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What's happened to the power to protest?

Is there a point where civil disobedience goes too far? Myles Brand says yes, but some student groups beg to differ.

By Denise Clifton
Emerald Associate Editor

University students have long enjoyed the power to protest. From anti-war demonstrations in the 1960s to anti-CIA rallies in the 80s, students have actively voiced their dissent and desire for change.

Oct. 15 was no exception. When Gov. Neil Goldschmidt and Sen. Mark Hatfield came to speak at a public dedication for the new science buildings, five student and local groups showed up to voice their concerns before the two politicians by disrupting their speeches.

This disturbance immediately sparked a debate between administrators and students as University President Myles Brand publicly chided the protesters and their supporters for the disruptive "incivility" and "irresponsibility."

Wednesday afternoon brought another disruption to the University community. This time local residents and students gathered in Alder Street to protest the parking structure proposed for the corner of Alder Street and 16th Avenue. Seven protesters, including two students, were arrested for disorderly conduct.

With police arrests and Brand's criticisms of vocal but non-violent protesting coming up during the past week, stu-

dents have started wondering what happened to this legendary "right to protest" enjoyed so freely in the past.

In Brand's commentary (ODE, Oct. 18), he supported the students' right to protest but not the students' right to disrupt while they protest.

"This (disruption at the dedication) is not acceptable behavior at a university," Brand wrote.

Protests Are Disruptive

A protest, however, is disruptive by definition, according to the local American Civil Liberties Union chapter associate director Dave Fidanque.

"Protests are always disruptive and disturbing, as that's their nature," Fidanque said, adding that civil disobedience protests such as Wednesday's are an example of using disruption to make a point.

"With civil disobedience, you either violate a law you



testers did," he said. "Those people should expect to create a disturbance and get arrested for it."

Despite the arrests made, Wednesday's demonstration

their job enforcing the law very professionally," he said. "And I'm also impressed with the demonstrators because they were pretty predictable and peaceful in their behavior."

'With civil disobedience, you either violate a law you think is unjust or use the violation to draw attention to another issue Those people should expect to create a disturbance and get arrested for it.'

— Dave Fidanque

think is unjust or use the violation to draw attention to another issue like Wednesday's pro-

was very peaceful, said Eugene police Sgt. Tim McCarthy. "I think the police department did

Peaceful disruption often is very healthy and necessary for social change, Fidanque said. "We (ACLU) would be concerned about any attempts by the University to restrict demonstrations on campus to only anyone who is being nice," he said.

The ACLU has a policy supporting the rights of hecklers or protesters who interrupt other people's speeches such as the science complex dedication incidents.

The policy states "Heckling or any other interruption of a speaker, as a form of speech or expression, in a public forum or rally, is entitled to First Amendment protection even though ... it may be offensive or obnoxious."

Infringement Of Rights

But Brand said Sunday's incident went "way beyond heckling" to the point of inhibiting the invited speakers' First Amendment rights.

"What happened on Sunday was an infringement of Hatfield's and Goldschmidt's rights to freedom of speech," he said. "We certainly do not want to abridge First Amendment rights on this campus, and that includes protesting."

If Sunday's demonstrators were preventing the politicians from speaking, the ACLU would not advocate their disruption, Fidanque said. Because he did not attend Sun-

day's protest, Fidanque said he did not know if the protesters were heckling or preventing free speech.

Former University President Paul Olum, who attended Sunday's dedication, said the students had a right to protest verbally at the ceremony. "I'm not opposed to dissent," Olum said. "And although some people think it's unmannerly and wrong, I also personally don't have any objection to students ... booing at the ceremony."

"But I do not think they should completely disrupt and interrupt a person's ability to speak, and I saw some of that happen," Olum said.

However, most of Sunday's protesters do not believe the politicians' rights to free speech were infringed. "I think it's silly to talk about interrupting Hatfield's and Goldschmidt's free speech because they can freely speak to the public through the media any time they want to," said Carol Faulkner, the Graduate Teaching Fellow Federation vice president for organizing.

Survival Center co-Director Matthew Snider agreed. "Politicians have access to the media whenever they want because they can call out the newspapers and TV at the drop of a hat with an announced press conference," Snider said.

"But we have to do something newsworthy like this in order to get the attention of the media."

Two Wrongs Not A Right

However, the inequality of media access does not justify inhibiting anyone's freedom of speech, said Tim Gleason, an assistant professor who teaches media law in the journalism school.

"There is no question that equal access to the media does not exist," Gleason said. "But that problem is not solved by these actions."

Hatfield, Goldschmidt won't let demonstration affect University

By Polly Campbell
Emerald Reporter

Despite loud interruptions by protesters during the Oct. 15 dedication of Willamette Hall, aides in Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's and Sen. Mark Hatfield's offices said state and federal support for the University will not be affected.

"The Senator's view is that everyone has a right to free speech, but that works both ways," said William Calder, Hatfield's press secretary.

"The most unfortunate thing about that day is the lack of order that was in the room," Calder added. "People have a right to be in there and to speak their mind, but as a courtesy they have to let others speak too."

"The small group (graduate teaching fellows) who came out to protest was real vocal, and that's too bad because the Governor had some important things to say and those things got drowned out by the minority," said Lee Weinstein, the governor's communication assistant.

Oct. 15's protest was not an effective way for the various groups to express their views, Calder said. If anything, the groups damaged their own credibility, he added.

Although he was frustrated Oct. 15, Hatfield recognizes the importance of the new sci-

ence facilities to the University and the State of Oregon, Calder said.

"Sen. Hatfield was absolutely instrumental in securing \$33 million for the facility," he said. "That was a significant effort on his part and he has not changed his mind about the importance of education and research."

The irony of the protest is that Hatfield's views are in agreement with some of the opinions expressed at the protest, Calder said.

"People need to work within the proper channels to effect change and that is something those people didn't do," Calder said. "They need to act with respect and courtesy if they really want something done."

Sen. Hatfield and Gov. Goldschmidt could not be reached for personal comment.

However, ASUO President Andy Clark gave an official ASUO stand on the issue.

"People who had very specific issues brought those issues to the protest, but the mode of social action they took, I don't know if it had a clear directive," Clark said.

Everyone has different opinions of the value of Oct. 15's protest and Clark said different views are even apparent within the ASUO office.

"There have been some serious communication breakdowns between the students and the state," Clark said. "The University is definitely becoming factioned off."