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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

ASUO allows double-taxing of students at UO events

"Under no circumstances shall any incidental-fee paying student ... be denied the right to participate in or attend an activity or event, fund-raiser or otherwise, that is sponsored in whole or in part by an incidental-fee funded (Programs Finance Committee) Program based solely on that student's inability to pay the requisite donation or admission charge." (Student Senate Rule 13.7).

Attention students: You are currently being screwed. And, it seems, the ASUO Executive doesn't care. The ASUO Student Senate doesn't care, either. Neither does the EMU Ticket Office.

That's right, every time you pay for a ticket to a cultural event on campus that is funded, in full or in part, with incidental fees, you are effectively paying a second time for something that you've already paid for (being "ripped off," in the parlance of our times). And the student government evidently doesn't feel it necessary to tell you about it.

Each year, students pay millions in mandatory incidental fees. A portion of that amount is distributed to student groups on campus. These groups then may take the allotted money and fund events. These events — recent examples include Ut-sav and "The Vagina Monologues" — are funded with your money. When students later pay extra for a ticket to the student-funded event, that's unfair double taxation.

A prime analogy is the newspaper you're reading right now. Each year students pay through incidental fees what is effectively a subscription cost, and in return students can expect to pick up a free copy of the Emerald every day, if they so choose. Now, if the Emerald installed change deposits on dispensers and forced students to pay an additional 5 cents per copy, how fair would that be?

ASUO President Maddy Melton told the Emerald that she isn't advertising the rule — which would be as simple as telling the Ticket Office to post a sign outside its office stating a student's right to a free ticket — because she thinks it should be changed. Essentially, Melton would rather see students suffer double-taxation than enforce a logically and ethically sound principle.

Senate President Ben Strawn said he thinks the lack of knowledge about the ticket rule is a problem, yet he said it is not the responsibility of the Senate or the Executive to educate students about their right to free tickets. Director of Ticketing Services Mary Barrios said it's not her responsibility either, and she refused to post a sign informing students of their right. Instead, students are directed to the student group, where more complications can be expected due to most student groups' likely ignorance to the rule.

But the question remains: What good is the student government if it's unwilling to enforce its own rules or educate students about their rights? Can we trust people with our money who flaunt rules at the real expense of the very people whose interests they're obligated to defend?

Melton argues that if students can't be double-taxed, student groups will need more incidental fees to pay for events. She added that students who aren't interested in events would be forced to pay more in incidental fees. This may be true, but it doesn't change the fact that students who pay once for a service may be too poor to pay for it a second time, nor does it change the fact that an ASUO rule isn't being enforced.

It's insulting that the Executive has the audacity to screw over strapped students in the interest of a few student-group events and at the expense of fairness to its constituents. Sure, it's not technically the Executive's or the Senate's job to advertise any particular rule, but certainly it falls within the spirit of their roles as student fiscal authorities. A student government that has rallied so hard to keep tuition down in the stated interest of saving student dollars, but refuses to enforce this rule, smacks disturbingly of hypocrisy.

As long as the rule exists in the Green Tape Notebook, students ARE entitled to free tickets to incidental-fee funded events. So if you, Joe or Jane Student, can't afford a ticket and can't get a free one at the Ticket Office or from the student group, then go to the ASUO Executive office, located at Suite 4 of the EMU (on the ground floor), and demand enforcement of the rule. Get a copy of the Green Tape Notebook, or view it online at <http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~senate/documents/greenTapeNotebook.pdf>. Don't leave until you get a straight answer — something that this administration lacks all too often — and by all means, don't let this institution steal your money.



Eric Layton Illustration

A Stern warning

I don't remember, did Janet Jackson have a pair of red horns protruding from her head during the Super Bowl halftime show? Did she carry a pitchfork instead of a microphone?

Poor Janet. Since Feb. 1, she's been blamed for everything from sex scenes in movies to the Haitian rebellion.

Her latest offense, apparently, is getting Howard Stern booted from the airwaves. Last week, media conglomerate Clear Channel Communications dropped the shock jock from its phalanx of radio hosts (though his show continues to be syndicated and available in several markets). Stern immediately dropped Jackson.

"They've been after me since 1992 and they're having their way with me," Stern told Reuters news service. "Then Janet Jackson whipped out her boob and it's all over."

We're watching media theory in action these days, and it's about to get uglier than Ron Jeremy. With Congress and President George W. Bush both decrying indecency in the media, soon we're going to dive hands-first into Lake Morality. Soon we're going to start violating free speech, one of the greatest freedoms we're afforded in this country.

I'm not a big Howard Stern fan; I think anybody with a brain bigger than a walnut can see through his humor. But he's



Peter Hockaday
 Today is Hockaday

occasionally funny and he's popular. Heck, he's probably the only radio host with his own movie (the classic "Private Parts").

Clear Channel's official stance is that Stern was dropped because of some offensive banter with Rick Solomon, the man who knows Paris Hilton better than the rest of us. I've read the transcript, and without going into much detail, it doesn't seem much more offensive than the schlock Stern normally spews. One caller used a very offensive word, but you can't blame the host for his lame callers.

Stern's theory is that Clear Channel dumped him because they wanted to wash their hands of him and use extra soap. On Thursday, Clear Channel executives appeared in front of a congressional committee hearing on indecency in the media.

This is where the red light goes on in my head. If Clear Channel wants to ax Stern for business reasons, that's fine. If he lost popularity or crossed the final line of indecency, great. Drop him. But if they cut him because of pressure from Congress, that's wrong.

I want our culture to tone down the indecency a bit. I'm not a conservative dude, but I think about raising a son or daughter in a world of exposed breasts and graphically sexual radio programs, and I shudder.

But I want decency to happen naturally. That's the beauty of living with capitalism. If we stop listening to Howard Stern, maybe he'll turn the volume down on his loud-mouthed act. If we stop buying Christina Aguilera's albums, maybe she'll put some clothes on.

If we protest indecency in the media, it will disappear. But we don't need the government to help us out. We can't have the government set the line of what's moral and what isn't. Because that line is where capitalism ends and communism begins.

That's right, Janet Jackson is a communist. Wait, maybe not. But I still blame her for that uprising in Haiti.

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

Freedom comes with consequences

No one seems to comprehend the double-edged sword of freedom these days, as evidenced by Jerome Garger's recent diatribe ("Fuss over Jackson hides deeper problems with U.S. media," ODE, Feb. 23). Freedom

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is not merely the ability, free of retribution, to do something, but is as a whole that ability plus the right to not do something without fear of retribution. This understanding of basic personal liberty is what drives the essence of free-market capitalism: the notion that individuals exercising their freedom to do and not to do influences the goods and services, including media, that are a part of the whole.

If we are to presume, then, that this is the case, we must also presume that what drives a corporation like CBS is the will and desire of its customers. If the will and desire of its customers are commercials of purple pickup trucks and CBS chooses pink Geo Metros,

then the consumers of CBS — in this case, the people who choose to watch the programs CBS offers — can choose, as an extension of their freedom, not to watch CBS anymore, and instead watch Fox or NBC. If Mr. Garger truly holds dear the freedom that he is speaking of, then he would have to embrace this as a natural consequence of such freedom. This exercise of freedom, then, can be said to influence what is aired. CBS has to compete with the likes of Fox, NBC and ABC, and thus must respond regularly to the desires of its customers' wishes in order to remain a viable network.

The more explicable and begged question, then, is this: How would Mr. Garger remedy the situation? Choose a group of educated people to decide what is proper for the public to watch, see and absorb? That's rather undemocratic, don't you think? Perhaps even a bit "elitist"? The answer lies with Mr. Garger himself. The people should decide. They are, in fact, deciding right now, much to the chagrin of Mr. Garger. They call into places like

CBS and demand that series like the Ronald Reagan biography not be aired. CBS and other news-media outlets do intense polling of those who watch their station for information about viewing and reaction to shows offered, and most importantly, they monitor the viewing itself. It is perhaps the most democratic system currently available, and yet those of Mr. Garger's clique despise it with such impunity and hatred as to boggle the reasoned mind.

But why is this? It cannot be because the system is anti-democratic, for the evidence does not establish this. Rather, it is because the evidence points to a public who as a reflection of their own freedom censor themselves, an idea that baffles the pre-pubescent minds of Garger and those like him. So be academically and intellectually consistent, Mr. Garger, and accept the fact that sometimes in a popular vote, you will lose. Be gracious about it, and be a good loser.

Anthony Warren is a sophomore studying political science.