

Tuesday, October 21, 2003

EDITORIAL

Student funds wrongly filling state's coffers

After state government higher education funding has dropped about 8 percent and tuition has jumped to more than \$5,000 for the first time in school history, Oregon's lawmakers have told the state's seven public universities that they need to return some \$14 million.

This, of course, is bad news in a state that's already cash-strapped to the point of being forced to cut weeks of K-12 classes last May and June. But the problem swells from unfortunate to diabolical when you see the devil in the details: The state has told the university system to take the sum from a fund fueled mostly by students' tuition and fees.

As Oregon Student Association Director John Wycoff observed in an Oregonian article last week ("Colleges told to draw on funds," Oct. 8), until now, only the university system itself has used student funds to balance its internal budget. But now, the details of planning aside, the state is working to balance part of its own budget shortfall by taking funds effectively paid for by students.

Here's the bureaucratized underlying what seems to be an — intentional or otherwise — usurpation of student funds. In the waning days of this year's record-setting legislative session, the state House and Senate passed two relevant bills. Through House Bill 5077, "the authorized appropriations and expenditure limitations ... (were) changed by the amounts specified to reflect the reduction in employer contribution rates for the Public Employees Retirement System." The change in limitations mandated recalling \$14 million from the Department of Higher Education's "Other funds," as well as \$15.8 million from general funds. House Bill 2148 defined how to calculate how much in PERS-related reductions each of the state's programs would suffer, and mandated that "the amount ... be transferred to the General Fund to be available for general government expenses" by the beginning of 2005.

Now the University is slated to lose up to \$5 million in these "Other funds" — in the neighborhood of \$250 per student — to state misappropriations.

Should the University's number-crunching fiscal wonks have anticipated this development when planning the 2003-04 and 2004-05 budgets (that is, those affected by this biennium's Legislative budget)? Possibly.

But that point is moot: The state is now taking money paid by students — who, like members of the Editorial Board, no doubt justifiably assumed it would be spent on University student academic and other programs — and funneling it into the state's drained general service coffers.

Certainly this is unfair to students, and moreover, the means don't justify the ends.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters @dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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The first and only call came from Lach Litwer, a University senior and an active member of Oregon Hillel and the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee. Litwer's phone had rung often on Oct. 13, he said, because of an illustration that appeared in that day's Emerald.

He called the office to share his and others' displeasure.

The drawing, titled "The Middle East's wonderful future," had upset many in the Jewish community, Litwer said. In the following days, three individuals wrote to the Emerald to share their disapproval.

The heart of this particular issue, as the phone call and letters have illuminated, is the misunderstanding that the Emerald is in some way anti-Semitic.

Litwer said in his phone call that while the illustration wasn't racist, it certainly was offensive. Specifically, he said, the caricature perpetuated the stereotype of the "Dirty Jew" through its facial exaggerations and the use of the Star of David. Litwer said the drawing reminded him of the sort of propaganda used by Nazis during World War II.

Graduate student Sol Hart also likened the drawing to propaganda and said the illustration implied that Jews control the world. Additionally, he wrote in a letter to the editor, the usage of the Star of David and a yarmulke on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon demonstrated insensitivity on the Emerald's part. Hart concluded that the cartoon was anti-Semitic.

In another letter, community member Libby Bottero also called the illustration anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious-political propaganda.



Brad Schmidt
 Of chief concern

Finally, senior Matthew Peltz made the argument that if the Emerald chooses to print cartoons like the one published Oct. 13, other illustrations — particularly with dead

civilians — also should be acceptable. Peltz hinted in his letter, too, that the Emerald shouldn't discuss issues when it lacks first-hand experience in the matter.

For the individuals who contacted the Emerald, and for those in the community who were affected by the cartoon, let me stress that the Emerald is not anti-Semitic. One cartoon alone does not warrant such a critique.

The purpose of the Page 2 illustration varies from subject to subject, sometimes offering analysis of religion and politics, other times campus issues; sometimes they are drawn with only humor intended. In this instance, religion crept into commentary meant to be strictly political in nature. The religious overtone in the illustration was an error on the part of the Emerald, a grand one at that: Sharon was drawn wearing a yarmulke, while Bush can be seen in a hat most often associated with the Catholic church. Bush is a Methodist.

In light of these circumstances, it is necessary for the Emerald to clarify its position for campus and community members.

The Emerald will not stray from a topic of discussion simply because staff members are not proficient in a particular language or have not been to a certain area of the country or world.

The Star of David resides on Israel's flag, and Sharon is the Prime Minister of Israel; thus, Sharon is speaking on behalf of Israel.

To draw similarities between the Emerald illustration and Nazi propaganda is possible, but to establish a meaningful philosophical connection is not viable for two reasons. First, Nazis used these cartoons to further their own beliefs and had a military movement aimed at ethnic cleansing. The Emerald has no such beliefs, nor does it have any military power.

Continuing, it is hypocritical to say that someone may draw a caricature of President Bush but not of Sharon, simply because the latter is Jewish. This double standard is not acceptable; the Emerald will not restrict itself to caricaturing white men because they are neither ethnic minorities nor women.

In the future, the Emerald will look more carefully at its illustrations in an attempt to prevent misconceptions about the purpose of the drawing and to remove any underlying, unintentional tones.

To reiterate, the Emerald does not and will not allow racism or racist remarks in the paper.

Finally, the Emerald Commentary section will continue to create illustrations that may draw the community's ire. If people didn't disagree over varying viewpoints, this world wouldn't be very much fun, and this page wouldn't exist. And if the Emerald didn't occasionally fire up some of its readers, the Commentary section wouldn't be doing its job.

Contact the editor in chief at editor@dailyemerald.com.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Illustration promotes 'prejudiced bigotry'

Steve Baggs' illustration in the Emerald ("The Middle East's wonderful future," Oct. 13) was one of the most despicable pieces of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious-political propaganda and prejudiced bigotry I've seen in a long time.

The characterization of Jews and Christians as darkly evil and greedy was false and vicious, especially in light of ongoing suicide-homicide bombings by those groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad whose aim is to undermine any road map for peace in the region. It reminds me of the anti-Semitic cartoons and articles published in Nazi Germany, and applauded by the Islamic Conference this week in Malaysia when it called for the destruction of Israel and America.

Shame on the Emerald for publishing this kind of wicked hatred. It is a disappointment to those of us who work for peaceful coexistence.

Libby Bottero
 Eugene

Illustration caricatures inappropriate, inaccurate

I am writing in response to Steve Baggs' editorial cartoon published in the Emerald on Oct. 13 ("The Middle East's wonderful future"). I was shocked to see this form of blatant anti-Semitism appear in our local campus newspaper.

Baggs included several elements that are patently offensive. Baggs implies with the words "You're my bitch, ain't-cha Georgie!" that there is a widespread conspiracy where-in Jews control the world.

This falls under the same line of lunacy as those who make the claim that it was a Zionist conspiracy that was behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, instead of al-Qaida terrorists. Baggs also implies that the caricature of Ariel Sharon represents all Jews with the kippa placed upon Sharon's head (Sharon is rarely seen wearing a kippa) and a Star of David pinned to Sharon's jacket. The cartoon thus implies that Jews are something less than human, thirsting only for money and violence. This cartoon should be offensive to anyone, and its inclusion in the paper demonstrates a dangerous kind of insensitivity on the Emerald's part.

The Emerald needs to offer an apology to all Jewish students and the general campus community for publishing anti-Semitic cartoons such as this.

Sol Hart
 graduate student

'Biased cartoon' illustrates narrow world view

I think that in order to be fair, as people love to be here in Eugene, Steve Baggs should draw a cartoon representing the "Muslim Middle East Road Map" to go with the Oct. 13 cartoon, "The Middle East's wonderful future."

Maybe a picture of Yasser Arafat with dead babies and blown-up busses, Saddam Hussein with dead Kurds and kids, and Osama bin Laden with dead Americans would sum up the Muslim view just as accurately as Baggs chose to sum up the Jewish and Christian view with his biased cartoon.

Baggs should thank his lucky stars he lives in America, where he is allowed to draw freely whatever he wants. He'd probably be severely punished for drawing an anti-Muslim cartoon if he lived in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, etc.

But feel free to keep on criticizing, Baggs. People like you, and many others in Eugene, who have lived their whole lives in Eugene, don't speak Arabic or Hebrew, and have never ever been to Israel or any of the surrounding countries, always have so much to say. Isn't that ironic?

Matthew Peltz
 senior
 Judaic studies

ILLUSTRATING OPINION