

A right to be heard

As I sat down to vote by mail the other night, I wondered: What am I doing this for? I'd just spent the day reading articles in the *Oregonian* about the hundreds of students and parents

resentation?" I'm sure you heard about it once in elementary school... Your US History teacher knew that this statement wasn't on the ACT or SAT, so they probably didn't go over it.

In other words, we have the right to a water system that doesn't leak (*West Linn Tidings*, Jan. 12). We have the right to drive down the street of our town without hitting a pothole large enough to swallow a small European country (Fox 49 news at 10, Feb. 19). We have a right to have enough money devoted to education to bring our children up properly.

We have the right to a country that works properly. Maybe the Better Business Bureau should get involved... we're paying for a product that isn't performing as advertised.

The most important issue is that the government we elect doesn't listen to us. If they're going to do what they want to do anyway, what is the use of even voting them into office? We might get more done if we didn't have a government!

Of course, this is why the school budget isn't being increased. If more money went to education, then people might think, which would mean that they would question the government and its policies.

Now wouldn't that just bite?

We have a right to be heard. This is guaranteed in the law of our land, the *Constitution*. So whenever you have the chance, write a letter to your senator. Give them a phone call. Or better yet, write a letter to your favorite public forum, such as *The Oregonian*, your local town newspaper, or, horror of horrors, *The Print*. Whatever you do, though, don't sit back quietly and accept the status quo. *It's your choice. Use your voice.*

TO BE IN A PERFECT WORLD

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Assoc. Editor



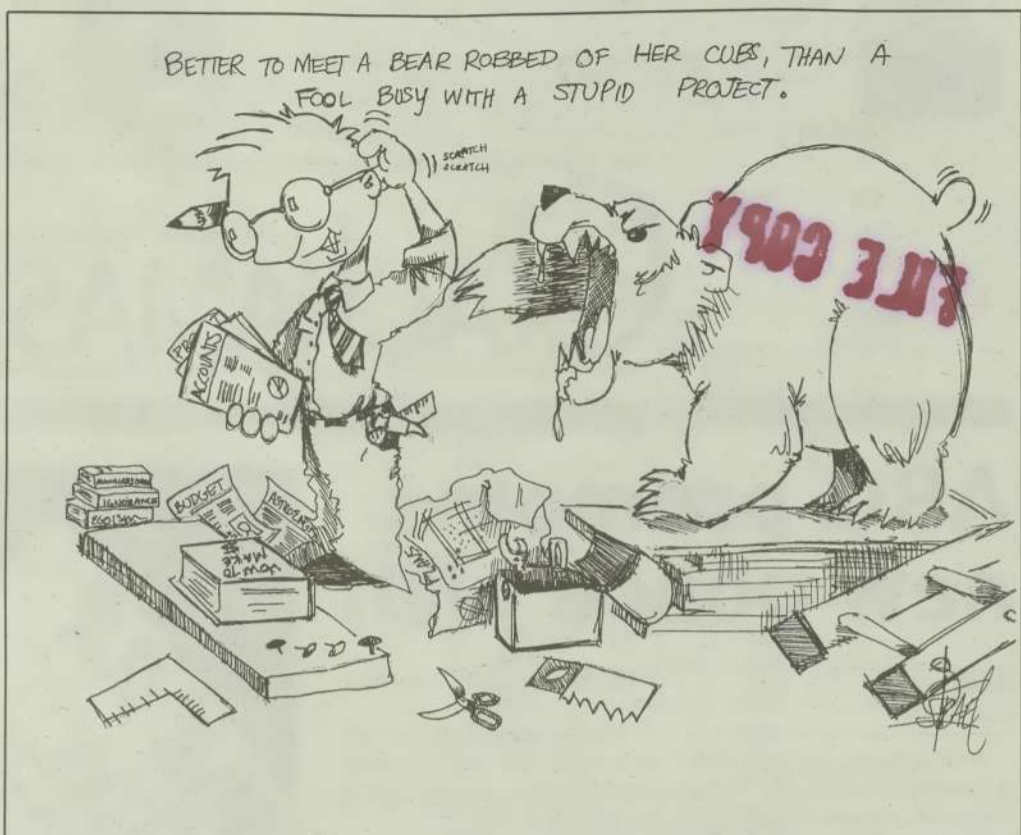
that traveled down to Salem to demonstrate their support for increased education spending.

In case you turned the news off at the first mention of the words "New Carissa," you might have missed this news story. Here's how it happened: Gov. John Kitzhaber wants to increase education spending. The state representatives don't want to. There's a battle waging.

Actually, I don't care about the battle itself. What I care about is that the rally had to be held on the side of the state capital... The front of the capitol was being used for the celebration of our state's 140th anniversary, with usually dignified senators dressing up in silly costumes and making long-winded speeches.

Even though the students had planned to come for months, and the government had known about the visit for months, John Kitzhaber was out of town that day and the few senators the students got to speak to were "downright rude," according to Lincoln High School students' comments in *The Oregonian*.

Where's the problem? We have to remember, as our favorite elected officials stand up their in their Armani suits and Rolex watches, that we are a part of this government too. Remember the old American Revolutionary slogan, "No Taxation without Rep-



Cloud of Unknowing: instrument of the Divine?

First, I'd like to thank you for all the Print space dedicated to the subjects of religion and philosophy in your winter editions. I'm glad that others in the college community find these

areas of study worth exploring. Joel Shempert's increased clarity of Christian apologetics in his weekly article are a source of intellectual stimulation. Also, superb articles on the Labyrinth and the kind and thoughtful (although I have taken plenty of ribbing for that photo) interview by Janos Plesko of my thoughts on religion were appreciated. A weekly student run newspaper is not the easiest forum to carry on a conversation about such intricate topics as faith and reason, abso-

lutism and relativism and the very nature of Divinity and Truth. Editorial policy and limited space would suggest that the classroom (or even the coffee shop) might provide a better atmosphere for such debates but I think you've been most generous in allowing these explorations.

I would like to offer several thoughts to clarify an interpretation that Mr. Shempert had of my statement in the interview regarding faith. I do not see faith as a lack of surety as Joel implies. Quite the contrary I see faith as a willingness to continue to ask questions within a framework of trust. Faith seeks understanding. As new ways of exploration in biology, physics, cosmology, anthropology, and other natural and social sciences reveal the material world, faith tries to understand them within the context of a hidden spiritual realm. "Lack of surety, this fundamental 'un-knowing'" as Joel puts it is not "the basis for all for all openminded and sophisticated thought" but rather the very instrument through which Divinity beckons. The great Christian mystical work from 1375, the *Cloud of Unknowing* suggests putting "all thoughts, all images, all concepts beneath a metaphorical 'cloud of forgetting' in the mind, and then single-heartedly seeking to love God, hidden from our finite consciousness by a "cloud of unknowing."

Joel's suggestion of Christianity's claim of absolutism in its ability to find God is

exactly like the absolutism present in fundamentalist Islam or Judaism, sectarian Hinduism, Mormonism, Orthodox Catholicism, etc. Each claim to have the truth that contradicts others beliefs. Mr. Shempert concludes that "this claim of absolutism seems ugly and oppressive to our modern pluralistic minds." I agree because as I've stated in previous letters, Divinity seems to me to be One Mind, One Consciousness that transcends the pluralistic minds of arbitrary interpretation of religion. This is the place where I believe faith seeks understanding and from my limited point of view there is much to understand. I just can't agree with C.S. Lewis that one who remains open to inquiry will, without even realizing it, find hell. Perhaps that is best left for one who doesn't inquire!

Last, I want to say that I felt sad in class when a student said, "Man, you and that Joel Shempert guy must really have it in for each other." I think nothing could be further from the Truth. I had Joel as a student who taught me much in our classroom discussions and as a friend who always expressed his opinions freely in my office or in the hallways. Now that we carry on our conversations in a public and spirited forum I can see how the misconception of our relationship could arise. Though we may disagree on thoughtful matters, I have always held him in highest regard and would only hope that many other students would pursue truth as he does.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

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