

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Salem Update

End death penalty

A reader writes elsewhere on this page advocating that laws barring racist activity be extended to include the wearing of "Black Power" buttons.

The wearing of "Black Power" buttons or other outward signs of black pride are not meant to, and should not, intimidate or threaten whites. The message they send is vastly different than those of the KKK and the Nazi Party.

Black people have never advocated that whites not be allowed to vote, to hold office, to own property, to serve on juries, to attend certain schools, to enter certain professions, to live in certain areas. Racially provoked murders of whites by blacks have been very rare in U.S.

history, while the burning, lynching, assassination and murder of blacks was once commonplace, and is even now not rare. Black people have never advocated a mythology of racial superiority.

The Klan and the Nazi Party advocate white superiority and have carried out a reign of terror, bearing responsibility for the murder of thousands of black people.

A "Black Power" button, a demand to share equally in the nation's economic, political and social life, is a threat to no one. The growing activity of the Klan, the Nazis and other similar groups is a serious threat.

Buttons no threat

While Oregon's governor was busily seeking a reinstatement of the death penalty in Oregon, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell was telling a group of federal judges that unless the judicial system can find a more efficient and judicial way to handle appeals, the states should abolish the death penalty.

Justice Powell does not believe the death penalty to be unconstitutional, but two justices — Thurgood Marshall and William Brennan, Jr. — do. The Court's indecisive and inconsistent actions regarding the death penalty indicate confusion reigns, and perhaps faith in the infallibility of the judicial system is wavering.

Since October, the Supreme Court has received 28 applications for stays of execution. Two executions were permitted to go forward: Charlie Brooks and John Lewis Evans. The Court stayed the execution of Thomas Barefoot.

According to a February survey, the number of inmates on death row reached an all-time high of 1,147 in 39 states. Minorities constituted 48.21 percent, and over the past 2½ years 54.25 percent of all persons sentenced to death were minorities.

Regardless of whether for constitutional or moral reasons, or because the system of justice is

inherently unjust, the death penalty must be abolished. This is not the time for Oregon to embark on an emotional and highly financed campaign to reinstate this barbaric crime.

Is this courage?

In Washington, D.C. the Senate Budget Committee passed the GOP budget plan providing small tax increases and a federal deficit of \$200 billion a year. The vote was a reversal of the Senate's earlier stand and came just one day after Reagan threatened a veto if the budget is not to his liking.

In Salem the Ways and Means Committee sub-committee on human resources refused to add funds for two-parent unemployed families and for health care for the medically needy. They are in the midst of cutting an estimated \$16 million from the Adult and Family Services budget.

Is this courage? The citizens should be able to expect more from their elected representatives. It is their responsibility to guard the rights and provide for the needs of the poor.

by Senator Jan Wyers

The sales tax is unfair. It falls unfairly on families with children, on families with low and middle incomes, on retired persons living on limited pensions, and on the unemployed and the handicapped. A sales tax would force these people with limited incomes to help pay the property taxes of businesses and people with high incomes. A study by Richard Munn, the legislature's tax economist, shows that families and single people with incomes under \$30,000 pay a larger share of their incomes for sales tax; while people with incomes of over \$30,000 pay a smaller portion of their income for sales tax.

Oregonians have voted down the sales tax six times since the Great Depression. As a member of the Oregon House of Representatives, my father voted to refer the first sales tax measure to the voters in 1933. He told me, when the sales tax was on the ballot the last time in 1969, how unfair this tax would be and said that he wished that he had never supported it. The 1969 election found only 11.4% of the voters supporting a sales tax. The tally was 65,077 Yes against 504,274 No.

Inflation has raised residential property values faster than business property values. Voters continue to pass higher local levies for schools, libraries, the zoo, etc. I don't have to tell you that the effect of these events has been drastic increases in residential property taxes. The recession has cut state government's income. The Governor has proposed a budget which is \$600 million out of balance. His 1% across the board income tax increase has little support from his own Republican legislators. The legislature wants very much to relieve the pressure on residential property tax payers.

The sales tax will not solve the

problem, however. It would mean a tax shift from high income to middle and low income people. Since this tax is unfair and unpopular, if we send a sales tax proposal to the voters in November 1983 it will very likely fail. We in the legislature will have wasted our chance to provide property tax relief.

Even if a sales tax did pass, what guarantee would you have that it would provide residential property tax relief over the long haul? This legislature cannot prevent future legislatures from changing the rules. Even a constitutional amendment can be changed by a vote of the people, referred by a future legislature. If the proponents wear us down enough to pass a sugar coated sales tax now, then they can build on that — like they did in Washington, recently adding food and increasing the rate.

The current sales tax compromise includes a tax rebate designed to alleviate the burden on low and moderate income people. It is only a loose constitutional provision, though, with no assurance that future legislatures will provide any rebate at all. That's not to speak of the embarrassing feature of the procedures required to get a rebate.

The exemptions bandied about by the proponents of the sales tax are hardly a safety net. Retired people in my district are concerned that the exemption on prescription drugs will not cover the majority of the drug costs of senior citizens. Many drugs that doctors advise their patients to take are purchased across the counter and would be subject to the tax. Also exempting food would not protect you from paying a sales tax when you check out at the grocery store. 40-50% of the goods that we buy in the store are not food items. They are soap, toilet paper, cleaning materials, magazines, and other sundries.

Women are the big losers in the

sales tax gambit. Working women already make only 59¢ on the dollar as compared to men and a growing number of women have sole responsibility for child rearing. Women are left to buy the children their clothing, their school materials and pay for many other consumer goods for their children which will have a sales tax imposed on them.

The Courtney-VanVliet sales tax would provide relief to business property as well as residential property. You and I would be paying a sales tax to relieve business taxes. That's not fair.

A recent letter to the *Oregonian* contained the idea that the sales tax is like the widow's mite. Have you heard the story of the widow's mite? The moral of that story is that a gift may be sacrificial and blessed though very small, if the giver is poor. Current Oregon tax laws protect elderly people with small pensions. We have the HARRP program to relieve property taxes. Small pensions are not taxed by the income tax. This makes Oregon's tax laws humane. Retired workers who are living on small pensions have already made heroic contributions to our abundant way of life. I don't want to be part of a program of "taking" the widow's mite. I'd rather that she have the right to decide how she wants to spend her limited money.

The good news is that there is an organization forming to protect Oregon's residents from this insidious new tax proposal. The State Democratic Party, The United Seniors, the state AFL-CIO, the State Grange, Common Cause, The Black United Front, The Women's Rights Coalition, the Oregon Women's Political Caucus, Fair Share, the Farmer's Union and a majority of the Democratic Senators in the caucus which I lead have all come out against any sales tax proposal. I hope that you will, too!

Letters to the Editor

Let's leave Iranians alone!

To the Editor:

I find your article on Iran by Ed Mason right on target.

It was a timely departure from the simplistic — and misleading — clichés that characterize the sorry state of media coverage of Iran. This style of reporting, which borders on the absurd, seems to start and end with printing horror stories and tales of torture.

Who are they kidding? The same media that bemoans the violation of human rights in Iran has yet to say a word about the inhumanities their "good" and "civilized" friends are perpetrating in Israel, South Africa, etc.

It doesn't really take a great mind tutored in the geopolitics of the Middle East to detect much greed behind all the anti-communism and the crocodile tears shed for the people of Iran. That is to say, the greed to gain control over the rich oil reserves of that area of the world.

As for Khomeini, there is no denying that much deplorable wrong-doing has gone under him.

However, he has so far had a lot to offer to his people too, ranging from subsidizing the low price of necessities for the poor like housing, food, clothing, etc. to nationalizing a big chunk of the properties of the rich families — up to 70% of all industries. Failure to see this would force one to endorse the bankrupt, racist line of the State Department, i.e. that tens of millions have gone fanatic all at the same time.

Lastly, I should say a few words about some opposition groups active in this country. Besides the monarchists there are some dubious groups whose own record on human rights is at best questionable. I have in mind the so-called NCR or the Mojahadeen Guerillas who have their share of atrocities in their own country — remember Pol Pot?

Maybe as Ed Mason says, the government is undergoing some changes now — is Uncle Sam at it again? — as of this moment, we could safely say that the pluses of the regime have far outweighed the minuses so far.

Bill Taylor
Bend, Oregon

Ban 'Black Power'

To the Editor:

I found your news report (D.C. bans racial acts, May 11, 1983, *Portland Observer*) quite interesting. I'm wondering if this law also will apply to blacks who wear "Black Power" buttons or other slogans "which intimidate people because of their race or religion." What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, as the old saying

goes, so I hope minority "racist" actions will also be prohibited (not just white). This "universal" prohibition is also applicable here in Oregon.

Perhaps you might do some Street Beat interviews on prohibiting majority and minority "racist" acts.

David Brock

Tudeh Party couragous

To the editor:

I read your May 4 article on Iran with great interest. It is about time somebody gave a balanced view of Iran. Unlike most Americans, I have held a lot of admiration for the way Khomeini has unified his people, first against the Shah and then against our destabilization campaigns.

The recent events, however, are very disheartening. If what is reported is true, then Iranians face very critical times ahead.

The Tudeh Party of Iran is the oldest party there. It has been banned and repressed during most of its 40 year history. Whatever one might think about its ideology, its record of struggle against the Shah is both impressive and courageous. Thousands were jailed, tortured and summarily executed. Being the main force of the left, colonization and capitulation of the country to the West has invariably started with its banning and repression.

That's why the Ayatullah's decision to ban them could only sadden the supporters of the revolution here.

Nancy Shapf

(The *Observer* welcomes Letters to the Editor. They must be signed and include the writer's address. We reserve the right to edit for length.)

Iranian government collapsing

To the Editor:

The two recent articles in your newspaper concerning the situation in Iran are full of lies, distortions and political errors. It is amazing that so much misinformation can appear in two short articles. I will try to deal with the main errors of these articles.

Mr. Mason's attempt to give Ayatolla Khomeini's faction of the Iranian government a progressive aspect is wrong. His use of the terms of the right and left of the Iranian regime is the same as trying to make a distinction between the Klan and the Nazis. Certainly making such a distinction is wrong. For example: It was Ayatolla Khomeini himself who ordered over two years ago that no virgin can be executed, so all the women in Iran are raped before execution and this would include the 9 year old girl who was executed two years ago. It was Ayatolla Khomeini himself who made it a capital punishment to convert from Islam to any atheistic philosophy. It is Ayatolla Khomeini himself who allows the use of extreme tortures upon all true leftist opponents to his regime. Maybe Mr. Mason considers these acts as progressive?

The most hated political organization in Iran is a small faction (less than 1000 members) called the Tudeh Party. The history of this party has been total support for all ruling regimes that are not progressive. They opposed Mossadegh in the 1950's and thus aided the American coup that put the Shah in power. They supported the White Revolution which caused massive starvation and death to the Iranian people. They supported the Shah and called for a constitutional monarchy up to one month before his downfall. They have supported the Ayatolla Khomeini's faction and current regime. They have informed on all truly progressive forces and have caused many arrests since 1953. The current repression of the Tudeh is based in the fact that the Iranian regime knows how hated the Tudeh are inside the country and therefore are using them in an attempt to rally more support behind their dictatorship.

If Mr. Mason is so wrong then what is the truth. The truth is that the Iranian regime is collapsing.

Since the coup of June 1981, when President Banisadr was removed from power, the regime has been in troubled waters. The coup of June 1981 was the turning point when the progressive wing of the government was assaulted. Since that time, conflict inside the regime has developed between the five various factions in the government which is resulting in the Hojatieh becoming more powerful. For the Iranian people, there is a senseless war, massive hunger and unemployment, political and social repression, and growing Western influence inside the regime. The only hope for the people of Iran rests with the National Council of Resistance (NCR) which is the main

opposition to the government. The NCR is a coalition of organizations (such as the Kurdish Democratic Party, People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, National Democratic Front, etc.) and individuals (such as former President Banisadr). Americans should be made aware of the truth about Iran, because soon it will become the focus of massive attention of Western powers when the regime collapses and the NCR moves to take power. Lies and misinformation such as Mr. Mason's article only confuses the reality and importance of this issue to all peoples of the world.

Douglas Hurd

US violates UN charter

To the Editor:

The U.S. has violated the United Nations Charter which calls for nations to settle disputes by peaceful means so that international peace and security and justice are not endangered.

It is my right through religious conscience to refuse complicity in crimes against peace, war crimes or crimes against humanity. The way the Reagan administration speaks publicly about fighting and "winning" a nuclear war, and refuses to pledge not to use a first strike policy, violates the United Nations Charter.

Aside from nuclear policy, I morally and ethically object to the U.S. rapid deployment forces to be used wherever U.S. perceived "interests" are threatened or when torture techniques are taught by U.S. Green Berets. I want a just foreign policy rather than the constant U.S. interference policy,

particularly in Third World countries under pretense of the "Russian Threat." The Constitution of the U.S. (Article V), states that international treaties entered into by the U.S. are the supreme law of the land. Section 7852-d., of the IRS Code agrees.

I support an alternative tax plan for those of us whose conscience will not let us pay for killing. My senator, Mark Hatfield, is the sponsor of the "World Peace Tax Fund," which would develop peaceful conflict resolutions and other peace-related programs such as true justice for minorities by erasing racist policies used in our own country and used against Third World countries. I urge the IRS to support this bill, which would put real meaning into the ideals of freedom of choice.

Victoria Plaisted

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