Nothing.



percent of the population instead? Wouldn't that raise revenue a whole lot faster? I doubt Hostess is a big campaign contributor, so House Republicans might even pass my "Twinkie Tax." And, revenue aside, isn't a public health problem affecting 80 percent of the population a little more pressing than a problem affecting 23 percent?

If you don't like that solution, how about this: Get overweight people to smoke. Cigarettes do keep you thin. My score on the Body Mass Index (the system used to measure obesity) is 19, a full six points below the "overweight" barrier. Now look at those Harris Poll statistics again. Do you see the correlation? As smoking levels in America dropped, the number of overweight people rose. So I say let the obese light up. And 68 cents a pack times 80 percent of the population equals more supplemental income than the state could possibly use. No more budget cuts or school closings, just a lot of thin, satisfied, cool-looking corpses.

After all, a corpse is a corpse, whether it got that way by eating too much or smoking too much. And thin corpses take up less room than fat ones. That solves our revenue problem and our obesity problem, and it economizes land use to boot. We'd still have smoking to deal with, but I can live with that.

E-mail columnist Aaron Rorick at aaronrorick@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

The very same Harris Poll said 23 percent of Americans smoke. That's down from 26 percent in 1990 and 30 percent in 1983.

So, to balance the budget, politicians want to tax the 23 percent of the population already being taxed. Call me crazy, but why not tax that big, fat 80

## Privatization privileges rich brats

#### GUEST COMMENTARY

Chris Fischer

school. I have had to take time off and work multiple jobs to be here in school. Next semester, I will not be here. I'll be back home working, with hopes of coming back in the fall.

Oliver's argument is a generic one, coming from a seemingly privileged point of view. He complains that state funding is wasted on other, smaller, more affordable state schools. He seems to be suggesting that Western Oregon University is "wasting resources" by providing a more affordable education. He is, and excuse me if I am wrong, suggesting that maybe that school should admit its inferiority and begin "using its facilities as a correctional institution." A fine idea. Along those lines, wouldn't we have more room for inmates here?

Why should they close their school before us? Because they don't breed NFL players or attack trust fund babies. Oliver's reluctance to share with the less fortunate is what is fundamentally wrong with our upper class. Our upper class has always had the power and the education to stay on top. Making the University private would be a generic solution keeping the rich in school and the poor picking up after them.

I have no solutions for our University's budget problems. But to blame the "fringe" schools in Oregon does nothing. Why shouldn't Oregon State University be given equal funding? Its agricultural focus needs to be supported in a time when our natural resources must be better utilized. If you want a private school education, go to Reed College, and there you can get a "better product."

COOChris Fischer is a junior exercise and movement science major.