

Commentary

The ASUO-IFC fight

'Politics has nothing to do with it'

By PAUL NELSON

I have no interest in filling the pages of the Emerald with ASUO "politics." Such endeavor is a waste of everyone's time. But I will respond when others make irresponsible personal attacks on members of the student government, and so I respond to Randy Shilts' commentary of October third.

There is certain irony in decrying "objectionable politics in ASUO" by taking some of the cheapest political and personal shots that I have ever seen in print. I do not know what Shilts' "politics" are, nor do I care. And I hold no personal animosity toward him or any other members of the IFC. I criticize only what he wrote and the manner in which it was written, and I write to defend the actions of the ASUO Executive.

Shilts demonstrates a complete inability to understand the real issues of student government through his attempt to reduce it all to a political conflict between "conservatives" in the Executive and "progressives" in the IFC. Such distinctions are both inaccurate and meaningless, and amount to no more than reliance upon "good guy-bad guy" epithets. Such an attempt to politically brand motivations and lump them into simple groups acts only to obscure the real reasoning behind the decisions that have been made. I would match the "progressive" credentials of members of the Executive against those of the IFC any day. But I fail to see what objective it would accomplish.

In actuality, Shilts uses the term "conservative" to characterize and thereby to discredit the ASUO Executive's vetoing of the day care program last Spring, seeking to infer that the action was motivated by a "conservative" political ideology. That implication is absolutely unfounded and inaccurate, and he knows damn well that it is.

It is important to note that he completely ignored the sound logical and factual basis for the veto of that budget. He makes no attempt even to consider the clearly stated rationale. He chooses instead merely to say that it was political, which leads obviously to the implication that his vote to override the veto was also a political vote.

Basis of veto

The basis of the veto was simply this:

1. The proposed Day Care program spent nearly \$1,000 on each of fewer than 100 children.
2. There was no assurance that persons who genuinely could not afford day care could even take part in the program, since the limited spaces were filled.
3. There was no more than token financial support from those parents who could afford to pay for the day care of their children, so that in effect, poor single students who had no children were paying, through their fees, for the babysitting of children whose parents could easily afford to pay their own expenses.
4. There were only minimal efforts by parents to make the service "cooperative" and to hold costs to a minimum.
5. It appeared last Spring that federal funding would not be available (although by a miracle it was), and the

operators of the center expressed an intention to operate solely on ASUO money through the summer, which would have depleted ASUO funds for the program before the vast majority of students even returned to campus.

There was no "political" basis in the action whatsoever, and if anyone has played politics in the matter, it has to be Randy Shilts, who is now trying to use it to his own advantage.

The support for the day care concept by the ASUO Executive was never questioned. But just because a program has the label of "day care" did not mean that it was the best program for applying money to the genuine needs of those students who were in need of financial assistance to care for their children as they attend school. It was felt that by putting money into this program, without any hope of changing its policies, we would be removing the pressure for the formation of a really adequate program of day care for those who really need it. But the point is not whether the day care program itself was good or bad. The point is simply that the decision was not a political one.

A challenge to Shilts

There were similar logical bases for all of the other Executive budget actions last Spring, and I will not analyze each decision for explanation for lack of space. Rather than go into every program, I will simply issue a challenge to Randy Shilts to cite one decision of the ASUO Executive with regard to last year's budget that was not based upon sound, rational consideration — to cite one political budget veto. He can't and he knows it, and until he does, he should keep his abusive mouth shut.

I stress this point because it has been a sincere objective of Greg and Deborah to remove "politics" from the administration of student interests. The ability of students to carry out particular projects or programs with financial support of the students should not depend upon whether such programs are consistent with the political views of those who make the spending decisions. All ASUO officers — Executive or on the IFC — have a responsibility to respect and to be sensitive to the desires and priorities of all the students, including those with whom they disagree. And that demands allocating the ASUO Budget only upon sound, rational bases. Politics should have nothing to do with it.

But contrast the rational explanations of Executive vetoes with the basis upon which the IFC acted in allocating money to programs. I recall specifically Randy Shilts proclaiming of one program that he realized that the program could not be rationally justified, but that he was voting for it for "emotional reasons." And add to that his statement in the commentary that he regarded such decisions as being reflections of his political "progressivism." I see nothing progressive in spending another person's money to advance personal political views, or spending student funds to purge irrational emotional feelings. I have always felt that the great "progressive" achievements have been the result of critical and rational persuasion rather than irresponsibility or meaningless

political epithets. One cannot mask irrationality by merely labelling it as being "progressive."

Differences not political

The differences between the IFC and the ASUO Executive related to the budget are not political in any sense of the word. And they are not "philosophical" except to the extent that Shilts embraces a philosophy of irrational emotionalism.

The question of conflict over recent spending of student money is entirely a separate issue from last Spring's budgetary hassles, and again it is no way related to any differences of political philosophy or attempts to impose such philosophy through the exercise of governmental powers. The Executive stands to gain nothing from the resolution of the conflict, which in actuality exists only between the programs themselves and the IFC. There is no issue of "checking" the Executive.

The sole controversy centers upon the question of whether the IFC, a legislative body, may exercise administrative and policy control over the various ASUO programs by withholding their allocations and releasing them selectively, if they happen to agree with the manner in which the programs are being run. We have challenged this supposed power to exercise such dominion over the internal operations of the programs. We have never denied the legitimate function that they had to perform in formulating the budget. The question is one of where that legislative function ends, and their exercise of power begins to exceed the bounds of the Constitution and reason. That exercise of power by the IFC has been blocked temporarily until the proper role of the committee can be defined, either through mutual agreement or through determination by the Constitution Committee, and this basis of the "freezing" action was clearly explained to the members of the IFC. There were no "politics" involved, and Shilts' attempt to inject politics into the matter is no more than a cheap subterfuge designed to obscure what is really in contention.

I have sought to find a compromise with which we could all live, but the members of the IFC have indicated no interest in cooperation or compromise. Their response has been to send cute memos of "rejection," and now to try to twist the facts to make it a "political" question. I very much resent Shilts' branding of the Executive action as "capricious" while completely ignoring the logic of our position and the genuine offers of compromise we have made. He does not seem to care why a particular action was actually taken. He just wants to make up his own evil motives, assign them to those with whom he disagrees, and then attack the motives which he has conceived in his own mind.

Any student who wants to review the correspondence, or the briefs which outline the relative positions of the IFC and the Executive is more than welcome to do so in the ASUO office. You can look at it yourself, consider the logic of the arguments of both sides, and reach your own conclusions as to the merits of each position. In any

event, it will be resolved by the Constitution Committee next Wednesday afternoon. And we will support whatever decision is made by that body.

The IFC salary

I want also to respond to Shilts' comments on the salaries of the IFC members. Last Spring the IFC voted themselves salaries aggregating over \$3,000 to carry out their task. They weren't "hired." Over \$2,000 of that salary is paid after the budget has been formulated and finalized. To "justify" that salary, they created a \$7,000 slush fund which is completely duplicative of the Executive Contingency Fund, administered by the President. They claim that this fund of \$7,000 justifies a salary expenditure of \$2,000 to administer it. I dispute that claim, and I consider such salaries to be an absurd student rip-off and a genuine insult to the intelligence of the student body. It is certainly a breach of the trust placed in them to allocate student fees. But this matter will also be resolved by the Constitution Committee.

Finally, I would add that there is no factual basis for his contention that the Gay People's Alliance is being used as a political football. Again, he is using words without thinking about what they mean. The problems GPA had during the summer were problems of communication and bureaucratic mistake, for which an apology was issued. Yet he ignores the apology and makes up another "political" motive. I simply cannot understand why.

There is absolutely no factual basis for contending that members of the Executive have been insensitive to minorities. If anything, the current administration is far more aware of such considerations than has been any in the past. I did not see the memo referring to him as "Ms. Shilts." If it was sent, it was wholly improper, and he deserves an apology if he has not yet received one. At the same time, though, if he is to continue to make such an overdrawn point of constantly calling public attention to his individual sexual inclinations, he must also be prepared to occasionally take flack from individuals who grow weary of his actions and find them personally offensive. The fact that he is a self-proclaimed minority does not free him from responsibility for his actions. And his cry of "insensitivity to minorities" must be considered within a context of both his status as a homosexual minority and also his actions and statements as an individual.

If we are going to accomplish anything for the benefit of the students, persons in ASUO need to show genuine respect for each other, and they need to demonstrate a real desire to cooperate with each other to achieve common objectives. Randy Shilts' commentary was shallow, unfair, and constituted a reversion to the old "student politics" that we are trying so hard to overcome.

Editor's note: Paul Nelson is currently the Chief Administrative Officer of the ASUO. He was appointed by Greg Leo and Deborah Barnett, ASUO Executives, shortly after their election in May; and is the main ASUO official concerned with the current case before the Constitution Committee.

Letters

Energy council

To my knowledge, there is not in Oregon at the present time a state-wide, non-

profit, membership-supported organization providing the necessary check-and-balance, energy alternatives, solutions to energy problems, and public orientation in matters of an energy nature. Such an organization, democratic in

structure, able to lobby on a state and federal level, in a position to advise and inform its membership and the public at large on energy matters, to assist in the election of candidates to public offices, candidates whose stands on energy

questions are clear, consistent and people oriented, is vitally needed by the citizens of our state, indeed, every state. The energy council would thus provide Oregonians with a more effective voice
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