

Keep OSPIRG strong

A lot can be learned about an organization by finding out who its enemies are. Since its creation in 1969, the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) has made some very powerful enemies.

The roster of the board of directors of one organization that has repeatedly tried to cripple OSPIRG, the Foundation for Oregon Research and Education (FORE), reads like a Who's Who in Oregon Business and Industry.

FORE's latest attack on OSPIRG is an attempt to get the State Board of Higher Education to change the way OSPIRG is funded. FORE would like to see a voluntary funding system, where students who felt like contributing to OSPIRG would be the only ones to do so, rather than the current system, where OSPIRG is funded in a manner similar to other student programs.

Today the state board will consider FORE's recommendation, which is based on a report on OSPIRG's operations.

One of the reasons listed in the report for changing the funding system is that OSPIRG's research is often biased. The report cites two examples — a comparative survey of prescription drug prices and an investigation of auto repair shops — as examples of shoddy research techniques.

Aside from not mentioning the fact that OSPIRG has conducted over 160 research projects in the last three years, the FORE report ignores the fact that the auto repair shop investigation was conducted in cooperation with the State Department of Justice. That investigation resulted in at least one assurance of voluntary compliance from a company that OSPIRG found to be ripping off its customers.

Another reason funding should be voluntary, the FORE report claims, is that many of OSPIRG's projects not directly benefit students. But the interests of students and the interests of the community are often hard to separate; in fact they are often identical. And there is no reason why students should work on issues of interest only to themselves. Besides, no one can deny that a substantial part of OSPIRG's work does in fact directly benefit students. The renter's pamphlet, for example, is a tremendously valuable guide for students. If others find it useful, so much the better.

Statewide student support for OSPIRG is high. A survey at Portland State University showed 90 per cent of the student body in support of the program, and if the same survey was conducted at this university the results would probably be similar.

But a voluntary funding system would destroy OSPIRG. Other states have voluntary funding for their student research groups, and the result is invariably a weak organization. Too many students just won't contribute.

The state board's subcommittee reviewed the FORE report and by a narrow vote recommended to keep OSPIRG's funding system the way it is. The state board should follow that recommendation. The fact that OSPIRG has such powerful enemies shows that it's doing a good job.

Class war in Lebanon

This week has been designated as a Week of Solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian People. While an overwhelming number of University students have neglected to observe the struggles of the Palestinian people in any manner, Arab students at this institution have a dramatic story to tell.

To listen to the Palestinians is to understand that media reports of the situation in Lebanon are consistently distorted. Whenever a question of liberation confronts the American press, the media manages not to tell the truth. Vietnam is testimony to that. The media continues to distort the world situation by portraying struggles such as the war in Lebanon as a religious war.

The truth is that the war in Lebanon is a class war. It has a material base in the contradictions between the masses of Arab people and the ruling elite who are at the disposal of multinational interests.

The leftist front, as it is called, is a broad-based force of working class Lebanese and peasant Moslems, Jews, and Christians. At the forefront of the struggle are the Palestinian people. As the vanguard of the Arab revolution, their interests are those of all Arab people whether in North Africa, the Saudi Peninsula, Lebanon, or in Palestine.

Essentially, the solidarity of the Palestinian people and the progressive forces in Lebanon pose a threat not only to the ruling class in Lebanon, but to imperialist interests and their mouthpieces throughout the Mideast.

It is for this reason that the Lebanese right and the U.S.-backed Syrian invaders have the full support of the United States and both Arab and Zionist reactionaries. All are engaged in an active attempt to suppress the Palestinian struggle based in Lebanon and the aspirations of the Arab masses.

No, it is not a religious war. It is a war of the haves against the have nots. It is a war to liquidate the Palestinian movement and the movement of the Lebanese people who face economic exploitation and oppression.

It is time for the American people to wake up to the truth. The Vietnam war is over, but the lessons should not be forgotten.

As members of an institution of higher learning we must look at the world critically. We must remember always that our role is not to simply understand the world. Our role is to change it.

—Letters—

Count the ballots

There's an easy way to settle the question of who got the most votes in the recent faculty election on collective bargaining: Count the ballots and publish the results.

Henry Disney's complaint about Nat Teich's estimates (ODE, Nov. 16) would seem to come with better grace were it not for the fact that it was Chapter 77, OSEA, of which he is president, which vetoed the counting of the second half of the ballot, the other two organizations both being willing.

Mr. Disney warns against the risk of accepting questionable estimates as facts. Why won't his organization let us have the facts? Then we'll all know.

Charles T. Duncan
Professor of Journalism

Friends of Exxon

An article in the Oregon Daily Emerald of Nov. 16 promises that all is not lost; humanitarian movements are sprouting in our midst. One such movement, mentioned almost in passing by the Emerald, ("Gallo Reps Strive to Curb Harmful Publicity"), is the "Eugene Friends of Gallo," (known to in-groups as "Amici Eugeniani di Ernesto e Guilio").

In keeping with this campus concern for the underprivileged and the downtrodden, I would like to meet with anyone wishing to participate in the formation of a "Eugene Friends of Exxon." On the assumption that those most underprivileged are those who have greatest need of friends, Exxon's need is extreme; students and faculty should consider seriously joining the proposed group. Exxon needs all the friends it can buy if it is to bring a strong America one step closer.

Those interested in forming a "Eugene Friends of Exxon" may see me personally in the Library (before 7:15 AM or after 5:30 PM only, please).

Guido Palandri
Assistant Head
Catalog Dept.

—opinion—

The struggle for a free secular state in Lebanon

In the streets of Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon, the confrontation between the Lebanese and the Palestinians on one side and the Syrian invasion army along with the fascist forces of the Lebanese right on the other, continues to claim the lives of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians. However, half-way across the globe, a quieter confrontation was taking place in corporate board rooms. The U.S.-based First City Bank moved in to buy Beirut's battered luxury hotels: the Holiday Inn, Phoenixia, and St. Georges.

At a still loftier level, Arab Kings and Presidents were engaged in heavy bargaining in the luxury suites of their Cairo hotels. The subject was the fate of Lebanon, which has been ravaged by the civil war for the past 20 months. The result of such a "summit meeting" was to bring the Palestinians under control and to preserve the decadent status-quo in Lebanon.

As it exists now, Lebanon, in its geographical, political and socio-economic characteristics, is the creation of French colonialism. Following the policy of divide and rule, the French colonial rule proceeded to drive a wedge among the various ethnic and religious groups by favoring the Maronites (Christians loyal to the Vatican) over other sects, thus creating a privileged class to serve their own interests in the area. In 1943, this elite had sanctioned its own privileged status with the National Pact, under which administrative positions, and consequently political power, are apportioned on a quota system based strictly on religious affiliation. With a constant six to five ratio in favor of the Maronite Christians the privileged class of the Maronites and some Muslim landlords maintained their prominence to the present day.

Lebanon was never allowed to develop into a democratic, secular state. The 1943 Pact sanctified and enforced political and class divisions along sectarian lines. It continues to do this along the outmoded six to five ratio even though the Muslims constitute the majority of the population. Economically, the privileged class of

Maronite Christians and Muslims encouraged the growth of the uncontrolled economy. This class, constituting four per cent of the population and receiving 40 per cent of the GNP, succeeded in increasing its wealth at the expense of the majority of the population. Thus, in spite of the great wealth that poured into Lebanon, rendering it the financial center of the Middle East, prosperity continued to be confined to small areas and groups. At the same time the gap between the rich and the poor widened and deepened. The maintenance of such conditions was left to the state apparatus along with some private armies organized to protect the privileged. The most notable among them is the Phalangist party, which draws its name from the infamous Franco's Fascist party and organizes its own militia by utilizing the religious divisions to further oppress the majority of the Lebanese people.

The continuation of this unbearable situation gave rise to the Lebanese National Front which started putting forth a program reflecting the aspirations of the Lebanese masses for a secular democratic state. The program calls for the institution of a national democratic government, development of a national economy and the redistribution of wealth.

The Lebanese national forces found an ally in the Palestinian Revolution which reflects the aspirations of the Palestinian people, living in refugee camps and sharing the miseries of the Lebanese people, to return to their homeland and establish a secular democratic state in Palestine. This alliance repulsed numerous attempts from the fascist and reactionary forces to liquidate or downplay it, notably in the confrontations of 1969 and 1973. However, the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war introduced new dimensions to the Lebanese crisis. The so-called "Middle East peace settlement," characterized by Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy, along with the consolidation of the oppressive ruling powers in Egypt and Syria put the focus on Lebanon as the next area of concern to Kissinger and the Arab regimes.

The American "peace" plan for the area is aimed at accepting the Zionist state of Israel, opening the economies of the once national regimes of Syria and Egypt to international capital in order to reap profits and suppressing any revolutionary element in the area. The reactionary regimes of Egypt and Syria went along with such plans. The results came out in Kissinger's initiated and engineered "Sinai Accord" and the "Golan Heights disengagement accord." However, the Palestinian revolution stood against such maneuvers. It rejected any settlement short of establishment of a secular democratic state. The Arab people supported the Palestinian revolution and its aims. Such a support was translated in the Lebanese-Palestinian alliance. Of course, such an alliance would disturb the so-called "peaceful" settlement because it meant that there were still obstacles in the road to capitulation. Therefore, taming the Palestinian revolution or liquidating it in Lebanon was an aim shared by Egypt, Syria and all the other reactionary regimes. This explains why Syria invaded Lebanon last June to side with the fascists against the alliance of Palestinians and Lebanese nationalists when it appeared that the progressive alliance was winning the war.

The Syrian invasion of Lebanon was met with stiff resistance from the Lebanese and Palestinian people and it seemed that Syria was creating its own Vietnam in Lebanon. At this point the Arab regimes came to rescue Syria. The Arab Summit Conference came to sanctify this invasion by employing a so called "Arab peace-keeping force" in Lebanon, two-thirds of which (30,000) was to be the Syrian invasion Army. By these maneuvers, the reactionary regimes thought they could achieve in diplomacy what the Syrians couldn't achieve by force. Such maneuvers are apt to fail due to the escalating struggle of the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. The foreign army is an invasionary army whatever its disguise might be.

Organization of Arab Students

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