

Marketeers should cork toy gun debate

While the nation struggles with the prospect of intensified gun-control laws, Eugene is dealing with a gun-control argument of significantly less importance.

The controversy in Eugene doesn't involve assault weapons, handguns or even B.B. guns. No, Eugene residents are up in arms over a Saturday Market vendor's right to sell his homemade cork guns.

It seems some Saturday Market shoppers and vendors have taken exception to Norman Wright's 18-inch toy guns. A poll of vendors and shoppers taken last week showed that while 60 percent of the vendors questioned supported Wright's right to sell the toys, the same percentage of shoppers wants the cork guns banned.

The Saturday Market Board of Directors and Officers has not yet voted on the issue. The vote is scheduled for April 23.

Saturday Market has the reputation of being an open environment where folks from all walks of life can come together and appreciate their differences. Banning Wright's toys would be a first step in taking away that cultural freedom.

So far, the reasoning for the toy gun ban was summed up best by Saturday Market Board Vice Chairwoman Carol Berg. Berg told *The Register-Guard* that she found the toys offensive, and that "I want to live in a world without violence, a world where children aren't shooting each other."

Maybe she should take up permanent residence in Disneyland.

Contrary to what Berg and other cork-gun control advocates say, playing with toy guns as a child does not lead to a life as a criminal or serial killer. Many children who play with guns go on to lead productive lives without ever killing anyone.

In fact, like any kind of censorship, a ban only increases the curiosity about the prohibited item. *2 Live Crew* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* are recent examples. Children who aren't allowed to play with guns become fascinated with them. Children who are exposed to guns in a responsible manner become educated about the danger and potential for destruction they represent.

The larger issue involved with the toy gun control debate is whether the Saturday Marketeers want to play the role of community censor. By banning the toys, they can line themselves up with the likes of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Ed Meese, Adolf Hitler and other heroes of the 20th century.

If the trend of banning violence-related items is to be consistent, no one should be allowed to sell the works of Shakespeare (people are getting killed all the time in those darn plays). Some of Ken Kesey's books contain acts of violence, so naturally their sale would be prohibited. Records, tapes and CDs often contain depictions of violence, so the board would have to prohibit the sale of all items related to them, such as tape and CD racks.

After a point, censorship gets pretty ridiculous. That is why it's better not to start down the gray road of judging what is good for other people.

The Saturday Market has the reputation of being an open environment where folks from all walks of life can come together and appreciate their differences. Banning Wright's toys would be a first step in taking away that cultural freedom.

Unless someone wants to sell something that is patently offensive by community standards, or poses a real threat to shoppers, the market's board should avoid making other people's decisions for them. If people don't like the guns, they don't have to buy them. But others who want to let their children play with a toy that has been around since humans invented the wheel should have the right. And if Norman Wright wants to make and sell a handcrafted product that could never harm anyone, he should have that right.



LETTERS

Unfair idea

Mike Colson's argument that students should vote on whether to fund groups such as the Black Student Union, MEChA and the ASUO Women's Center seems a bit frightening, given that a very small percentage of the 18,000 students on this campus vote at all.

Does that mean that we should leave the fate of certain student groups in the hands of a "vocal minority"? A popular vote on whether these groups should be funded or not would fail to address the value and service these groups provide to diverse populations within our student body, none of which make up a "majority" of students.

The point is, each group has the right to exist and provide unique support services and enrichment to its members. What we do vote for, hopefully, are honest, responsible IFC members dedicated to intelligent, impartial and thorough examination and evaluation of such groups seeking student funds. In good faith, we vote for IFC members who should bear the responsibility of distributing \$4.5 million with utmost seriousness and integrity. The students of the University have a right to trust these values will be upheld, and when we vote, we hope this is what we are getting.

If not, then Colson's idea of students voting to fund groups individually would be an alternative. And we must ask ourselves: In this scenario, which groups will win and which will lose?

Priscilla Warren
Sociology

Muddy ad

It is a shame that University politics has sunk to a level of mudslinging.

I am referring to an ad (*ODE*, April 11) placed by Colson/Grayson. This ad was definitely made in ignorance on their part.

For one, I was a participant in the trip to Washington, D.C. for the USSA conference during spring break. Second, I did not know either Kirk Bailey or

Jennifer Bills before this trip. So it wasn't "friends" of theirs chosen for this trip.

Students were selected from applications submitted. Colson/Grayson should have checked their facts before making accusations.

The purpose of this trip was to learn about the Higher Education Act being reauthorized by Congress this year. In addition, we learned about lobbying our elected members of Congress.

And our last day in D.C. was spent lobbying them. I encourage Colson/Grayson to inquire more about this trip before making anymore assumptions.

Cindy Duffield
Student

Due process

I wish to raise my voice in protest to the procedure used in the investigation of alleged record tampering at the IFC.

This is America. The most horrible mass murderer and the most gruesome rapist have the right to something called due process. This requirement sets us as a people apart from the law of the jungle. It means that fair, impartial procedures ought to be used in the investigation and adjudication of criminal or ethics violations cases.

From the account in the *Emerald*, it appears to me that Mike Colson was denied this basic right. One would think the accused would be allowed to face his accusers, know the evidence against him and have an impartial body make the final determination of fact.

None of these constitutional rights was remotely tendered. Rather the Executive conducted a secret, unaccountable quasi-inquisition.

That concerns me. While denouncing blind allegiance to President Bush, Kirk Bailey asked the IFC to give such to him in this matter. It appears to me a dangerous thing to let the ASUO Executive have the power to conduct inquiries that deny basic human rights, and demand action without anyone serving to check and balance them.

For all who decry oppression and abuse of power, I invite

you to join me in defending the precious due process rights our forefathers bought with their blood.

William Gaskill
Political Science

Not the one

One of the main functions of the ASUO president is to be able to form cohesive alliances between student groups. This is an important consideration in choosing the next ASUO president.

Mike Colson has recently claimed that because he is "experienced, dedicated, accessible and professional" he should be president.

- Experienced? While he has been involved with various student groups, he has managed to alienate many members of these groups. His perpetuation of disharmony between groups has only created barriers in student activism.

- Dedicated? It appears that his "dedication" is only to himself. By failing to resign as IFC chairman, Colson has stopped the funding of many student groups. This reflects his dedications to his own aspirations.

- Accessible? When Colson was chairman of the University Democrats, several students found that the group had become elite and ineffective under his leadership. As a result these students voted him out of office.

Also, in a recent press conference concerning the IFC investigation, Colson refused to answer questions posed by students.

- Professional? In a classified ad he and Barclay Grayson placed in the *Emerald* on April 11, he presents students with misleading information while attacking one of his opponents in the current ASUO election. This violates an informal agreement made by the candidates to run clean campaigns. Also, it contradicts Colson's own advice to students to "stay critical, but stay positive."

It is obvious that Colson cannot fulfill the campaign promises listed above and that he is not dedicated to the students.

Theresa DuBravac
Lynn Lucas
Eugene