

Tuesday, January 13, 2004

EDITORIAL

Registration deadline is impending for voters

In recent weeks, ASUO has cranked up its perennial voter-registration drive in preparation for the upcoming Feb. 3 special election, wherein voters will decide whether to approve tax hikes that supporters say are essential to state services.

And the Emerald Editorial Board, with the maintenance of your civil responsibilities and empowerment in mind, is reminding you that today is your last day to register to vote in that election.

Measure 30 is a complicated creature with a hefty price tag — the measure seeks to collect some \$800 million through various tax increases. The proposed temporary tax changes include a graduated income tax surcharge that will be added to 2003-04 tax liabilities, the rate of which scales with income. Single filers making less than \$10,000 annually will pay no additional money; those making over \$120,000 will see a 9 percent increase in their state taxes this year. According to the Oregon secretary of state's Web site at <http://www.oregonvotes.org>, a family earning \$41,000 would pay an additional \$36 in income taxes this year.

Opponents of the bill say that tax increases like Measure 30's are unfair and fly in the face of popular sentiment:

"There were a lot of governors (from various states who) were turning to taxes when that's not the problem," Citizens for a Sound Economy spokeswoman Brenna Hapes said in an Oregonian interview. "People don't want you to raise their taxes. They want you to start spending their money more efficiently."

But, the measure's proponents argue, the various costs are not only worth it, but are quite essential to maintain "certain levels of service in public education, senior services, public safety and other areas, and to avoid budget cuts."

The election is important for many reasons: Most immediately, if voters reject the measure, the state would see \$544.6 million in budget cuts for the 2003-05 biennium, as mandated by existing law, including \$14.3 million in higher education cuts (which, in turn, includes about \$2 million at the University alone).

More broadly, this measure is nationally posed to act as a referendum on the expansion of state taxation, not to mention the anti-tax movement. Some similar efforts in recent memory have failed, including February 2003's Measure 28, which was rejected by 55 percent of the voters, and a \$1.2 billion increase proposed in Alabama last year, which failed by a 2-1 margin.

No matter how you come down on this issue, the important thing is that you register and vote. The Oregon University System has about 82,000 students. The state community college system has thousands more. Across-the-board student voting mobilization would no doubt draw more of Salem's attention to student voters, granting even more lobbying and legislative power to a group that traditionally hasn't taken advantage of its numbers in the political realm.

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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Ad influence

It was P.T. Barnum who said, "There's a sucker born every minute." Lately I've been throwing off the curve, because I'm just a sucker every minute.

When I see a Hummer H2 climbing over a mountain on my television screen, I want to drive that H2. Now. While eating a Grilled Stuft Burrito and screaming, "Can you hear me now?" into my cell phone. Is that bad?

Is it bad that I stand in the shampoo aisle and buy Suave for Men solely because their commercials challenge my manhood ("You're not a woman, don't use a woman's shampoo.")? Or that when I empty my beer glass at a bar I tell my friends, "I can't taste my beer!" just like that stupid-funny Miller Lite commercial?

We're coming up on the shiniest jewel in the advertising crown, the Super Bowl, and it suddenly struck me today how many of those commercials will be targeted directly at me. I'm young, I'm impressionable and I watch too much television.

And most of all, I have an odd, sick craving for name-brand products. Given a choice between generic detergent and Tide at the grocery store, I'll take the Tide 18 times out of 19. Maybe it goes back to high school

when I never wore North Face and my generic fleece just didn't cut it. Now I'm making up for it. I'm cool, really! I buy Cheerios instead of the generic O's! I'm hip!

Of course, this is exactly what



Peter Hockaday
Today is Hockaday

Weiden+Kennedy want me to think. The Portland-based advertising agency, which creates campaigns for Miller Lite, Nike and ESPN, is the master of subliminal advertising. Instead of just telling me Nike is cool, Weiden+Kennedy, over the years, have made me feel like Nike is my life. Like wearing Adidas is a lifestyle choice along the lines of becoming a transvestite: No way would I want to take such a drastic step.

They get into your head. Advertising is everywhere. That Coke being sipped by your favorite actor is a product placement.

And don't even get me started on pre-movie advertising. Seriously, I don't want your Bod. You know the day is coming when "Harry Potter XIV: Retirement Home Magic" is interrupted for commercial breaks. By then, movies will cost \$35 and your ticket will come with 18 different popcorn discount coupons.

The thing I hate the most about living on Planet Advertising is that I can't do a single thing about it. We could revert to communism, but that's as drastic as wearing Adidas. We could stop patronizing the big advertisers, but then we wouldn't be able to eat or have clothes to wear. So that's out.

Until we can figure out a way to stop advertising, I'll just keep drinking my Michelob Ultra. It has low carbohydrates, and I'm trying to watch my figure. Can you hear me on that?

Contact the columnist at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Radicalism responds to capitalism

Scott Austin's Nov. 26 guest commentary ("Prevailing American sentiment supports iron fist," ODE, Nov. 26) makes much of other people's presumed illiteracy. That Austin has

gotten as far as he has while remaining so culturally illiterate is no less alarming. His letter is a perfect object lesson of the maxim "Repeat a lie often enough and it will be believed as truth." As a self-described "fascist" ("New Campus Rebels," Eugene Weekly, Nov. 20), I assume Austin is at least historically literate enough to be aware of this tried and true method of Goebbels'.

The myth of Islamic "backward"-ness Austin believes and promotes is betrayed by the fact that places like Jerusalem, Damascus, Alexandria, Moorish Spain and, more recently, Beirut were long considered to be models of religious and cultural pluralism. Centuries of Christian crusades, Western colonialism and, in the case of Lebanon, intervention by Israel, have put an end to this. In short, the kind of Western imperialism which Austin dismisses, not abstract but manifested daily in the form of human and cultural poverty and death, has gone a long way toward creating the heinous situation that the United States and its few allies now face. Indeed, the problem with Islam is not its backwardness, it is its very

modernity. Contemporary scholars, like the late Edward Said, point out that the Islamic radicalism currently being embraced by some is a thoroughly recent development. It is a reaction to the devastating, atomizing effects of industrialism and capitalism that have shaken the foundations of traditional societies worldwide. As such, Islamic radicalism has much in common with the conservative-Christian radicalism Austin himself embraces. They complement each other perfectly as evidenced by Austin's own goose-stepping, flag-waving creed as well as the sentiments of Toby Keith that Austin defends.

Jason Maas-DeSpain lives in Eugene.