

At OCC, smoke's in despite Smoke Out Day

By Teri Banas
Staff writer

The timing was ironic. Last Thursday may have been the nation's "Great American Smoke Out" day — a 24-hour fast from tobacco.

But it failed to dissuade Oakland Community College trustees from their contractual commitments to sell cigarette products out of campus vending machines and in the college book store.

Trustee David Hackett's attempt to dissuade his colleagues to ban the campus' involvement in peddling tobacco failed 5-2 with support only from trustee Douglas Wakefield.

THE BATTLE seemed to have been won down classic lines — between right of some to smoke versus the

right of the non-smokers to breathe clean air.

Said Wakefield, a non-smoker: "Smoking (other people's) makes me sick. I go home with headaches at the end of the day. I don't think I should be subjected to somebody else's smoke."

After the board vote that night, Hackett said he was glad he had at least raised the issue. "I'm mildly disappointed," he said of the outcome, "but at least the issue was brought up."

For the college, the sale of cigarettes in vending machines is a money-making proposition, though a slight one, said OCC Vice President Anthony Jaron. He noted the annual figure at \$3,000. No estimate was given of the

proceeds from cigarette sales at the book store.

THOSE IN FAVOR of maintaining cigarette sales were trustees Earl Anderson, Margaret MacFay, chairperson Suzanne Reynolds, Edward Pappas and Sandra Ritter.

Said Ritter: "I feel my life is legislated to the point I have to watch what I eat, drink. . . they come a time in everyone's life when you say 'enough's enough.' I'm a big kid now, and I can make decisions for myself."

She argued that if these machines were removed, then to remain consistent the college might have to take action to remove the "refined sugar and all those other things that go through the cafeteria that are carcinogenic."

"Good idea," responded Hackett. "I really feel that's a matter of choice," said Ritter.

ARGUING FOR removing tobacco, Hackett said that OCC, as a center of higher learning, should look at government research on the cancer threats of tobacco and "set an example and say we're not going to contribute to something that's detrimental."

Anderson suggested that groups might threaten legal action against such a decision.

"The reason I brought it up was not to say whether it's appropriate or not appropriate per se because it's not within our purview," Hackett said. "All I'm really concerned with is: Do we want to be in the business of selling cigarettes?"

Pappas said that while he supports separations between smokers and non-smokers in public place, he could not support Hackett's motion because "smoking is not yet illegal. It doesn't solve any problems," he said.

ONLY TWO members of the audience at the Orchard Ridge campus asked to speak on the issue, and both supported Hackett's motion. A letter delivered to trustees, urging against the proposed action, was sent by a college union.

Mike Lewis, a college maintenance employee there, said he supported the motion because it will curtail some people from smoking by limiting access.

But he noted "contradictions" on the campus such as "No smoking signs posted with ash trays right under them."

"By not selling the product, you aren't promoting smoking," Lewis told trustees. "But the vending machines are saying yes you promote it."

rise is that "When you light up a cigarette, I am forced to take that risk. But when you eat food with saccharine, that's a choice you make for yourself."

He urged the group to consider the proposed Michigan Clean Air bill and take steps to implement it even before the Legislature does. Pappas said he would look at it.

IN A LETTER, a college union voiced opposition to Hackett's proposal. Local 2042 of the American Federation of State, County Municipal Employees said:

"We are entitled to the same working conditions which have held true for 20 years at Oakland Community Coll-ge, which includes the right of smokers to obtain cigarettes from campus vending machines. At this time the Classified Union does not wish to give up this benefit."

Refund to shave suburbs' gas bills

Residential natural gas customers of Consumers Power Co. could receive \$20 to \$25 refunds on their December bills under an agreement reached before the Michigan Public Service Commission.

The utility, which sells gas to most metropolitan Detroit suburbs, has filed

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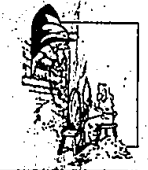

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