

Boyd stresses necessity of neutrality

By MELODY WARD
Of the Emerald

Moral issues explained to ministry

"Universities are agnostic, not just about the gods, but about everything," says University Pres. William Boyd. "Nothing is so sacred that it cannot be examined."

Boyd addressed a gathering of campus ministry rabbis, pastors, and associates Tuesday at a conference concerning moral issues and gave his perspective of those particularly relevant to campuses.

He defined morality as "a kind of human activism," saying apathy was almost a vogue word for this decade Boyd suggested that activism is not a thing of the past.

"Some activism does remain," he said. "But there is an enormous qualitative difference in the activism that's going on."

"Not many incidents occur that attract any numbers of people out of moral concern. Ideological considerations would seem to be dominant in those things that pass for activism today."

Boyd stressed the University must remain neutral in the face of moral issues.

"Academic freedom requires above everything else that we not be captured, not even for a good cause," he declared. But a University should play a role in developing moral behavior."

Explaining that if universities became political, they would effectively become prisoners Boyd said.

"I doubt seriously that you can have a free society in which the universities are held prisoner."

Boyd said it's natural people want the universities to act on one moral cause or another, but their neutral position in the face of



Photo by Greg Gawlowski

"Academic freedom requires above everything else that we not be captured, not even for a good cause," said Pres. William Boyd in an attempt to explain why the University must remain neutral in moral issues. Boyd addressed a gathering of campus ministry Tuesday.

moral action creates a dilemma.

"Our position makes us neutral, and our neutrality makes us appear hostile to morality," he remarked.

Because universities are basically hostile to doctrine, "The basis for moral values that many people hold are challenged by them," Boyd said.

"But on the other hand, the faith of many of us rests on doctrine. Doctrine itself is an attempt to codify truth."

Boyd said he sees the role of the campus ministry as one of prophecy.

"I don't mind being nailed against the wall if my own position is derived from a higher moral concern," he explained.

"The problem is apparent neutrality in the face of someone else's moral concern," Boyd said. "But once the University is drawn into partisan action it will lose its effectiveness."

"It is characteristic that universities are open to a wider range of belief and behavior. Things that would seem bizarre on the street or in a congregation go unnoticed at a university."

Boyd recalled the heyday and mecca for activism in the late 60's.

"Berkeley activists generally had a higher intellectual orientation than their classmates," he said, adding that they also tended to come from politically liberal families.

He speculated the kinds of

families that produce socially aware persons come from "liberal education at its best. It's up to the university to create the kind of learning environment that will

produce that freedom."

Boyd added, "The number of born-again Christians seems to be increasing, if one can believe the television and the White House. But it seems to me that universities would be the best hope for producing sensitive leaders."

However, he said since the humanities have taken a backseat to the more professional and technological disciplines, producing those leaders may not be easy.

"It's the first order of business to produce the kind of undergraduate environment where liberal education can take place," he said.

"Undergraduates like to ask great sloppy questions about the state of humanity, questions so broad that dealing with them is difficult at best. And yet dealing with those questions is an important part of an undergraduate's education."

Questioned about the possibility of including gay rights in the University code, Boyd replied, "Someone commented recently that there is in fundamentalist Christianity a mean streak."

"To expose an issue like this to an organized mean streak is potentially dangerous to the cause."

Boyd explained that having gay rights become a part of the University rules requires public hearings and that he "fears the public response."

Degree discussed today

The University Committee on Curriculum will ask the University Assembly today to consider a motion to discuss management of a tri-university doctor of education degree at a 3:30 meeting in 150 Geology.

The committee will ask whether University faculty have a right or responsibility for considering such an administrative plan on the offering of an inter-institutional graduate degree involving Oregon State University and Portland State University.


The action will be introduced to insure that faculty members can propose action rather than react to it, says English Prof. Joe Hynes, curriculum committee chair.

"We want to find out if there's any need to ask anyone for a

promise that faculty (opinion on the matter) will be considered," Hynes says.

Also on the assembly's agenda will be comments by University Pres. William Boyd on salary improvement plans for the current biennium.

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