

Council sponsors human rights conference

By JIM GERSBACH
Of the Emerald

Eugene is half a hemisphere away from the torture chambers and mass graves of Latin America. But for the three dozen active members of the Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America, informing Eugeneans of Latin Americans' struggle to overcome social injustice is a daily task.

The council formed in 1974 to protest General Augusto Pinochet's military take-over of Chile. Since that time, ECHRLA has sponsored films, concerts, speakers and vigils for *los desaparecidos*, the victims of police assassination in South America.

The council also is sponsoring tomorrow's two-day conference on human rights in Latin America.

Since the group's formation, government repression of human rights has spread beyond Chile to Argentina, El Salvador and many other countries. Political refugees from nearly every country in Central and South America, as well as Anglo students, faculty members and Eugene residents, now work at the council's office at 547½ E. 13th Ave.

University student Daniel Malarkey joined the council after traveling in Guatemala for several weeks last summer.

"I saw the effect the United States has on Latin America," Malarkey says. "And right now that effect isn't good."



Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Pauline Lasse and Carl Seese, members of the Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America, confer on how best to educate Eugeneans to the social injustices occurring in Latin America.

Malarkey says he is worried that Reagan's "tough" attitude toward reform movements in Latin America could result in military intervention.

Avoiding another Vietnam is one good reason for young people — especially those of draft age — to work for social justice in Latin America, Malarkey says.

But there are obstacles to working for human rights even in an ostensibly liberal environment like the University, he says.

"People think that if you're the least bit progressive you must be one of those commies," Malarkey says. "But we (ECHRLA) don't advocate any political philosophy beyond self-determination and respect for human rights."

Nellie Link, an Argentinian member of the council, agrees. "We're in the same position

as Marco Polo returning from China. How do we make people listen? You don't do it with a diatribe."

Link says that Americans, with their idealism and strong sense of public morality, could exert enough pressure to end human rights abuses in the Western Hemisphere.

For example, Link says, when it was reported that American nuns and journalists were assassinated in El Salvador, Americans began asking questions about what was going on in Central America.

But flooding right-wing leaders with telegrams was more effective when U.S. policy stressed respect for human rights, Link says.

"(While) Carter's policies didn't make much difference in South America, compared to Reagan he was a moderate," Link says.

"He put pressure on countries to conform to what was in America's interests but he rejected armed intervention as a solution."

With the new administration's friendlier line toward military governments in Latin America, members of the council are pessimistic about the eventual success of eliminating oppression in Central and South America.

"I can understand the temptation of the officers in the Pentagon (to use military force in Central America) because it is extremely effective," says ECHRLA supporter Argentina de Erdman, a former political science professor at Lewis and Clark College in Portland.

But no matter how pitiful working for social justice may seem under present circumstances, says de Erdman, it is the only moral alternative.

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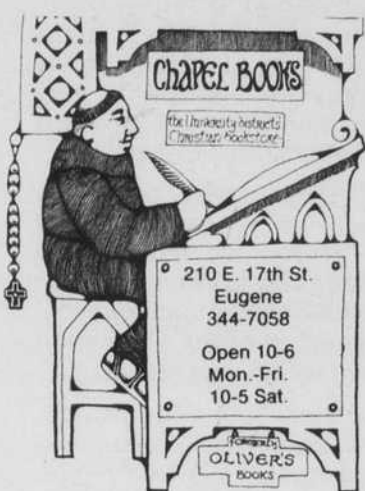


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"During debate on the power bill, a lot of concerns were raised. But now it's law. The only question now is how can the State of Oregon best take advantage of the provisions in that bill."

According to Fawbush, the bill contains about \$1.25 billion for conservation.

"Oregon not only leads the Northwest, but leads the country as far as conservation programs and moving toward alternative energy. We're in a good position to reap a lot of immediate benefit from that bill."

Turning to the interplay between the BPA administrator and the proposed regional

council, Fawbush says that it's envisioned the council will make the decisions.

"The administrator is essentially the executive assistant to the council. He can override the council on policy matters, like buying power from a nuclear power plant, but he has to do it with Congressional approval.

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