Work begun on weakened Autzen footbridge



Photo by Ross Martin

Workmen began Monday to reinforce a weakened Autzen Stadium footbridge that carries thousands of Duck fans to fall football games.

By Mary Lichtenwalner

Beams laid across the millrace Monday were the first steps made in repairing a deteriorating wooden footbridge usually traveled by University football fans, said Harold Babcock, Physical Plant director.

Engineers who examined the bridge said it could have collapsed.

But while repairs are now being made, football fans walking to the Civil War game in November had to take a different route.

That didn't deter fans from attending the game, however, said Herb Yamanaka, University athletics events manager. "I think everyone got there who wanted to go," he said.

The bridge was blocked off before the game when the Oregon Bridge Engineering Co. recommended that the bridge be closed for repair. OBEC was commissioned to study the bridge's condition to see if it could be used as an alternative route when repairs are to be made later this year on the bridge by the duck pond.

The engineers discovered that the bridge's supports were badly deteriorated. Babcock said. "It definitely needed attention," he said.

Babcock said the bridge was not a victim of neglect, but the Physical Plant was merely unaware of the condition. "It was definitely working alright — at least it wasn't falling down...but it was faulty, the engineers didn't have to look very hard to see that," he said.

The temporary repairs to improve the supporting of the bridge should cost less than \$5,000, Babcock said. The footbridge should be back in use within two weeks, Babcock said.

The Physical Plant did not schedule a specific time to complete the repairs, he said. "But we've not created any bad situations by not doing it sooner," he said

If the University decides that a new bridge should be built, it

could cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000, he said. That funding would come from the Physical Plant maintenance dollars.

Currently, temporary repairs are the extent of the improvements the Physical Plant is supplying for the bridge.

The Physical Plant requested \$40,000 from the State Board of Higher Education in the summer to repair the bridge by the duck pond. When the poor condition of the alternative bridge was discovered, the plans to improve the bridge were put on hold, Babcock said. Repair plans for the bridge are now being reviewed by the OSBHE, and the bridge repairs should be up for bid within the next month, he said.

The east footbridge was closed to motorized vehicles about 10 years ago, Babcock said.

Grounds for consensus exist in resolution of divestiture case

Since University students and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education voted in 1977 for the divestiture of University funds from companies doing business in South Africa, the issue has dragged interminably.

It has been eight long years since the move for divestiture was initiated and nothing has been accomplished. The time has come when progress can and should be made.

Apartheid is wrong. Both sides on the divestiture suit agree on that. The question is how to tackle this provoking and thorny moral question. This is where both sides disagree, but there is room for consensus. The task before the sides is to find the grounds for such agreement.

To date, the only common ground between students and officials in the Chancellor's and Attorney General's offices has been in a court of law. sider an alternative policy of partial divestiture on the basis of the Sullivan Principles instead of moving the case into a higher court.

The Sullivan Principles are a set of voluntary guidelines protecting the rights of blacks who work for American businesses in South Africa. Under this mandate, divestiture would occur only from those American companies that refuse to uphold the rights of blacks in their South African operations.

Richard Wasserman, an assistant to the Attorney General who has helped handle the state's case against the ASUO, indicated in December that partial divestiture on the basis of the Sullivan Principles would not violate the prudent-person rule and thus might be allowed.

Based on Wasserman's statement it appears the ASUO might be able to gain the support of state officials, who control the power in this state and actually achieve a limited divestiture.

A policy of complete divestiture could be reserved if conditions in South Africa worsen or fail to improve in a given time.

It is a tack that is worthy of consideration. The ASUO has spent enormous sums of student money fighting legal battles for a cause — complete divestiture — that might never be won.

In addition, the amount of broad based support for complete divestiture at the University has not been tested since 1978. It could be that a significant portion of the University community does not feel complete divestiture and its resultant damage to the South African economy is the best or only way to bring about the end of apartheid.

Finally, there seems to be a general consensus among all parties that state monies should not be used to support the morally offensive policy of apartheid, but eight years of squabbling over how to do it is enough.

However, it is not as easy as it sounds, because in order to make progress on the issue, both sides, students and state officials might have to compromise and cooperate.

However, if all involved parties would reconsider their past actions and motivations, progress could be made.

The alternative is that the students of the University and the government of this state continue to fight each other instead of the morally reprehensible, degrading policy of apartheid.

By Gary Jimenez

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Reporter's notebook

A decision on the matter could come as early as this term. But regardless of the outcome of the ASUO's appeal of the divestiture suit, both sides will still have to work together.

If the ASUO prevails, state officials, particularly the Chancellor's office and the Attorney General's office will have to cooperate and stop hindering the divestiture process.

They have already made the State Board look inept by showing its inability to implement its stated policy of divestiture in eight years. Most importantly, the State System is losing credibility. When the Chancellor's office — the administrative arm of the State Board — seems to be working in opposition to board policy, the credibility of the whole is damaged.

The Attorney General's office is in obvious opposition to the Board's policy. But state officials should reach some sort of an agreement on divestiture. Either they should move it expediently through the appropriate channels of government or ask the State Board to change its policy.

At some point it is necessary to stop this incessant and expensive political infighting and decide on a policy. But it should be decided, not ignored and delayed in hopes that it will go away.

On the other hand, if the ASUO loses its appeal, as it lost the original lawsuit, it should con-

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