

Legislation, taxes discussed

by Rich Lochner

A people's united front on state issues was put forward at a March 27 forum sponsored by the Portland Citizens Party. Ed Blackburn of the Citizens Party, Ron Herndon of the Black United Front (BUF), and Kathy Weaver of Oregon Fair Share spoke on issues from aid to the medically needy to opposing a sales tax. They addressed an audience of 60 at the Friends Hall on S.E. Stark.

The speakers emphasized a grass-roots approach, mobilizing people so progressive bills don't get lost in the legislative shuffle.

The sales tax is pushed mostly by liberal-to-moderate Democrats frightened by the near-victory last November of the property-tax limitation measure, Blackburn said. He believes legislators "will confront voters with a bad choice: a sales tax or no property tax relief." He called for positive choices, such as a home-stead exemption or a more progressive income tax.

The Citizens Party is organizing a phone and letter-writing campaign to local legislators against the sales tax, Blackburn stated. He said the sales tax would hit people in the \$15-\$30,000 income bracket hardest, since they would receive little or no rebate under current proposals.

The black community would pay relatively more of the sales tax than any other group in the state, according to Ron Herndon.

The BUF has three major legislative concerns, Herndon said: welfare reform, use of deadly force by police, and South Africa divestment.

Mothers on public assistance no longer get paid prenatal care until the eighth month of pregnancy, Herndon said, a rule he believes has increased infant mortality in the black community. He called for Republicans to "live up to their apple pie and family rhetoric" and support welfare for 2-parent families, eliminated in 1979 cutbacks.

Herndon wants the State of

Oregon to sell its stock in companies doing business with South Africa, which he labeled "the only country where segregation is the law... the most oppressive nation on earth." He attacked a South Africa trip taken by Oregon's Secretary of State Clay Myers, who opposes divestment. Herndon said the trip was featured in a Portland business magazine as "a tourist paradise... complete with pictures of smiling blacks and exotic animals."

Kathy Weaver said Oregon Fair Share supports welfare reform and opposes the sales tax. She pointed out difficulties with working in the state legislature: citizens often feel overwhelmed by legislators and lobbyists who act more like media stars than people's servants.

She said bills her group developed out of neighborhood organizing are often sent to committees dominated by opponents. Even when bills do pass, big business often finds ways to avoid them.

For instance, in 1981 Fair Share won a law sharply limiting utility

shutoffs during winter months. Weaver said the utilities have avoided the law by charging deposits of up to \$200, terming customers who move "applicants," and charging high fees for cutoff notices. Fair Share now is working to stop these new practices, but Weaver said the utilities are offering "amendments" that would effectively gut the legislation. She added, however, "This one isn't up for compromise."

Fair Share is organizing a people's lobbying day in Salem in May. Forum moderator Thalia Zepatos said that since the groups have many common issues and opponents, they should consider a united lobbying day.

Zepatos went on to propose humorously that tax breaks for the well-to-do be given only as "luxury stamps." She said many people blame high taxes on the poor when they see the down-and-out using food stamps. She wondered what people's reactions would be if they saw the rich using government "luxury stamps" to buy expensive cars, vacations, and jewelry.



Dr. H. Claude Hudson, a former national board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is being honored by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn whose motion was approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to proclaim April 19, 1983 as Dr. H. Claude Hudson Day throughout the County of Los Angeles.

On that day, Dr. Hudson will celebrate his 97th birthday. "Dr. Hudson is a great humanitarian who has dedicated his life to fighting for civil rights and equal opportunity for all people," Hahn said. "He is one of our greatest citizens and a great American."

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School transfer deadline near

Portland high school students with a valid reason to transfer schools for the 1983-84 school year must submit requests between April 1 and June 16 under new guidelines established by the school district.

Limiting transfer applications to a specific time period is being initiated in the Portland School District this year, to process transfer applications more equitably.

After the June 16 deadline, transfer applications will not be considered until one week after school opens in the fall. Transfer requests at that time will be granted on a space-available basis.

School district policy specifies these four reasons for granting transfers: Desegregation (to help achieve integration of students of all races); hardship (includes health, critical personal problems, unusual job problems, etc.); educational program (to provide an educational program not otherwise available); transfer to neighborhood school of residence.

Applications are processed in the order they are received, and most transfer requests will be acted on by the end of this school year.

Present freshmen, sophomores or juniors who want to transfer schools should obtain a transfer application form at the school they now are attending and return the completed form to that same school.

Eighth-grade students who want to attend a high school out of their neighborhood should obtain a transfer application form from their elementary or middle school. The same transfer policy applies to eighth-graders.

Magnet high schools will continue to accept applications directly until May 15. After May 15 the transfer application policy also will apply to magnet schools.



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