Faculty Information Policy

Secret Faculty Meeting Proceedings Are Hardly Compatible With the Concept of A University

Wednesday the University faculty met as a body as they do once a month. Faculty procedure is somewhat antiquated. The faculty cannot introduce a motion and vote on it at the same meeting. Therefore, they will introduce a "notice of motion." This notice of motion will then be sent to the Faculty Senate, an elected body of particularly prominent faculty members for recommendation. One month after introduction at the general faculty, the faculty as a whole will vote on the motion.

But if this procedure seems somewhat odd, the faculty's information policy is even stranger. The faculty refuses to release notices of motion to the public until final action is taken on them. This means that a motion introduced at one meeting will be kept "secret" by the 200 or 300 faculty members present at the meeting for an entire month.

What is the faculty's justification for this? In talking to various faculty members, as far as we can determine, the faculty does not wish to become prey to what they term, "outside pressures" which might "prejudice" their decisions.

Faculty members will tell you, using the worst possible logic, that the current policy has always existed, with no bad effects. Furthermore, they will say that the faculty is not a legislative body, that they make no final decisions binding on anyone but themselves, and thus their proceedings needn't be released.

We think our University faculty should take a second look at their information policy.

In the first place, it is not reasonable or practical to ask hundreds of faculty members to keep anything "secret" for a complete month.

In the second place, a desire not to be prejudiced by outside pressures reminds us of the old statement, "Don't confuse me with facts, my mind is already made up?" We should think that an educated and intellectual faculty would not have to worry about sifting through arguments to delete the prejudice and pressure. Is it one of the signs of an educated man that he be afraid of controversy arising in an area where he must make a decision? If any body is capable of withstanding "outside pressures," we would think it would be a University faculty.

The argument that the faculty is not a real legislative body, that their motions and considerations should not be public information because they are not binding on anyone but themselves seems to us to be rather ridiculous.

The University faculty is a group employed by the people of the State of Oregon. Their decisions certainly have a wide influence beyond their own numbers. Whether or not they have final authority, they certainly have a great deal of power in determining University policy in areas which affect not only students and staff of the University, but the entire citizenry of this state.

Take, for instance, the area of student discipline now before the faculty. Their recommendation in this area may not be final, but it will surely be influential. In that sense of the word, the faculty is a legislative body of the University of Oregon, and their proceedings should be a matter of public record.

What would be some of the benefits of a policy which would make faculty proceedings public record? One immediate advantage is an organizational one. Faculty members not at the last meeting could be informed by the Emerald of the business to come before the next meeting, and on that basis decide whether or not to attend. There would no longer be the many cases of rumor and misinformation that automatically occur in a system where 200 or 300 people keep secret notices of motion for an entire month.

Our final point is a philosophical one. We do not see an educational community, such as this University, as one in which the free flow of information, so important to education and educated decision-making, runs into stumbling blocks at several levels. We do not see a University as separate and divided segments such as the faculty, the students, the administration, and the public-at-large, each making decisions in their particular sphere. Rather, we see a University as members of the community participating in the deliberation and consideration of decision-making according to intellectual ability, not according to their membership in any one particular segment.

Secret proceedings behind closed doors are hardly compatible with the philosophy of a University.

Footnote

We would like to take note here of our Feature Editor, Dick Richardson, and give him special credit for the two-page spread commemorating the 50th anniversary of the University's School of Journalism.

A Firm Stand...Either Way

The following commentary on conformity was printed in the columns of the McLoughlin High School Pioneer, of Milton-Freewater, Oregon. We think that both advocates and critics of conformity will agree that this represents a firm defense of the views.

* * *

Who so would be a man, just be a non-conformist.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

CONFORMITY

What is it? Webster defines it as a "state or quality of being in agreement, harmony, etc." A student might reply that it is taking part in current fads, ideas, or customs. A politically-minded person might refer to it as following or adhering to a certain idealogical group and its opinions. But however one looks at it, conformity is being like or similar to something. Often this is good, for if people did not mankind would be nothing but an anachronism.

However the atheists and agnostics should not be persecuted for their beliefs for as Voltaire said, "I do not agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Another example of conformity is the wearing of clothes. It is a world-wide custom and yet many people rebel against it.

But to conform is not always best. Don't always go along with the gang, especially in doing something in which you don't believe. Their ways are not always best. You should assert your right as a minority, for surely others cannot criticize you for him.

Nevertheless, through many hundreds of years the human race has developed certain common laws know as a "code of ethics." This is something all people should conform to because it is what a majority of the people for a long time have considered the correct things to practice and carry out.

Outside of this though, each person must be a "free thinker." However, he should try to understand the views of others and weigh them against his own ideas to find out for himself the best way.

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Letters to the Editor

Not A Status Seeker

Emerald Editor:

Yes, we have all heard the complaints about the lack of capable and qualified ASUO Senators who are able to think and act intelligently on issues and subjects of real importance to students at the University. On April 10 we will have a most important chance to **do** something about the situation. If you are of the faction that believes incumbent Senators are adequate, then you will have the chance to keep the ASUO Senate of a high calibre. Our Senators-at-Large have the responsibility and obligation to the students of acting wisely and judiciously to advance our interests, to recognize the issues of importance, and to act intelligently and rationally on these subjects.

I suggest that we consider Mr. Merritt Fink as our prospective Senator-at-Large. Recently the Senate has been considering what we know as the Mexico Program. This program is solely the development of hard pursuit by the Mexico Committee, of which Mr. Fink is Chairman. He became aware of the educational and practical value and importance to the Mexicans and to interested students of such research and work projects as he has proposed to the Senate. Mr. Fink is working to offer this expansive and invaluable opportunity to the students of the University of Oregon. Mr. Fink has been able "to stand on his own two feet and take constructive action." We all want just this kind of representation, don't we?

Mr. Fink has not concerned himself with creating the "proper campus image." He has intelligently found his interests and beliefs, and has spent his time and efforts acting in accordance with his own ideas and principles, and constatly searching for new suggestions and ideas to improve the Program. I am confident that we are in favor of such a conscientious approach.

Besides originating the Mexican Program, Mr. Fink is Chairman of the Student Ambassador Program of the SU People-to-People Committee. He is really "interested in doing something of value", and obviously not in the so-called "status" referred to in association with the honorable and responsible position of Senator-at-Large.

Kathleen Thompson
Junior in Romance Languages

"STOP MOLESTING THAT BLANKETY-BLANK CAT!"