

## opinion

# 'Who will watch the press?'

A fraternity member first posed the question a few weeks ago. Over pot roast and mashed potatoes and following a discourse on the press' role as a watchdog of the government, he asked me, ever so earnestly, "Who will watch the press?"

editor's note  
debbie howlett

It was a good question; a question many people have been asking for some time now, and it stretches far beyond the realm of the University. But the University provides a decent point of reference for the answer to our frat brother's query.

The key to any responsible press, in this and any community, is a press that isn't responsible to any one. While that sentiment may read like Winston Smith's least favorite newspeak, it is a goal for which the press should always aim.

By looking at the journals drawing an audience from the the University community, it is a relatively simple task to uncover what each journal is hoping to accomplish, because most of the time that goal is admitted. For instance *Off the Record* is in the business of publicizing ASUO events and programs — and they've stated that goal all along.

What has become difficult is discerning to whom these publications feel a responsibility and an obligation. Just as difficult, and of more importance to the reader, is determining how far a publication has gone in upholding those obligations.

In the context of the student newspaper, we at the *Emerald* feel our obligation and responsibility is to the student. To uphold those responsibilities, the *Emerald*, 13 years ago, refused to accept money from the University because that money left the door open for the University to control the paper's content, up to and including the editorial stance on some key issues. The change effectively put the burden of the *Emerald's* financial stability upon the students and the *Emerald's* advertising department.

Winter term we decided that the audience to which we are obligated — students — did not hold the *Emerald's* purse strings. We decided that student government, often the subject of editorial criticism, held the purse strings — often to the point of choking funds off completely. That is the rationale behind the referendum initiated on the spring ballot. This year, more than any other, individual students controlled the *Emerald*.

We are now indebted to the student population rather than student government and/or the University administration. We feel the *Emerald* is now a truly independent, student publication.

And rather than using this column solely as an opportunity to explain our actions, it should serve as an illustration of what objective student publications should try to attain: a clear representation of the total student body.

But that leaves the original question unanswered. Who is going to watch the press — or in this specific instance, the *Emerald*?

One solution put forth this year has been "alternative" publications, the *Oregon Commentator* and *Off the Record*. Indeed, there is an amount of self-policing and peer pressure that journals should put forth, but rather than cleaning-up, direct juxtapositioning of news and opinion is not necessarily going to give the students responsible news coverage.

The only real solution to keeping the integrity alive in any campus newspaper, is the individual reader. For instance, the letters to the editor section has been a free-for-all this year. Students have complete access and few restraints on what is published in the letters column.

More than just a letter to the editor, the individual student now has a much larger role in keeping at least this newspaper responsible. We've pushed that role upon students because we feel that is where it belongs. We hope also that students take the responsibility seriously and hold the *Emerald* accountable, just as they did this year.

We amend that sentiment by asking students to demand the same responsibility and accountability, while retaining tolerance for minority viewpoints, from every other "student publication."

It is important also that students carry their vigilance beyond academia, to the ineptly described "real world" where hucksters and con-artists will avail themselves of a free and protected press, answering only to their audience.

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## letters

### Yeah, probably

... Well, I still haven't received my Freedom of Information Act (60 requests). The president's probably too busy making payoffs in the Debategate scandal.

How much \$\$\$ did this cover up cost?

Mot

### Roll cameras

The following is a scenario for 1984-85:

(1) Pres. Ronald Reagan will be re-elected in November by a narrow majority over Mondale.

(2) Before his second term is finished Reagan will be forced from office by physical incapacitation or senility at 74, whichever comes first. Note: Reagan forgot to dye his hair after his recent swim in Hawaii — a sure sign of memory lapse.

(3) Vice-pres. George Bush will assume the office, but possibly not the title — sentimentality for "the Chief" — and will try to carry on with an indifferent Reagan cabinet.

(4) Bush will then attempt to push through Reagan's defense budget, the MX, covert aid, laws on abortion, etc. . . . , but will fail to garner the support in Congress with "Communicator" and Senate strong man and ally, Howard Baker on permanent leave.

(5) The MX won't be funded, defense spending will be reduced by a democratic majority in both houses, and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neil, will get madly drunk on the floor of the House in triumph over Reagan before being severely beaten to retirement by a handful of fanatic Republicans.

(6) Meanwhile an observant Moscow will watch intently the pathetic figure of Nancy Reagan pleading to White House

reporters for Ronnie to have his job back, while Reagan, by then completely whiteheaded, pushed by in a wheelchair waving the flag, will accidentally drop his favorite Max Brand western. As the cameras close in all Supreme Soviet members over 70 will suddenly die laughing, and Reagan will be wheeled away yelling "I'm in charge, dammit. I... heh, where's my book?"

(7) 53-year-old Borbachev will become the new First Secretary and Russia will wear Levis at last. Conservative Washington will recede to Detroit in disgust, and Bush will ultimately be forced to think on his own.

(8) The N-freeze will become reality, and the population of the U.S. and Russia will amazingly double 9 months later in celebration, and China will secretly land a panda on Mars.

But then Mondale could win....

Michael Wolf

### Tokenism

I am a lover of history and I have a somewhat unusual hobby. I collect old tokens used by stores, barber shops, lumber companies, saloons, forts, and other businesses years ago. The tokens were "good for" \$1, 50 cents, 25 cents, 12½ cents or such in trade or merchandise or "good for" a loaf of bread, one drink, one shave, one ride or whatever. They were usually made of metal, and while having the general appearance of a coin, they were made in all shapes and sizes with some picturing elephants, cows, birds and buildings.

I have reason to believe that some of these tokens were used in your area and I would be most interested in obtaining some of them for my collection.

I know that this request is

relatively unimportant but I do get a great deal of enjoyment from my hobby and I do believe that these concrete reminders of our great heritage are worth preserving.

I would like to hear from anyone having one or more of these tokens or from anyone that might be able to help me. Any help that you can give me of any kind is greatly appreciated. I now live in Texas and my address is Travis Roberts, Box 1168, Bellaire, Texas 77401.

Thank you in advance and best wishes.

Travis Roberts

### Fact not fiction

Sean Axemaker, reviewing "When the Mountains Tremble," acknowledges that the producers of the film have something to say. But the review says little about the message and the context of the film except that it is "an uneasy mix of fiction, docu-drama and documentary." Axemaker contends that the film "presents very little factual information" and implies that the young Guatemalan narrator and her story are fictitious. It should be pointed out that Rigaberto Menchu is a real person and her story, as presented in the film, is factual. We could only hope, as we witnessed the torture, oppression, and genocide of a people, that what we were seeing was hyperbole. Sadly, it was not and is not.

Perhaps the film was "geared to elicit an emotional response." Or perhaps its purpose was to elicit compassion towards people in a situation which continues because of detached and dispassionate politics made possible by our votes, tax dollars, and apathy.

Galen Martin

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