

Editorial

Amendment to bill promotes ignorance

Sen. Jesse Helms' (R-N.C.) amendment to the AIDS appropriations bill that would "prohibit federal funds from being spent on AIDS education materials which promote the homosexual lifestyle" is representative of the ignorance and fear that prevents adequate AIDS research and education.

The AIDS appropriations bill determines the amount of support the federal government will give during the next fiscal year. Helms' amendment, however, could hamper financial support for AIDS research and directly segregates those with the disease.

Essentially, the government is sending an intolerant message that it does not approve of homosexuality and is unwilling to help combat the disease. This is the attitude that has prevented AIDS research for so long, as San Francisco Chronicle reporter Randy Shilts explains in his book "And the Band Played On: People, Politics and the AIDS Epidemic."

Shilts says it was the lack of concern expressed by the government, media and society that delayed AIDS education and research — education and research that is necessary to prevent the spread of the disease.

At first AIDS was considered a homosexual disease and basically ignored by society and even the homosexual community, Shilts said while he was on campus Thursday. It wasn't until the disease spread to the heterosexual community that it received the attention it receives now.

The Reagan administration has perpetuated this segregated attitude by ignoring AIDS until the public demanded action. Despite the information available to them, officials refused to deal with the issue simply because it was considered a homosexual disease. The government also has promoted fears by proposing mandatory AIDS testing. While it is necessary to control the disease, this method would be ineffective.

The Helms amendment reinforces this fearful ideology and denounces the homosexual lifestyle. Helms would prefer to ignore an entire class of people on the basis of sexual preference — a preference he does not approve of.

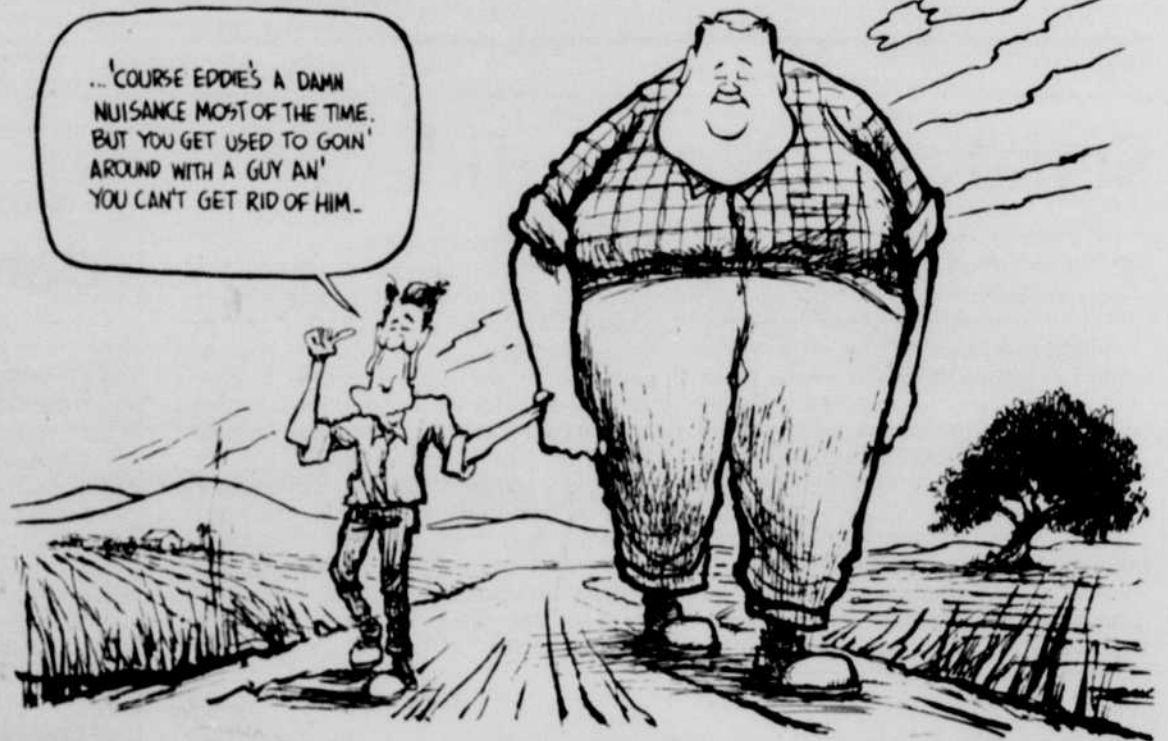
This attitude does not benefit AIDS research. Homosexuals and heterosexuals are equally vulnerable to AIDS. The homosexual lifestyle must be considered for proper education about the disease. Ignoring this aspect of the disease will not make it go away.

The amendment also would place the government in the sensitive position of judging what "promotes" homosexuality. Helms' views toward the lifestyle, for example, are much more conservative than other senators' views. As a result, the educational material stands the chance of being restricted to the extent that it no longer serves its purpose.

Education on and research of AIDS is vital to curbing the spread of the disease. This cannot be done, however, if people like Helms are more concerned about dismissing a lifestyle they do not approve of. We must all accept that the disease exists and is a danger to both heterosexuals and homosexuals. If we deny it in our educational material, we only promote the stereotype and segregation of the homosexual lifestyle.

The AIDS appropriations bill is an important and necessary step towards solving the AIDS epidemic. Helms' amendment should not be allowed to undermine its purpose.

OF MEESE AND MEN...



Letters

Glasnost

The recent decision of the State Board of Higher Education to retire University President Paul Olum in June, 1989 is seriously flawed for several reasons.

The fact is, the decision was made by the executive committee of the board. Although the board is now going to vote on the matter it was perfectly obvious to anyone who attended the board meeting on Friday, Nov. 13, that the decision was already made and that the vote was to be mere lip service to democratic process.

The fact that this decision was made with no minutes kept, with no record of votes, with no stated reason for the retirement, and most importantly, with no public discourse, is a slap in the face of Dr. Olum, the students, the faculty, the community and anyone else interested in seeing that the University grow and improve.

The board condescended to hear testimony on Dr. Olum's behalf at the Nov. 13 meeting, but as I have stated, this was merely a cosmetic measure intended to pacify the natives.

Regardless of Dr. Olum's qualifications for the position of president, the decision-making process was flawed. Once this mistake was made, the board had two options. It could have admitted the mistake but defended the decision. This would have entailed remaking the decision in the proper manner. The other option was to simply admit that Dr. Olum does damn good work and let him stay until 1992.

The board did neither. Instead, they compounded the mistake. They decided to vote on this important matter via teleconference, thus making another closed-door decision.

This is a statement to Oregon that the board does not really care what we think. The board also does not want to make an unpopular decision in front of hundreds of justifiably outraged citizens.

This is not just a question of the University or of Paul Olum. Decisions that affect our lives are being made behind locked doors. I would like to ask one thing of the state board. The Soviets have a name for it: glasnost.

wish to see some real exploitation, I suggest catching the dog food-eating contest action in Springfield. It's a crazy, mixed-up world, isn't it?

Rebecca Harris
Eugene

Make peace

As a former Marine who served with a grunt (infantry) company in Vietnam, I would like to respond to Henry Kissinger's taking offense to the United States-Vietnam agreement linking an accounting of the 2,413 missing American servicemen with pledges to look into Vietnam's humanitarian concerns.

It is my belief it is we, as a nation, who should make the first move by offering full diplomatic recognition and reconstruction aid to Vietnam. It is Kissinger that I take offense to. As secretary of state, co-author of the Christmas bombing of Hanoi in 1972 and the U.S.-backed coup of 1973 which replaced the legally elected socialist government of Salvador Allende's Chile with the viciously brutal U.S.-backed military of General Augusto Pinochet, I believe that Kissinger should be brought to trial as a war criminal.

Jeff Heiman
Student

Suave band

Personally, I think the Guardians of American Morality are really f---ing suave.

In their stance of "tight-lipped moral superiority," the ladies of the Women's Resource and Referral Center not only completely miss the point (ODE, Nov. 16), but serve to make that of the band they are protesting, as its name would imply. (You do have a point, don't you guys?)

Although I suppose these women have actually seen the excellent film, "Blue Velvet," somehow it doesn't seem like it. In any event, do they know what exposition and satire are?

Lighten up, girls. Should you

I read with interest the the article on MIA's in Life magazine. The evidence cited was enough to rank the magazine right up there with The National Enquirer in the annals of yellow journalism. The article lacks any substantial evidence to indicate that there are Americans being held in Southeast Asia. One of the more interesting statistics of the article is that while MIA's make up twenty percent of the Korean War, they only account for five percent of the Vietnam War. The MIA issue is a pseudo-issue, it is time to make peace with Vietnam.

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