

★THE CLACKAMAS PRINT★

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# Cutting out the middleman

## Save money by refining administration



**Robb Egan**  
Opinion Editor

Oregon is facing a massive budget shortfall, and politicians and business-leaders from all walks of life have come forth to proclaim the same hypocrisy; save the economy, save our jobs, save our schools, save the salmon, etc., but don't make us pay for it!

It is a common theme in the sordid tale that is recession econom-

ics: cutting public programs and employee benefits, while carefully ignoring the administrative process. House committee members are finally getting on track to reforming the much-beleaguered state employee pension system.

However, the reform plan they have approved would only protect the pensions of employees already close to retirement, while cutting back on the benefits of younger employees. Since PERS hasn't updated its life expectancy tables since 1978, current retirees are living an average of five years longer than expected, adding to the budget woes. With the average life expectancy increasing as much as five years every generation, if PERS updates their tables younger

employees would have their benefits stretched even further.

The newer employees are, of course, already paid a much lower salary with fewer benefits, owing to their lack of experience and time with the company.

Of course, a fair amount of the personnel woes could be readily solved by reforms in the administrative process. The immediate firing of the PERS Board of Directors would be a good place to start.

Administrators pulling in six-figure incomes while working as nothing more than figureheads and glorified file-clerks seems a tad wasteful. In an age when most of the real physical work in accomplished by data-entry clerks sitting at a computer, of what use are a

bunch of middle-managers who do nothing more than attend meetings and sign expense reports?

There clearly needs to be something done to cut to the dead weight that is sinking our public agencies.

What kind of indication is it that Portland's human resources director is one of the highest paid officials in the city? It's fair to say that allowing an administrator to be involved in calculating his/her own salary level and pay increases constitutes a bit of a conflict of interests, and a serious flaw in the administrative process.

Then again, how likely is it that our officials would support legislation that could potentially cut their pay or even eliminate their jobs altogether?

### Education reform part two

## Change the requirements of higher learning

**Robb Egan**  
Opinion Editor

In a previous issue I wrote about what could be some progressive and very beneficial changes to our education system at an elementary school level, and this article is intended as a sort of continuation, addressing the question of reforming education at the high school level and beyond.

Budget cuts caused by the continuing economic recession have forced

many institutions of higher education to raise tuition, cut programs and student services, and lay off many staff members. The academic requirements for many degree programs change almost yearly, and even vary from institution to institution, state to state. The course requirements for some programs can be complicated and sometimes downright confusing; many students require the assistance of counselors or student advisors to plan out their class schedules.

Our current system of higher learning is clumsy, wasteful, and inadequately meets the needs of modern society. Many recent college graduates rush out to the job market, only to find that the degree in Ancient Mating Rituals of the Duckbill Platypus that they just spent the prime years of their lives earning isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

A lot can be learned from examples such as vocational training or apprenticeships, where education

focuses on the skills and experience needed for a particular job. A philosophy major will rarely have a pressing need for computer or foreign language courses, and yet they are on the suggested classes list in our own course catalog.

Hard times call for decisive and sometimes difficult decisions, and sometimes cuts have to be made, but it would be far more practical to simply trim the fat around schools, so to speak, and stop requiring students to take courses that they will never use.

### Video games not to blame for teen violence

Dear Editor,

I am writing this response to Sadie McCarthy's article on "Violent video games should be abolished." The contents of this letter are just some of my own feelings and beliefs on violence concerning today's teenagers.

I personally believe that video games are not a contributor to teenage violence, but that violence at home and at school are what really provokes kids to act out. Teenagers in school are forced to adapt so that they fit in with some clique. These kids then proceed to ridicule and persecute each other until they can't stand the other group. This is just one of many things that contributes to the violence of our younger generations.

The media is also a factor in this melodrama that is our youth. They show things that are downtrodden and depressing with a hit of happiness every so often so as not to seem like a total waste of time. They also leave out the graphic details so people don't grasp the magnitude of the situations that take place. If people are forced to face the things that are generally deemed inappropriate to view then they will be forced to recognize the seriousness and significance of what is actually going on in the situation at hand.

I think people are trying to find something else to blame instead of admitting that they are not good guides or teachers. They do not want to admit that they might be approaching their kids wrong or that they just might not be able to relate to kids and could be wrong with their advice or opinions on what their kids are doing. I am not saying that all people are bad guides or teachers just that people in general are not wont to admit this and due to that line of thinking they continue down the same road unaware that there are more potholes and dead ends than anything else.

In closing I think overall that everyone, once able to think for oneself, is capable of making his or her own decisions, but the older generations are afraid to let go of the level of power and influence that they have gained through out their life over the younger generations. For if the younger generations can think for themselves then where do the older generations fit?

Noah Harper Holland  
CCC Student



### Letters to the Editor

#### The trouble with taxes

Dear CCC Print,

In a recent letter to the Print, Doug Williams asked the question "What society has ever taxed itself into prosperity?" The answer to that question is "ALL of them!"

How could that be? Here's how: Society cannot co-exist with anarchy. Government suppresses anarchy; therefore society cannot exist without government. Government enables society, and government cannot exist without tax. Government and tax are things humans have accepted since the dawn of civilization because they enable prosperity by disabling chaos and anarchy.

It is possible that government can hurt a prosperous society by over taxation. So how should we judge taxation in Oregon? How about by comparing to other states? According to the US Bureau of the Census for 1998/1999, the last year for which I found data, state and local taxes as a percentage of income in Oregon are ranked #45. Only five states are lower than ours. Considering the quality of life here, I think we're getting a bargain.

I also suspect that the reason we have a low taxation rank is the lack of a sales tax. Sales taxes generate huge income for the state. Almost all other states have one. I believe that the lack of a sales tax contributes to the quality of life in Oregon. A sales tax is the most painful tax of all. It is a constant annoyance; small jabs and pokes every time you go shopping. If you buy something expensive such as a car, the jab becomes a major punch. It might prevent you from getting what you want.

It may be true that business owners such as Mr. Williams pay too much tax. If that's what he thinks, he should use the democratic system that our government and society has provided through taxation to work for change that might reduce his burden.

There is a tax problem in Oregon, and it exists in the minds of some Oregonians. According to *The Oregonian* newspaper, local author and historian Gordon B. Dodds describes Oregonians as people who are "self indulgent and lack a sense of civic responsibility". That's one way to describe it. Another way is that some people just want something for nothing.

George Clark  
Oregon City



Do you have something to shout about?

Letters to the editor are always welcome.

Drop letters by B-104 or send to  
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