

Turmoil defined Bills' ASUO reign

Oh, what a long, strange trip it's been.

A little over a year ago, Jennifer Bills was elected ASUO president. With her history of school activism and ideas for the future, things looked promising.

On Sunday, Bills became a president emeritus. She left office with a different vice president than the one she started with. The scandals, Measure 5 backlash and other energy-sapping affairs overshadowed her accomplishments.

Bills worked hard in her job. She tirelessly lobbied politicians to keep tuition down, pushed for a special legislative session and tried to make peace with the Incidental Fee Committee. Despite all that, one can't help feeling a little disappointment.

When Bills and JoSonja Watson were elected last spring, they had a genuine enthusiasm for the job. Bills seemed the ideal choice to break out of the historical do-nothing rut of the ASUO executive.

Unfortunately, Bills and Watson never had a chance. Turmoil marked their administration; some their own doing, most not. Watson was forced to resign due to student anger over her shoplifting charge. Next came an attempted recall. As the year went by, Bills seemed less and less in touch with student interests.

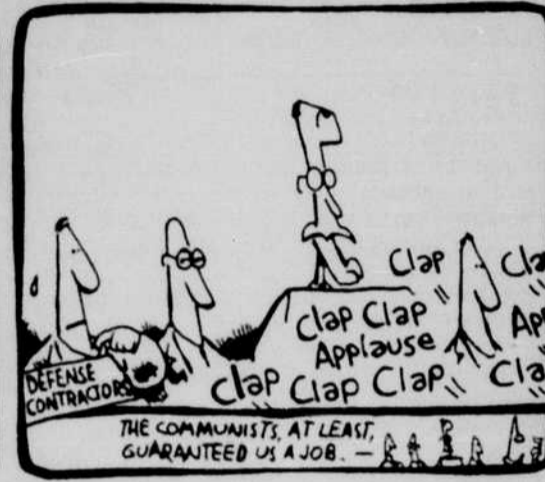
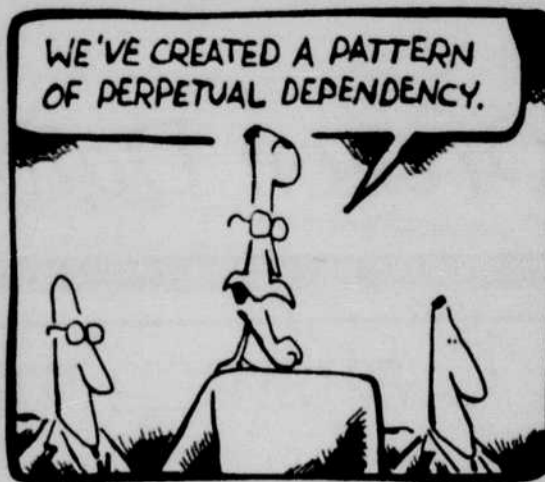
In an interview last week, Bills listed her two biggest accomplishments as reforming the student health insurance program and negotiating a 5 percent cut in the athletic department's budget. But throughout her administration, Bills seemed more intent on the "big picture," or what was going on with higher education at the state and federal level.

There is nothing wrong with working to improve higher ed as a whole, but students are more interested in tangible results — what was done to better their University life. While problems mounted on the local scene, Bills was charging Don Quixote-like at the monolithic windmills of the federal higher education system.

With the Bobby Lee and Karmen Fore administration now firmly entrenched in Suite 4, it is hoped they won't fall into the same trap Bills did. It is all well and good to lobby the legislature, but don't forget the problems at home.

In the end, Bills gets a passing grade. Perhaps she set her goals too high; the overall impression was that of hopes unfulfilled.

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COMMENTARY

Violent protest sometimes justified

By Lydia Lerma

It is unfortunate the media portrayed the incidents occurring in response to the Los Angeles police officer's trial as "mob riots." Throughout the entire history of this country, there have been thousands of uprisings of discontent toward legislation, taxation and unjust labor and social conditions.

Too often we fail to refer to this history of the United States, and begin to assert negative charges toward those in a reactionary state. Great discontent has surfaced from the impact of conservative politics imposed on many Americans.

In 1773, the British Parliament passed the Tea Act, which was intended as a revenue measure that would allow Americans to purchase tea at bargain rates, eliminating the middleman. The colonists thought the Tea Act was extremely unfair. "Taxation without representation" was screamed in reaction to its enactment.

Guess what? Our revered forefathers, acting like looters, threw 340 chests of tea into the harbor, perhaps taking some home for an evening's night-cap. For those who can't remember (or don't want to), this violence is still referred to as the "Boston Tea Party."

I ask the same question the *Oregon Commentator* asks (May, 1992): What happened to "public discussions? There was no attempt to pressure (Parliament), just illegal action, perhaps for the pure pleasure of convincing themselves that they were badass people who wouldn't take it anymore." Those damned colonists!

In the same vein, in 1791, Congress passed an excise tax on distilled whiskey. In addition to other acts of violence this tax caused, Americans reacted by tarring and feathering federal officials. This famed occurrence is referred to as the

"Whiskey Rebellion."

So why didn't those "radical" Americans write a letter to Congress expressing their opposition to the tax? It is interesting how such violent acts could be referred to as a "party" or a "rebellion."

From 1880 to 1900, there were over 23,000 strikes in the United States, with over six million workers involved. During the McCormick Harvester strike of 1886, police officers killed two workers. During that same strike, a meeting was called at Haymarket Square in Chicago, where 3,000 people protested peacefully. However, when ordered to disperse, violence erupted resulting in the deaths of one officer and four other people.

By the end of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, approximately 580,000 workers had participated, with over 100 deaths. Although great violence ensued during the workers' efforts to receive fair wages, the wages of most railroad workers by 1880 had risen to former levels. Again I ask, what happened to public discussion or letters to Congress?

History is replete with violence and discontent at all levels of society. In America, violence is an integral and sustaining component of our national spirit, and social injustice inevitably results in violent upheaval by the oppressed.

As we have seen throughout our history, acting in a peaceful manner has not always brought about needed changes. It seems that if Americans acted in a peaceful manner, we would still be colonies of England, Spain and Portugal. We must also remember that when Americans have peacefully assembled and participated in peaceful demonstrations, they were not free from violence directed toward them.

Those who are currently rising up in Los Angeles and throughout the United States believe that as Americans, this

society has acted in an unjust manner. The struggle is much like that of our forefathers; true representation and justice must prevail.

When many have demanded that these changes be made, they have been met with great resistance. An example of this is a flyer that was received by and associate of mine that reads: "Bigoted and proud, say it out loud! Racist and high and a wonderful guy, prejudice too, and to hell with your liberal crap and Donahue."

I find it very interesting how so many people have taken a special interest in a summer banner, but I didn't read any letters from them when Rodney King had been beaten. A crime was committed against another human being. Where were those who stood by their banner so honorably?

An extreme double standard exists in our society. It is interesting that when our forefathers reacted to unjust measures in violent ways, they were praised, and even later, elected to political office.

Those who participate in illegal acts for celebration — for instance, during football games — are also praised. Several security guards were assaulted during the tearing down of the goal post following Oregon's victory over UCLA in the fall of 1990. Those who react to racist oppression in the same manner are hunted and "justice" is demanded.

During the summer banner incident, no one was physically injured in any way. For those of you wanting "justice" to be served in reference to the summer banner, remember: Next time Oregon beats UCLA and the goal post is torn down, will you demand the same justice be served?

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