

Monday, February 9, 2004

EDITORIAL

Meth, logging, sweat shops are answers to state woes

With the recent failure of Measure 30 and the subsequent threat of massive across-the-board budget cuts to public services and education, the Emerald Editorial Board would like to humbly suggest to the Legislature some options for future tax revenues:

- Legalize prostitution — Two words: Sex sells. And when something sells, what do you do? Tax it! Surely we can all take a hint from Las Vegas and just legalize the institution. After all, Las Vegas has a whole lot of money. And we need money. Coincidence? We think not. Furthermore, because we'll no longer be needing the public school buildings — because, surely, more days will be cut from K-12 schooling — we'll just use them as brothels (minus the kids, of course). Five hundred bucks gets you the principal's office; five bucks a head for the janitor's closet (no pun intended).

- Legalize sweat shops — With minors no longer forced to spend month after month in classrooms, their true potential can finally be tapped. What better way to help improve Oregon's economy and unemployment rate? With little Suzy sewing identifying marks on apparel items and little Johnny making microchips, we'll ensure high-profile businesses keep pumping dollars into Oregon's tax system.

- Eliminate police — Eliminating the police force will save us a pantload of money. We can use part of that to buy everybody a gun — even the kids. Then, it's everybody for their own! Of course, the state will have to change that pesky law saying you can't carry on campus. Oh, and the whole murder thing might have to be reworked a bit. But we're positive that the idea will catch on once we all get used to dodging bullets. (And don't forget that we can take a cue from Chris Rock and tax the bullets, too!)

- Sales tax — Hello? Duh. Everybody's doing it. And yes, if Washington state jumped off a bridge, we'd be right behind.

- Sell the trees — Oregon has an abundance of trees, and they aren't doing anything but standing there in the forest and taking our rainwater. What a bunch of freeloaders! We've gotta chop them all down and sell them for lumber. Old, new, big, small, burned — it doesn't matter, just as long as it's made of wood. Plus, everybody is all bent out of shape about cutting them down. Well, when they're gone, nobody will have anything to complain about anymore. Problem solved!

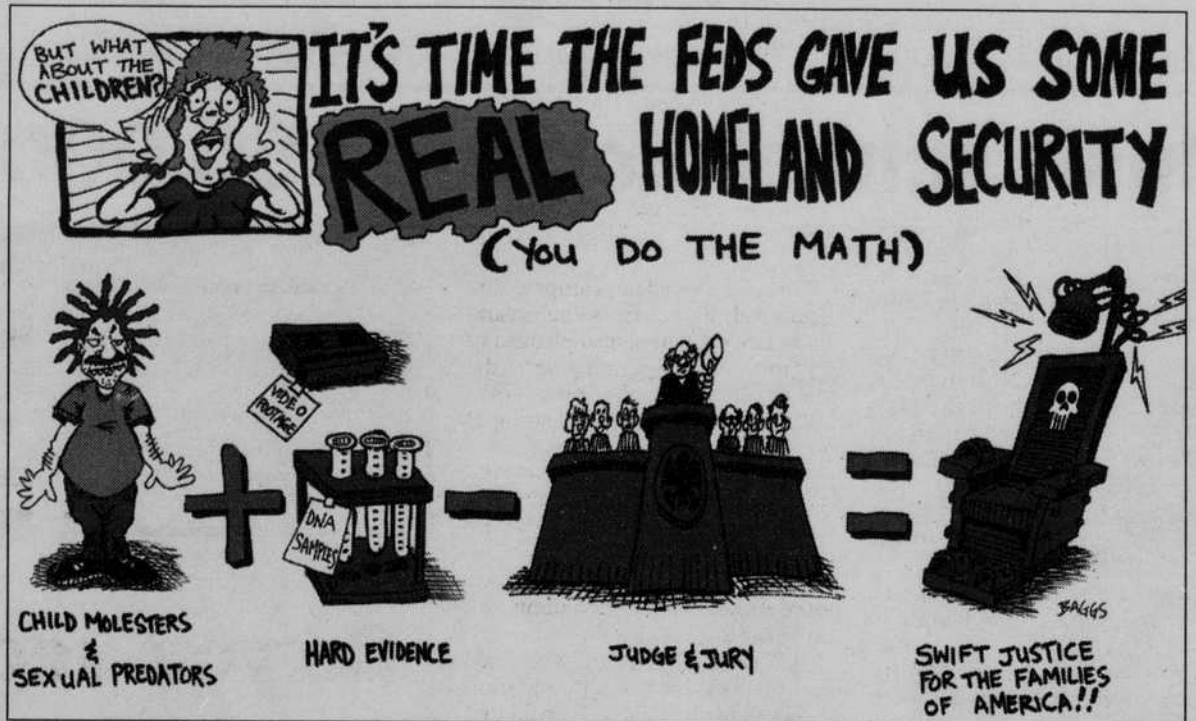
- Legalize meth trafficking — Let's face it, we've got plenty of meth in this state and we're not reaping the potential benefits. Also, no major corporations can pour billions of dollars in lobbying money to keep the taxes low. Therefore, meth is practically an untapped resource for millions of revenue dollars. Hell, it's easy to make and easy to package! There's just no end to the possibilities.

- Total overthrow of the government; secede from the Union — Clearly a unilateral rejection of capitalism and a reversion to a feudal system of government is the best thing for Oregon. The market hasn't given us anything but pain and suffering. We need to be ruled by a supreme overlord — we're not going to say any names, but current Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski would sound a lot cooler as "Lord and Savior Kulongoski, ruler of all Oregonians" — who can bring this state back from its dire economic straits, with just a hint of classic totalitarianism.

Viva la revolución, comrades.

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.



Steve Baggs Illustrator

Malpractice suits not 'excessive'

A lawsuit was recently won by the family of a University student who died while at Sacred Heart Medical Center with an unexpectedly lethal illness. A few days later, someone

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responded with an opinion that the verdict was unfair and the defendants were not guilty. His arguments were compelling, but what do I know? I'm not a doctor and I wasn't on the jury. All I do know is that when I go to the doctor or the hospital, and they look at me for maybe seven minutes, they better have some real incentive to get it right.

Some folks say this suing business has gotten out of hand — there are too many, it's ruining the industry, it's limiting our choices. President Bush has declared that

tort reform is a key part of his "pro-growth" agenda, saying that it "would have made a difference" to benefit the economy. But a recent study by the National Center for State Courts found that medical malpractice lawsuits per capita have actually decreased. Fewer cases went to trial in 2002 than in 1962.

While Bush claims that "everybody pays more for health care" due to "excessive litigation," the president of the American Tort Reform Association said in 1999, "We wouldn't tell you or anyone that the reason to pass tort reform would be to reduce insurance rates."

Malpractice premiums as a percentage of all health costs have declined from 0.95 percent in 1988 to 0.56 percent in 2000, while prescription drugs costs make up about 11 percent of all health costs,

projected to rise to 14 percent by 2010. Controlling the cost of drugs will have far more impact on insurance premiums than malpractice reform. Despite these facts, the president and Oregon's senators chose to support a Medicare bill that would prevent the Medicare administrator from negotiating lower prescription drug costs.

As is so often the case these days, some folks try really hard to confuse the issues. Don't be fooled; don't give up your power. The president and his friends are not on your side; they just want your money. They want to prevent you from getting better drug prices and they want to prevent you from being wholly compensated when you are injured — or die — because of a provider's mistake. That's what I call "excessive."

Tim Mueller lives in Eugene.

OSPIRG should account for its funds

I write in response to a letter authored by Arista Hickman regarding OSPIRG's funding for next year ("OSPIRG is major asset to University community," ODE, Jan. 21). No one can argue with the fact that the

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Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group has some positive impacts on the University of Oregon campus, so what does it say to you when such a group's funding is called into question? This is a direct response to hypocritical and unclear spending habits exhibited by a public service group.

About this time last year, a scandal erupted on the University campus when it was revealed that OSPIRG felt it appropriate to take thousands of dollars from its budget of student funds and send it off to another major Oregon university. Apparently, the University was doing its part to start an OSPIRG chapter at another school. While I

applaud the idea, I cannot stand by and allow such hypocritical spending to continue.

In her letter, Hickman points out that her beloved student organization has been involved in a campaign to lower the overall cost of textbooks. How does OSPIRG reconcile the fact that it wants to help the average UO student by lowering textbook costs, while quietly spiriting away our student funds and transferring them into another school's checkbook?

Furthermore, let's not forget that no one from OSPIRG has fully explained this situation. Many of my fellow students and I have waited for a response, yet are always greeted with "It is complicated" or "Starting other chapters at Oregon schools is part of having our own chapter." I say, NO! It is not complicated! If part of having an OSPIRG chapter here on campus means that I personally have to shell out money, under the guise of student funds, they need to tell us that. If part of having an OSPIRG chapter here on campus means that our school is partly responsible

for starting chapters at other universities, they need to tell us that. I don't see the LGBTQA, the College Republicans, the College Democrats, The Student Insurgent, Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or any other politically active group on campus requesting thousands of dollars to start chapters at other universities. Why OSPIRG?

Hickman claims that there are more than 100 OSPIRG members who impact 20 times that many students here on campus. If so many people are involved, why doesn't anybody know what is going on?

I am not calling for the banishment of OSPIRG. I am simply requesting that an organization claiming to help better serve our campus do exactly that. If you want to be fully funded, you have to be prepared to explain why. I commend the ideals of our OSPIRG chapter, yet am ashamed of its shady and hypocritical behavior.

Colby Reed is a junior pre-journalism major.

ONLINE POLL

Each week the Emerald publishes the results of the previous week's poll and the coming week's poll question.

Visit <http://www.dailyemerald.com> to vote.

Last question: Should Genesis Juice be forced to pasteurize its juice to stay open?

Results: 50 votes.

- Yes — It's the law: 36.0 percent or 18 votes.
- No — It hasn't had problems in 30 years of business: 30.0 percent or 15 votes.
- Yes — It's safer for you: 22.0 percent or 11 votes.

- No — It tastes better unpasteurized: 12.0 percent or 6 votes.

This week: How will you celebrate Valentine's Day this year?

Choices: Spending time with friends; Spending time with my significant other; Spending time alone ... again; I don't celebrate Valentine's Day.