



Representative Les AuCoin (D-Ore.) speaks to local meeting on his trip to Central America and his opinions on U.S. involvement in the region. (Photo: Richard Brown)

## AuCoin opposes Reagan war

Two months ago Congressman Les AuCoin returned from a trip to Central America. Writing to Oregon Democrats in an April newsletter of the Oregon Democratic Party, AuCoin brought his message to party activists: "(1) Unconditional negotiations are the only solution to the crisis; (2) Military aid is preventing these negotiations; and (3) the [Reagan] Administration has turned the human rights certification requirements into a creative writing exercise in order to keep military aid going at all costs."

In his message to Oregon Democrats, AuCoin reiterated his intention to fight appropriations for military aid, calling the Reagan call for elections in El Salvador later this year a "sham" to give the false impression that progress is being made. AuCoin noted that his delegation to Central America had been prevented from entering El Salvador because the Salvadoran government was unable to guarantee their safety

from rightist violence. AuCoin concluded, "If the Salvadoran government can't protect a U.S. Congressional delegation for three days, how can we expect it to protect candidates of the opposition in an election."

AuCoin's position is similar to the current efforts of Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela, who have joined in a diplomatic initiative calling for direct negotiations among all parties in the Salvadoran conflict.

Earlier, in a February 19 constituent meeting with local foreign policy activists, AuCoin discussed his trip to Central America, and sounded a note of alarm on conditions in Guatemala, where he found ample evidence that the Guatemalan government is carrying out massive atrocities against Native Americans.

The problem with the Reagan policy, he summarized, is that it accepts criminals and thugs as America's friends as long as they claim to be

"anti-communists." Appealing to Oregonians to remember the spirit of World War II opposition to fascism, AuCoin called for an end to support for "Nazi-like hit men" in El Salvador and Guatemala.

## Citizen rally opposes sales tax

by Rich Lochner

"It's time to take the burden off the working people's backs/No sales tax!" sang 300 anti-sales tax protesters at the State Capitol in Salem, April 15, in chorus to a song by local folksinger Kevin Johnson. They heard speakers from the anti-sales tax coalition, OUSST, as well as legislators, blast the new unified sales tax proposal.

A piggyback sales tax, on top of the four percent proposed, could be enacted by cities, counties and other local governments, said Jan Wyers (D-Portland), Senate Majority leader. An eight percent tax is levied in some Washington State cities because of such piggy-back taxes, he said.

The same businesses that say they need their property taxes cut are exporting profits made in Oregon overseas, said Dave McTeague, Oregon's representative on the Democratic National Committee.

Representatives from the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Oregon Citizens Party, the Oregon-Washington Farmers Union, and the Grey Panthers also spoke briefly.

A half-dozen legislators besides

Wyers also stated their opposition to the sales tax. Only Reps. Wally Priestley (D-Portland) and Gordon Shiprack (D-Beaverton) among them have said they're against referring a sales tax plan to the voters under any circumstances. The OUSST coalition opposes referral, calling it "a foot in the door."

"Unfairness" was the main reason demonstrators gave for opposing the new tax. Charles Lau, a cannery worker, said, "I earned less than \$6,000 last year, but I paid ten percent of that in taxes. I don't need to pay another four percent of what little I make on a sales tax. They can find better ways to raise money for the state."

Retiree Clifford Walker said the motive behind the tax is "to take the burden off the big corporations."

Citizens testimony ran strongly against the sales tax at legislative hearings held around the state in the past month. Chances for the tax seemed dim.

But momentum dramatically moved the other way with the announcement of a unified proposal April 13. Business, local government, and teacher representatives put together the plan with top mem-

bers of the House Revenue Committee in a closed five-hour meeting.

The new plan most resembles the pro-business Taxpayers for a Better Economy plan, says one Salem legislative aide. "Everything that protects business would go into the constitution, everything that protects workers and consumers could be repealed by the legislature," he says.

Business would get across-the-board relief, meaning it would get 60 percent of the benefits, while paying 20-40 percent of the price for the sales tax. The rebate plan for those making \$17,500 or less could be cut in a budget crisis, just as property tax relief has been frequently cut.

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## Divestment bill fails

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

quire that funds be prudently divested in a reasonable period of time after the bill becomes law. Excluded firms are deferred as those that have more than 50 employees, gross more than \$500,000 annually, or invest more than \$500,000. This bill was introduced by the Interim Committee on Aging and Minority Affairs, but was tabled in Committee in favor of HB 2772, which is considered a compromise.

Rep. Carl Hosticka (D-Eugene), said the greatest concern expressed about the bill is regarding the investment of PERS (retirement) funds. The Secretary of State's office has claimed that the bill would guarantee that those funds would not earn as much from investment, but there has been no evidence offered to verify that claim. In fact, Hosticka said, whenever comparisons have been made the performance of the investments excluding companies doing business in South Africa has been equal to or better than those including the offending corporations.

The second concern is that U.S. investments help oppressed black people in South Africa: "... we have to consider that the major effect of these investments is to prop up a regime that systematically oppresses the majority of the people."

"To me the moral question is whether the people of this state are going to profit from a regime that suppresses 80 per cent of its population."

Rep. Mary Alice Ford (R-Washington County), said the bill would prohibit investment in American companies and lead to loss of jobs, "some right here in Oregon." Should banks be excluded "and corporations bear the brunt of our wrath?" she asked. Also, if there should be an overthrow of the government of South Africa, "we might very well be in a position, because of the legislation, of not being able to assist through investment the very people the sponsors of this bill care so much about."

Republican opponents took advantage of HB 2772's weakness to excuse their opposition.

Tony Van Vliet (R-Corvallis), said, "I feel very sensitive to Mr. Hill's comments and I don't think there is anyone with a Republican background and a Lincoln philosophy who doesn't feel as sensitively about it as you do.... The thing that bothers me about this particu-

lar bill is that it does not achieve what I think you and I want. I don't think we should shy away from racial issues or racial inequality, but if you're going to write a bill then write it correctly and pinpoint the major problems... who will fill that void if we leave and will their standards of equality be better than ours?... Simply having a program which puts people out of work and having no backstop, even though they may be willing to stand and 'cry for the beloved country,' does not fit with our particular role of social justice.

"Money is not the issue; the issue is can you get the social change that we want to apply by this particular measure.

"This is not going to achieve what both Rep. Hill and I would like to see happen in South Africa."

Hosticka quoted the Secretary General of the South African Council of Churches: "Some have said that if we get out of South Africa others will invest. The moral turpitude of the argument is breathtaking. It's like saying, 'Hey, a woman is going to be raped and if I don't do it someone else will.'"

The question, Hosticka said, is "Do I want me and the people I represent to profit from such a regime?"

A roll call vote was requested by Rep. Rick Bauman, requiring members to shout "Yes" or "No" rather than pushing the electric counter on their desks. The vote was 35 to 24. Voting no were: Republican Representatives: Anderson, Bellamy, Brugoitti, Calouri, Campbell, DeBoer, Ford, Hanneman, Harper, Johnson, D. Jones, D.E. Jones, Lombard, Markham, Miller, Parkinson, Rutherford, Schoon, Smith, Trahern, Van Vliet, Van Leeuwen, Zajonc. Democratic Representatives: Gilmour, Hanlon, Lindquist, McCracken, Rijken, L. Roberts, Scavera, Shiprack, Simpson, Whallon and Young.

As the Representatives left the floor to seek consolation in the House lunch room, a sense of embarrassment prevailed. "I can't bite the hand that feeds me," one freshman Democrat was heard to say. "I couldn't vote no; I'd be labeled a racist," said one old-timer. A "liberal" Republican who is also a banker just dropped his eyes.

The sheep and the calves still waited outside.

(Editor's note: Due to a Tuesday vote to reconsider, HB 2772 will have another vote.)

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