

opinion

Olum's 'decision' is a fatal precedent

The Emerald editorial of two weeks ago (Sept. 28) implied University Pres. Paul Olum was under inordinate pressure from timber and other interests to move the Pacific Northwest Resource Center off campus. Olum reacted sharply to the editorial, accusing the Emerald of making it appear the decision to move PNRC or not had already been made. Olum will in fact hand down a "decision" after a student-faculty forum Wednesday.

Olum's "decision" is, in the view of most, a foregone conclusion. Information released by Rep. Margie Hendriksen, D-Eugene, characterizes Olum's "decision" as a facade that masks a decision previously reached by the State Board of Higher Education.

Olum is going through the appropriate motions, mimicking the formality of decision-making apparently to assuage concerned faculty and students. This mimickry is at its most blatant in a memo dated March 30 from Curt Simic, vice president of university public relations, to Olum. That memo states:

"It does not go as far as Paul Olum and I want it to, but we are in discussion with Dean Bell to include, at least, the possibility of moving the operation (PNRC) off campus. Everyone is **not** convinced yet but we will persevere."

Olum is the flak-catcher in a situation he hasn't total control over, but he is in a position to set a dangerous precedent that could destroy the autonomy of the university.

Political pressure was leveled against Olum because of PNRC as early as May. A memo that circulated in the House Ways and Means Committee voiced the committee's displeasure at PNRC on campus.

Hendriksen termed the memo a "heavy-handed pressure device." Olum, at the committee hearings, acquiesced, agreeing PNRC appeared to compromise the neutrality of the University in public policy matters.

Olum might have agreed solely to ensure the financial survival of the University. The purpose of that May committee was to discuss budget cuts, not put political pressure on the University president. That PNRC was brought up during budget hearings has been interpreted to imply the University's budget was in jeopardy because of the center's presence on campus.

Business interests, as well as the political interests, to all appearances, were subtly attacking PNRC through the University's budget. Olum's decision is cosmetic. The final decision has been made.

Ed Harms, of the state board, summed it up to Hendriksen.

"If Pres. Olum doesn't move the clinic (PNRC) off-campus, the board would see that a rule was established system-wide so that it would occur."

Have political and business interests applied pressure to the state board as well?

There is extraordinary pressure on Olum as he goes through the motions of making a decision regarding PNRC. What should be foremost in Olum's mind is to protect the independence of the University in determining its curriculum. The PNRC decision should, ideally, be based on the principle of whether the curriculum is successful or not. Former University Pres. William Boyd commented that PNRC was an experiment that, in his eyes, failed.

If the business and political interests were not interfering, Boyd's reasoning may suffice as criteria to move PNRC off-campus. But any decision now to move PNRC, due to the unusual intervention, sets a dangerous precedent for the University.

The Emerald urges Olum to stand tough in the face of business and political coercion. The autonomy of the University in curriculum must be beyond the reach of business and political interests. To allow such prejudiced review of PNRC may open the door for special interest groups' wholesale evaluation of University curriculum. To retain PNRC on campus now, shows political and business interests they cannot bully the University, nor determine its curriculum.

letters policy

The Emerald will accept and attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on issues, ideas and topics of interest to the University community.

The letters **must** be limited to 250 words, signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in to The Emerald offices, EMU 300.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content. Publication is dependent upon the space available.

OURS



YOURS

ELC out

It appears the Environmental Law Clinic in its present form at the University will be terminated.

In a meeting (Oct. 5) with four law students, Pres. Paul Olum said he's decided to push the clinic off campus. The clinic has been in jeopardy since its involvement in a legal appeal in Idaho. Last spring, timber interests moved to get rid of the clinic.

Pres. Olum claims that his decision to, in effect, eliminate the clinic was based on the principle of maintaining the appearance of university neutrality. The actual result of Olum's decision will be to create the appearance that a public university president can be improperly influenced in matters of principle by elements of the timber industry.

The message is clear: the university is in financial trouble so now is the time for powerful special interests to lobby for changes in the university curriculum.

In his public comments and in reluctant meetings with students and faculty, Olum has not demonstrated an understanding of the clinic structure or the special needs of a legal education.

Here is how the situation appears to me. The timber industry creates a so-called public interest group, FORE, which pressured state legislators to eradicate the clinic. Certain members of the Ways and Means Committee pass the message along to receptive ears on the State Board of Higher Education. Next Olum is devising "principled" criteria of institutional neutrality which for some reason will only impact on the environmental clinic and no other clinics or courses.

John W. Penfield

No comment

I'm not sure if this is indicative of the trend in education here at the University. But I feel this

situation is at least worth mentioning.

On Tuesday, in the midst of the shock and concern over the murder of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, I went to my International Relations class feeling certain that the incident would be discussed. My professor began the planned lecture mentioning nothing about what occurred that morning. A hand went up and a student asked, "What do you think will happen now that President Sadat is dead?"

The response???

My professor smiled, laughed nervously and stated, "I'm really not up on the matter enough to make a comment."

In a calculus class, perhaps, but International Relations??

Maggie Lear
Senior, psychology

Academic Censure

"Fundamental to the success of the University's educational mission is preserving and encouraging an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. Without the freedom to seek information and knowledge in the library, in the classroom, in the laboratory, in field studies, in the words of campus speakers, the objectives of a University cannot be achieved."

University of Oregon, 1981-82 General Catalog, page 2.

The proposed decision to move the Pacific Northwest Resources Center legal clinic from the University campus turns these cherished ideals into meaningless rhetoric.

Academic freedom is a cherished cornerstone of the American educational system as we know it today. Indeed America was, in part, founded upon the ideal of intellectual freedom and valiant campaigns have been fought both at home and abroad to preserve the right of intellectual freedom for Americans. It is with this strong tradition of intellectual freedom in mind, that

Pres. Olum must defend any attempted infringement upon the academic freedom of University students.

The attempted censure of academic freedom at issue in the instant case would not only thwart intellectual development and growth of University law students, but would proceed to place extreme self-doubt in University law students as to the value of learning the adversarial system as it exists today.

Indeed, not only will students experience self-doubt as to the worth of the adversarial process, but law students will no longer be able to receive clinical experience or training in the adversarial process itself, thereby effectively killing two educational opportunities with the same stone.

As a law student at the University, I urge Pres. Olum to stand up for the rights of both the future graduates of the University Law School and for the intellectual and academic freedom of the University itself.

In this day and age of "trickle-down economics" we must guard against this "trickle-down" effect encroaching upon our fundamental right to academic freedom.

I leave the future of the University's mission in Pres. Olum's hands.

Kevin Peck
Executive Board Member
National Lawyer's Guild

Get small

In regards to the front page article appearing in Thursday's Emerald concerning Pres. Olum's rejection of a "let's get small" attitude, I would just like to state that if Pres. Olum would only "get small" once in a while, the University financial situation would not appear nearly so bleak.

In fact, I am sure he would find it difficult not to smile about the whole affair.

Tony Hopkins
Senior