

Editorial

Fairness doctrine wrongfully abolished

The Federal Communications Commission's decision to abolish the fairness doctrine last Tuesday is reminiscent of Reagan's policy to decrease government intervention in public affairs. This decision, however, will adversely affect the people's ability to express opposition to television and radio programming.

Because television is such a persuasive medium, the fairness doctrine is a vital watchdog over broadcasters who may present slanted views on important issues. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader is correct in his statement that the decision is a setback for minority views.

Claiming the doctrine unconstitutionally limited broadcasters' First Amendment rights, the FCC abandoned the nearly 50-year old policy when reports showed broadcasters had shied away from controversial issues because of the ramification of the fairness doctrine.

The doctrine requires stations to cover controversial topics and air opposing views to these issues. It was designed to promote free speech and to provide open debate. But the FCC has done little to enforce its policy.

The FCC reasoned that they did not have the right to second guess a station's editorial decisions. It violated their freedom of speech. "In short, Government restrictions on speakers' rights injures the public's interest," said FCC member Diane Killory in an official statement explaining the decision.

When considering air waves, however, the government does have the right to regulate their use and content. The recent confiscation of a pirate radio station off the New Jersey coast proves that not everyone has access to this form of communication.

As such it must be controlled to prevent abuse. Air waves are public property. The public should have the opportunity to use them.

Broadcasters around the nation have hailed the decision, but say it will not effect the way they already present the news. It will effect the public's perceptions of the news, though. Without the ability to present opposing views, many sides will not be heard.

The FCC hoped to encourage a marketplace of ideas by establishing the fairness doctrine and claims it is continuing this goal by abolishing it. But the viewers must take the responsibility to listen and gather information. This option is not open to everyone, however. Television and radio are only one aspect — and a limited one at that.

Minor charges for deaths show need for stronger law

Wendy Cook was charged with driving carelessly and without a license Monday after the car she was driving jumped a curb on Franklin Boulevard and killed three people Aug. 2. Each charge carries a maximum fine of \$100.

These charges, however, are too lenient for the severity of the crime.

Lt. Eric Mellgren of the Eugene police department explained the laws vary depending on the level of intent. Careless driving is when a person unintentionally drives in a manner dangerous to others while reckless driving occurs when a person willfully or wantonly drives with disregard for others, Mellgren said.

Stronger charges, such as manslaughter, also rely on criminal intent. The driver must have an implied intent. For example: driving under the influence of drugs, speeding excessively or operating an ill-maintained car, he said.

The lives of three people are worth more than a \$200 fine. New laws or rewording of the existing laws should be created for such incidents.



"WE SUPPORT THE REPEAL OF THE FAIRNESS DOCTRINE. THOSE WITH AN OPPOSING POINT OF VIEW CAN START THEIR OWN TELEVISION STATION."

Commentary

Reagan: a case for impeachment

In the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal, at least two disturbing aspects of the Reagan administration have been brought to light: (1) the executive branch used the Constitution as a veritable foot rag, and (2) President Ronald Wilson Reagan's footprints are all over it.

Commentary by Mike Drummond

Reagan and members of his administration have broken numerous laws — major laws. Thus the president stands as a candidate worthy of impeachment.

But the word "impeachment" sends chills down many people's spines. Echoes of Watergate and the backroom treachery of "Tricky Dick" still ring in the American mind. Perhaps this is the reason the nation has lacked resolve to proceed with impeaching "Wrongful Ronnie."

Yet no matter how bitter the word "impeachment" may taste to the American palate, the facts remain too glaring to ignore: Reagan abused his powers of office — he broke laws.

Because ours is a society based on laws, and no matter

where one stands on the political spectrum, Reagan remains a criminal and should be removed from office.

Facts speak louder than rhetoric:

In August of 1985, by orally approving the shipment of 508 U.S.-made TOW missiles from Israel to Iran, Reagan violated the Arms Export Control Act.

Moreover, when confronted with this, the president lied, and attempted to side-step the issue by saying the arms shipment could have fit inside a small cargo plane. Maybe, if this cargo plane were the size of Rhode Island.

Reagan even went on to say on Nov. 13, 1986 that "The United States [read: President Reagan] has not made concessions to those who [read: Iranian government] hold our people captive in Lebanon."

But this is hardly the point; the point is he knowingly shipped arms to Iran, a confirmed terrorist nation, which was a crime.

In November of 1985, the Central Intelligence Agency provided aircraft and aid in shipping U.S.-made HAWK missiles to Iran without a presidential finding, thereby violating the Foreign Assistance Act.

This circumvention of constitutional procedure may not be as heinous as the one mentioned above, yet it alone is grounds for impeachment: It was a crime.

Although the president recently has claimed he will capitulate with congressional

demands that the legislative branch be notified of further covert operations, Reagan, on Jan. 6 and 17 of 1986 authorized and subsequently failed to notify Congress about arms transactions to Iran, which continued from August 1985 through October 1986.

With this Reagan violated the National Security Act and, again, the Arms Export Control Act. These, too, were crimes.

And there is the Boland Amendment, arguably the most flagrant transgression of U.S. law conducted by Reagan and his administration.

The Boland Amendment prohibited all federal funds "for the purpose of...supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua."

Not only did this amendment apply to the CIA and the Department of Defense, it also included "any other agency involved in intelligence activities." Yes, this encompassed U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North's National Security Council.

Reagan, however, denies knowing of any monetary diversions from the Iranian arms shipments to the Contras — the so-called "Freedom Fighters."

His brush with guilt is separated only by a thin thread — Adm. John Poindexter's testimony claiming he never told Reagan of the diversion in order to provide "plausible deniability."

Poindexter's testimony was shaky, at best. And Reagan, as president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, must remain accountable for any illegal activities that occurred under his watch.

The diversion clearly was illegal — it was a crime.

In light of these facts, impeaching President Reagan wouldn't be such a bitter pill to swallow. In fact, it would be an appropriate dose of medicine to cure the ills Reagan has inflicted on this nation.

Thursday, August 13, 1987

Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403. Daily publication will resume with the fall term.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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