

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

# Salem watch

## Begin with elementary schools

The State Board of Higher Education is considering stiffer requirements for students entering the state colleges and universities.

This is a commendable idea at first glance but it could have two purposes—the first to upgrade the quality of education that can be offered those who qualify, the other to restrict the number of students and eliminate those who require special assistance.

It is logical to expect college graduates to have a broad education and be able to read and write efficiently. However, the emphasis on quality work needs to begin at the primary level. If this were a nation where every child had an equal opportunity to learn and attended a comparable school then it would be reasonable to base all educational advancement on examinations. Even that ignores the physical, emotional and social factors that influence a child's educational development at particular times in his life.

When children are deprived of the opportunity

to learn the basic reading, writing and math skills at the primary level they enter high school without the ability to do high school work. Many of those who graduate from high school do not have the prerequisite skills to do college work.

The State Board of Higher Education can no longer sit idly by and see the qualities of our colleges and universities continue to decline. But is it fair to deprive those students who never had a fair chance in elementary school of the opportunity to at least try to obtain a college education? Is it fair to deprive those students who even now are being injured by decreasing amounts of funds available for elementary education?

It does seem that if the state intends to upgrade requirements for entry into college, then the state should ensure that funds, facilities and staff are available to provide every child with the opportunity to meet those requirements.

## Throw out 'human rights'

The Reagan Administration is moving rapidly toward certifying that the human rights picture in El Salvador has improved. This is essential for Congressional approval of the U.S.' continued and increased military support of the shaky El Salvador government.

The U.S. is prepared to say that there is a significant improvement because last year only an estimated 6,000 persons have been murdered by their government in this tiny country.

The situation has actually become worse during the last year. A U.S.-sponsored election which was admittedly rigged put a government in power that is so bloodthirsty that even General Garcia, the madman of the previous administration, is considered too moderate by it.

El Salvador's current leaders believe in no rights for the people and are engaged in a reign of terror—financed and participated in by the U.S.

Meanwhile, the guerrillas are winning the war in spite of the U.S. supplied helicopters, bombs, napalm, etc. U.S. aid can prolong the war but it cannot save a government that murders its people.

U.S. military aid to El Salvador does not just kill the people of El Salvador. It deprives U.S. citizens of food and shelter by spending money on weapons. It also continues the U.S. role of manipulation and conquest.

If the U.S. government intends to continue its aid to El Salvador, it should not certify that government as improving in human rights. The U.S. should just eliminate this rule that makes it so difficult to justify helping its friends in El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, etc., and just be honest with the American people and the world.

Human rights is of no concern to the U.S. government, so why be hypocritical?

Salem may be the hub of Oregon's economic development projects, but the spokes radiate throughout the state in the form of local programs intended to help end the suffering and frustration of thousands of unemployed Oregonians. Mayors, commissioners, merchants, and housewives are struggling to overcome tremendous economic difficulties, but are hobbled by the relatively few resources at their disposal. While industrial attraction programs seldom succeed, the illusion of progress thrown off by such activities serves only to mask the fact that many areas of Oregon are slowly starving to death.

As Oregon's rural areas decline, this accelerating process is not going uncontested:

•The battle in Vale is being fought by the Chamber of Commerce with a target industry program and full page advertisements designed to convince business executives that Vale is the place to be.

•In Bend, a sign adjacent to a vacant industrial park attempts to titillate business decision-makers: "If your factory were here, you could be skiing by now."

•The Hood River area Mid-Columbia Marketing Group is conducting a 600-firm direct mail campaign (similar to one in Clatsop County) to entice firms to move to the Columbia gorge.

•In Jefferson County, the local development corporation's attempts to promote Madras pale in comparison to the Bhagwan's efforts. Sannyasins, however, are probably not the target group preferred by the city fathers and mothers.

•Rural areas on the coast have been involved in the struggle for some time. Seaside's downtown local improvement district may be one of the most active in the state.

•In St. Helens, Mayor Frank Corsiglia remains committed to offering financial incentives for improvements undertaken in his downtown sector.

Oregon's small towns are strapped for the resources to promote their capital-starved communities. A few ads here, a billboard there are mere pebbles against the Goliath of economic decline. Recognizing the lack of resources available to them, the mayors of Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, and Wood Village are forming a joint regional industrial development commission. Such cooperation will reduce the possibility of each trying to steal firms from the other, but it probably will increase the risk for Portland. A recent example of raiding thy neighbor's industrial resources can be found in the actions of the Port of Tillamook Bay, which subsidized at taxpayer expense the movement of Exact Electronics from Hillsboro to the coast.

In Wallowa County, battle plans

are being drawn with the help of an input/output model designed by the Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics at Oregon State University. This \$16,000 study revealed that Wallowa County has an annual trade deficit of about \$3 million, leaving the area vulnerable to the loss of hundreds of jobs.

Despite these well-intentioned efforts to pull Oregon communities up by their bootstraps, very real market barriers lurk in the background, waiting to trip up these local Horatio Algers. Most communities face the problems they do for very real economic reasons. Market-dependent firms will never locate in Burns, just as those needing the sophisticated urban infrastructure of Portland will never concentrate in La Grande. Until these market barriers are altered or the local economies destroyed, industrial attraction efforts will continue to fail.

This struggle is not a new one. Industrial attraction programs have been in operation in one form or another for over two decades, even in Oregon. Yet during that time, no one yet has objectively proven that local efforts are anything but incidental in a corporation's siting decisions. More often than not, local (and state) economic development programs received credit for foregone decisions.

As the city of Portland is learning from the Hyster Co., there is little a community can do to bribe a firm to act against their own self-interest. Hyster Co., in what amounts to a brilliant public relations gambit, shifted the negative image associated with plant lay-offs from itself to the city by demanding a bail-out to avoid a plant closure. When Hyster does close its fork-lift plant, which it probably would have done anyway, the City of Portland will take the blame.

A lesson for all communities may lie in the Hyster example. Improved transportation, technologies, and corporate organization mean that even medium-sized firms are capable of becoming geographically mobile, of divorcing themselves from costs and commitments to municipalities and workers. While Oregon gained from this trend during the past decade, only now are we recognizing the cost which always was there.

One study conducted by the Social Welfare Regional Research Institute of Boston College, using data from Dunn and Bradstreet and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, estimates that during the rapid growth years of 1969 to 1976 Oregon lost 220,387 jobs because of factory out-migrations and closures, and 129,968 jobs because of business contractures. In essence, while Oregon was experiencing one of its most rapid growth periods in recent history (albeit one mostly con-

centrated in urban areas), the state's economy was losing 1 1/2 jobs for every two jobs gained. Industrial mobility means that cities and workers, who are relatively less mobile, must re-evaluate the consequences of programs attempting to entice capital to move. Such programs may subtract rather than add jobs.

In many instances, individual businesses are hardly to blame. Industrial survival means lowering production costs. In many cases, firms translate this competitive factor into a justification for relocating to areas where the value of human labor, and often of human life, is cheap. While wage give-backs may slow this process somewhat, employees currently lack the ability to stop or reverse such corporate flight.

The lesson to be learned by those who wish to become part of the solution rather than the problem is that the pursuit of short-term local gains at the expense of another community usually generates much greater long-term costs. Stated in more direct terms, the message reads thus: While you are out stealing your neighbor's factories, stop and consider who is stealing yours. The process is endless, and each round increases the ante. As the bidding goes on, the real losers are the displaced workers and the abandoned communities.

Local long-range planning becomes another casualty of corporate instability. Cities can no longer invest millions in sewer and water projects based on tax revenues generated by local factories; by the time such public works are completed, the factories that required such investments may be in the next town, in the next state, or in some Third World country. Workers must exercise extraordinary caution in purchasing homes; those houses may lose most of their value when the jobs have gone south. The same applies to merchants and bankers: the demand for local goods and services crumbles as the economic base of the community erodes.

Unfortunately for many Oregon communities, local boosters tend to be blind to the costs of their industrial attraction programs. The vision of that "pie in the sky" blocks out the strong light of economic reality. The economic definition of "efficiency" and business's need to obtain short-term pay-offs condemn many rural and some central urban areas to an agonizingly slow, capital-induced starvation. Promoting these same forces with target industry studies and full-page advertisement, at best, will merely accelerate the process these dedicated individuals are attempting to arrest.

Northwest Legislative Services

## College admission requirements proposed

(Continued from page 1 column 2) and to increase the students' course options.

The current admission requirements are: English, 3 years including one unit of writing; math, one year; science, one year; social science 2 1/2 years including one year of U.S. history; one year of global studies and 1/2 year of government.

High school graduation requirements do not differ significantly: Language arts, 3 years; one year each of math, science, U.S. history, global studies, health education, physical education, personal finance and economics; 1/2 year of government and of career development; one year of applied arts, fine arts or foreign language.

Forty-one percent of the Portland School District's 1982 graduating class planned to attend a four-year college or university. With the wide

difference between the high school graduation requirements and the new admission requirements, many graduates would not qualify for college admission unless they received proper counselling and made their college decisions early in their high school careers.

Only 15 percent of Jefferson High School's 210 1982 graduates would meet the new admission re-

quirements; 29 percent of the 178 Roosevelt graduates would meet the new standards.

Other areas of the "Strategic Plan" include coordination of programs, faculty salaries, equipment, libraries, facilities, training in science and high technology, etc. Copies of the plan can be obtained from the State Board of Higher Education, Box 3175, Eugene, OR 97403.



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