

POT ON THE JOB

As a member of the Eugene Police Commission (writing here on my own), I listened to testimony from medical marijuana users and proponents during hearings on medical marijuana police policy. Folks made it undeniably clear that this plant is their medicine, that its properties significantly improve their lives and that they all learn to function in the world with this medicine in their systems.

Companies have been dealing for years with employees' medical conditions. Policies balancing the needs of both employer and employee have been worked out by individuals and in collective bargaining. Companies can and should be clear how they define the word "impaired" and provide tests for fitness for duty. This is the way to resolve work place safety or performance issues for each individual, with consideration of their job responsibilities and prescription level.

Rep. Shaufler asks, "Do you want your claims adjuster to have marijuana in his system?" If the people are doing their job well and appropriately adjust my claim, I don't care what prescription they are taking. Every Oregon employer is required to employ workers who use prescription drugs, and to accommodate their workers' medical needs as best they can, safety permitting. America doesn't discriminate against people fighting chronic pain, appetite loss or back spasms; we work together to make their lives better. And if they can do the job they are paid to do

safely, America should just say, "Yes, now get to work!"

Tim Mueller
Eugene

NEW UO PRESIDENT

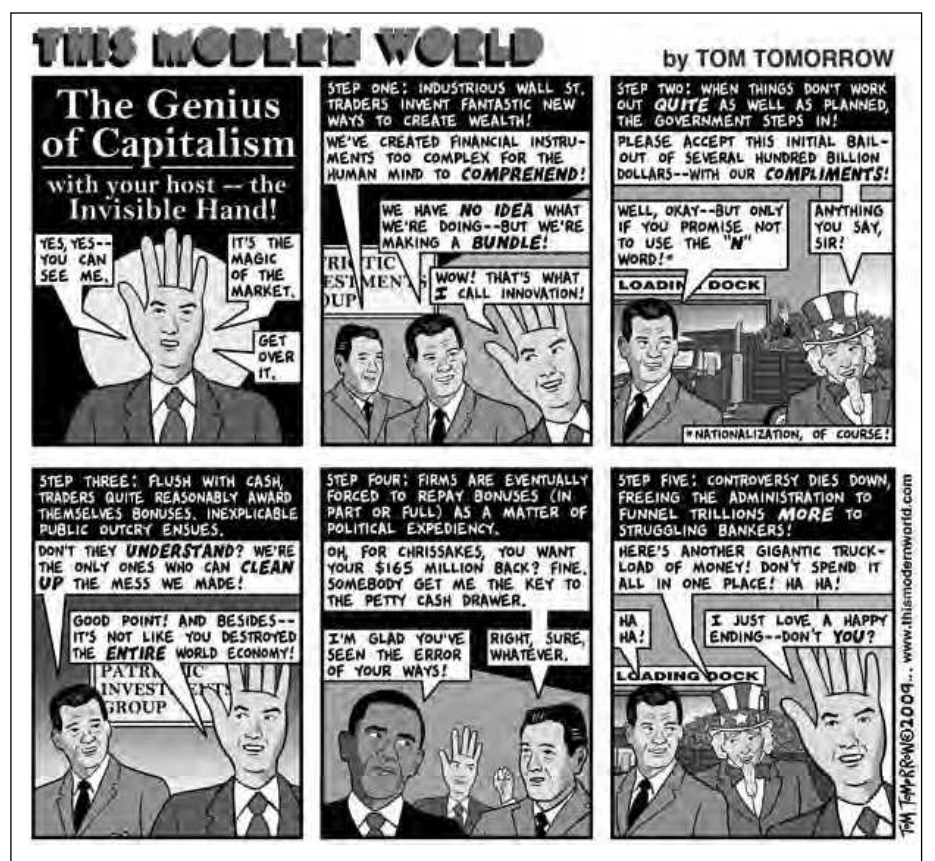
In your short Slant piece (3/19) on the incoming UO president Richard Lariviere you raise a series of questions about what his thoughts may be concerning a number of issues facing the university. Such questions were addressed by Lariviere at two open fora attended by many UO and local community members during his recent campus visit.

In case you missed these opportunities, there will be another chance to ask him questions at the public forum currently being planned during his next visit to campus on April 8-10. I'm sure he will give you the sort of straight answers that have impressed many UO staff, students and faculty.

Paul van Donkelaar
University Senate president

FUTURE DENIZENS

While I appreciate irony as much as anyone, when irony merges with intent to become hypocrisy, my amusement quickly fades. Eugene is a city filled with memorials to the activists of the past. We have free speech plazas named after Sen. Wayne Morse and Ken Kesey, neither of whom would keep quiet about the troubled times in which they lived. We have a street and a school honoring the Rev. Martin



Luther King Jr., who paid the ultimate price for the change he sought. And less than two months ago, the downtown LTD station was dedicated to the memory of Rosa Parks, whose courage in the face of oppression continues to inspire us all.

It would seem to me incredibly ironic if, in a city so enamored with past proponents of free speech and civil disobedience, the current generation of activists in Eugene was suddenly struck dumb and rendered incapable of protest by some mysterious

force. But when the silence arises out of the oppressive tactics of police officers employed by the same city government that commissioned these monuments, I find the hypocrisy too much to bear.

It must be cold comfort to activists such as Ian van Ornum and Josh Schlossberg to know that their brutal treatment at the hands of the EPD may someday be memorialized by future denizens of our city.

Michael L. Quillin
Eugene

viewpoint BY FRANK STAHL AND JETTE FOSS

Conflicting Roles

What form of governance best suits UO?

Union organizers are on the UO campus, and many professors appear ready to swap their legal status as governors of the university for the more adversarial stance implied by unionization.

There is no doubt that the interests of administration and those of professors often run counter to each other. Administrators care primarily about the preservation of the institution and their role in it, while professors care about educating students to think, to analyze and to evaluate. Administrators want students (and their parents) to be satisfied; professors want students to challenge and be challenged, and to explore larger issues of society even if that may make them (or their university) uncomfortable. These differences of interest are to be expected, and, if they are openly and respectfully discussed, they can contribute to the intellectual health of the institution and its students. In the past, such cooperation has characterized the UO. In recent years, however, there seems to be a trend to view the ideals of the teaching profession as a danger to the university's entrepreneurial activities, such as professional athletics, commercialization of research, and competition for students.

An incident in February 2003 will illustrate how an administration may stifle discussion it considers uncomfortable. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, about 550 faculty members had petitioned for a UO Assembly meeting, to be chaired by the UO president in the traditional manner. Petitioners had hoped to have the Assembly debate and vote on a resolution

to oppose the impending invasion. They saw such a debate as an educational experience for faculty and students alike and even hoped that a vote against invasion might influence other universities to oppose President Bush's actions. After making it clear that he disagreed with the intent of the petitioners, President Frohnmayer took an unprecedented action that preemptively silenced the faculty. Asserting that he was acting on advice from an unnamed lawyer in the Justice Department, Frohnmayer announced that Oregon Law required the Assembly to meet a quorum requirement. Furthermore, he told the petitioners that even if 50 percent-plus-one of the Assembly's 2,000-plus members were present, passage of the resolution would require a "yes" vote of a majority of the Assembly membership rather than the majority of the 1,000-plus members present at the meeting. At the scheduled time, approximately 1,000 people streamed into the meeting hall – about 500 Assembly members plus about 500 observers, mostly students. When it was clear that the quorum requirement could not be met, the president declared that there was no Assembly meeting, and he left the hall. (For the record, a tightly reasoned document from the Oregon Department of Justice, Office of the Chief Counsel, received in November 2008, argues persuasively that the faculty of the UO never had a quorum requirement under state law.)

How might this incident have taken a more constructive course? A president wanting to hear the voice of the faculty but convinced that state law

requires a quorum, would have taken steps to ensure that a quorum be achieved. He or she would then have chaired the meeting in such a manner that all points of view were properly expressed before a vote was taken. A very educational debate would have ensued – one in which honest differences of opinion could be offered and defended, illustrating democracy in action. The faculty would have made a contribution to shared governance, and the University would have been strengthened as an educational institution.

Should we conclude that faculty unionization, rather than shared governance, will best serve the students and the university? Not necessarily, at least not yet. Current circumstances provide an unusual opportunity to revitalize UO governance. First, the AG's opinion, cited above, declares that the 1995 UO governance document needs to be replaced to reflect the responsibilities of the faculty as prescribed by state charter. A new document is in preparation and will be presented to the faculty for discussion, revision, and adoption. Second, the university will have a new president, who must review the document and may advise changes before ratification. The faculty will have the obligation to negotiate any compromises that appear necessary.

If the faculty values this opportunity to assert its role in governing our university, it will see that its role is formalized in the new governance document. If not, the push for unionization is likely to succeed. Governance may then cease to be the joint responsibility of the professors and president. Instead, professors may become, simply, salaried employees. It's something to think about.

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