

Columnist critiques media

Cape: American press narrow, ethnocentric

By Cort Fernald
Of the Emerald

Kevin Cape complimented and criticized actions of the press in America and Europe when he spoke last week to the Rubicon Society, a Eugene public affairs discussion group.

Cape, who writes a column on foreign affairs for the Los Angeles Times and the Eugene Register-Guard, said the "press in America is doing a better job on foreign affairs than in the past."

The level and depth of the political analysis is better now, he said. "Concentration of power in an alarmingly few number of people" is reason for concern about current international coverage however, Cape said.

The "pack mentality" of American journalists in Europe causes them to write about the same subjects from the same point of view, he said. This distresses Cape, who said he sees foreign affairs coverage as becoming more important news to Americans.

Press coverage of European governments needs to be expanded, he pointed out.

Cape noted an apparent lack of cultural sensitivity in the American press toward other countries.

"In Iran, at the time the Shah fell, there was only one reporter there who spoke even acceptable Farsi," Cape said. He said he couldn't find a single reporter in Portugal who could speak Portuguese.

Besides the inability of American journalists covering Europe to speak the languages, Americans have a tendency to make ethnocentric comparisons, he said. Coverage of France's recent presidential elections is a good example, Cape said.

In order to understand the spectrum of French politics, American journalists divided the political parties into conservative right and radical left modes.

American journalists are unable to shake their own cultural framework when covering Europe, Cape said. The portrait of Europe they present thus becomes inaccurate, he said, because Europeans' "root assumptions as a people are different from Americans'." The



Kevin Cape

United States is a very insular country, Cape added.

"TV news is entertainment" in the United States, Cape complained. There is a danger in television news taking complex subjects and boiling them down to three minute packages, he charged.

The British Broadcasting Corporation presents outstanding television news coverage, according to Cape. He said he is especially impressed with the time they devote to a single story if it requires it.

Cape noted with some ambivalence the way the American press is committed to objectivity, which he said isn't the case in Europe. Among the major French newspapers — La Figaro is on the right; La Monde is on the left, he said. European readers know this and choose the newspapers they read by their political bias, Cape added.

Bias is unavoidable, but he attempts to be fair, Cape maintained.

Government ownership of the press is "a nefarious arrangement," he said. When the government changes in France, the television newscasters and overall tone of the news both change as well, Cape said.

Cape, a charter member of the Rubicon Society since its inception 12 years ago, is a graduate of the University and former Emerald reporter. He now spends much of his time traveling throughout Europe and filing stories for American newspapers.

Business as usual but outreach programs await word on funding

By Steve Hooks
Of the Emerald

Until Johnson Hall gives further word in October, it's business as usual for the University's four "outreach" programs, spared for the moment from the budget cutting ax.

"Everything is on hold" until the University studies fall enrollment figures, University Pres. Paul Olum says.

"It means we know that we have three more months of some University funding," says Janet Kenney, KWAX radio station manager. "It's a limbo kind of thing."

KWAX, the Bureau of Government Research and Service, the Labor Education and Research Center, and the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology were threatened with major budget cuts at earlier this summer.

Kenney wondered in early June if KWAX would still be on the air in the fall. But earlier this month, Bud Davis, chancellor of the state system of higher education, asked Olum to delay program cuts in hopes of a healthier-than-expected fall enrollment.

"If actual enrollments exceed our budgeted... projections, it would minimize the adjustments needed to balance... budgets," Davis wrote Olum in a July 7 letter.

If enrollment figures are not high enough, threatened cuts will surface again, Kenney says.

She says she now looks to public support and a fall fundraiser to give KWAX a fighting chance. The station wants to raise \$25,000 from the September effort, Kenney says.

A committee also has been

formed to study the station's role in the community and to report the findings to University and state officials, she adds.

"I couldn't be more pleased with our (public) support," Kenney says.

Emery Via, Director of the Labor Education and Research Center, says he is also "gratified" with his department's public support.

"We anticipate to continue to function for the long run," he says. His center will be "busily engaged in programs" through next summer and will celebrate its fifth anniversary on Aug. 1, Via adds.

"We expect it to be just that - a celebration," he says.

But Ken Tollenaar, director of the Bureau of Government Research, bides his time and awaits further decisions.

"Have you heard anything new?" he jokes. However, business as usual continues at the bureau, Tollenaar says.

"We're always on the lookout for grants and contracts," he says. However, "there's absolutely no way the bureau can generate... enough (outside) support to maintain our staff if we are cut off from state funding," Tollenaar adds.

Robert Terwilliger, biology professor at the Marine Institute in Charleston, could not be reached for comment. In an earlier Emerald article, he, like Via, expressed optimism his program would continue.

Olum proposed eliminating University funds to the four "outreach" programs after the Legislature ordered further cuts to higher education at June's special session.

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