

Clinton commits to abortion rights

Although some of the groups that helped get President Clinton elected have expressed disappointment with his performance in office, at least one group has no right to complain — abortion rights advocates.

Throughout his administration, Clinton has remained true to his campaign promises to pro-choice groups. Early in his term, he issued an executive order to allow abortions in military hospitals and then overturned the Bush administration's "gag rule," which prohibited abortion counseling in federally funded clinics. In recent months, his administration has successfully pressured a French pharmaceutical company to release the patents and technology for RU-486, the so-called "abortion pill," to allow the drug to eventually be distributed here.

And on Thursday, Clinton took yet another strong step toward solidifying federal protection of abortion rights by signing legislation that will make blocking access to abortion clinics subject to heavy fines and lengthy prison sentences.

The new law, which takes effect immediately, prohibits abortion protesters from using force or threats against patients and employees and from physically blocking access to clinics. Violators are subject to fines of up to a quarter of a million dollars and jail time ranging from six months to life.

Critics have argued that the law violates their First Amendment right to free speech. However, the law only prevents the use of physical force or intimidation. Protesters can stand by with signs and yell all they want; but they will no longer be able to act like bullies, or use their bodies to obstruct entry into clinics. Those who do will be appropriately punished.

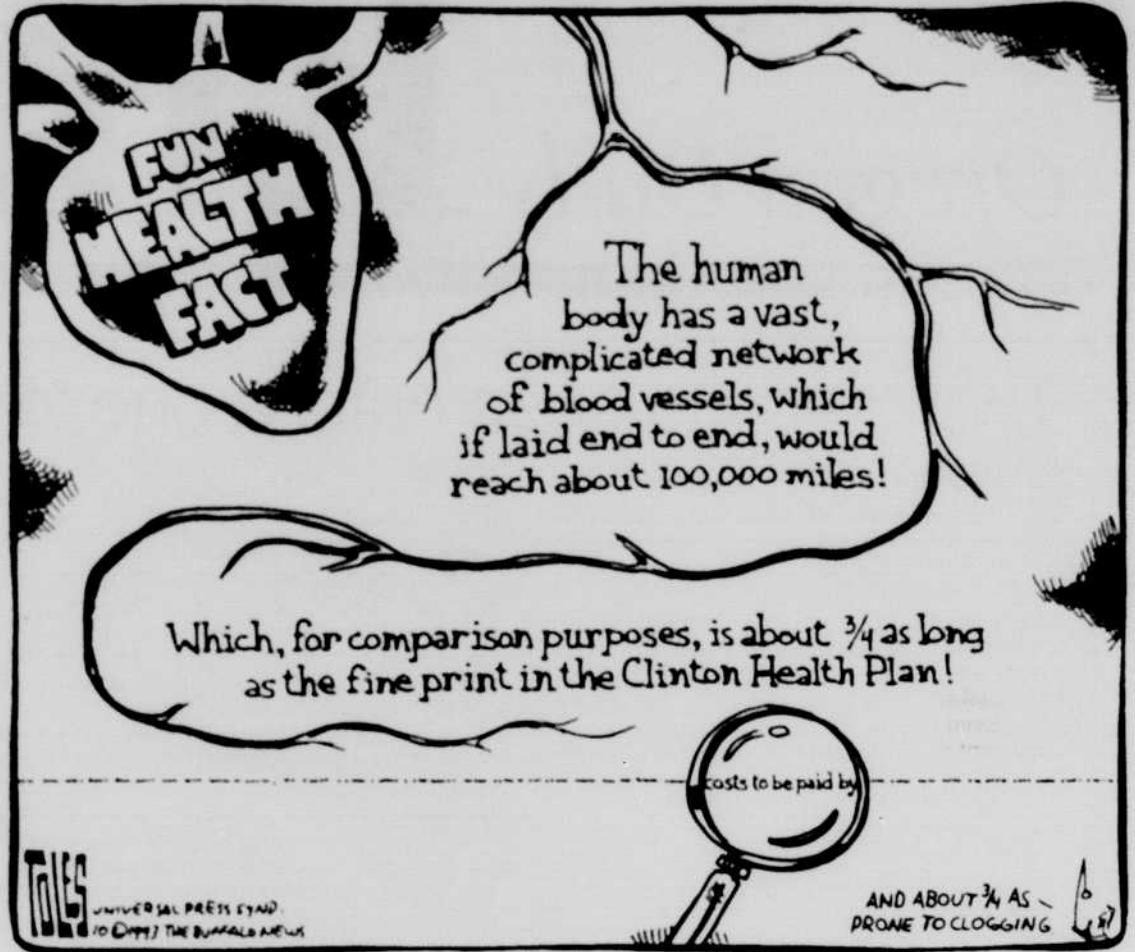
The new law probably will not have much immediate effect. Pro-life groups, ironically named, have committed hundreds of criminal acts to protest abortion, including 36 bombings, 81 cases of arson, 131 death threats, 84 assaults, two kidnappings, and the murder of Dr. David Gunn in Florida. All these activities were illegal, but that didn't stop them from happening.

In addition, conspiracy to stop women from having abortions may be punishable under federal racketeering laws as well, the Supreme Court ruled in January.

So this new law will effectively take away one more weapon that pro-lifers have wielded in their crusade to stop abortion. What's more, it sets a tone of official intolerance for those individuals who would seek to impose their own vision of what the law should be, in opposition to the law of the land.

Abortion is legal in this country. If pro-life groups have a problem with that, then they need to mobilize their forces, lobby their government, and change the law — by constitutional amendment, if necessary.

That probably sounds like a daunting task. Surely, it would be more difficult than ganging up and bullying women who are, in many cases, going through a life crisis. If right-to-life activists are too impatient to achieve their aims politically, and legally, then too bad. This country shouldn't tolerate any more vigilantism.



OPINION

Folk festival plagues University again



ROBBIE REEVES

Enjoy the Willamette Valley Folk Festival last weekend? I know I did. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I caught up with my assigned reading in five classes, due to the amount of time I spent in the library trying to avoid the festival.

Maybe I'm a no-fun sort of person. But when there is the Street Fair blocking 13th Street for days on end, followed by a weekend of congestion and noise at the EMU, my sense of enjoyment for our local merchants and musicians drops significantly.

It's not that I don't think that folk music is artistic or valuable. It is. It's just that the people who came to see the folk festival managed to alter the landscape of the surrounding area. OK, I won't beat around the bush. Folk fest watchers destroyed the lawn, as well as surrounding flower beds at the Carson residence hall.

I know, you don't care. Believe me, I understand. A little maintenance work, a bit of money, and voila! Instant lawn. But considering how many bands have played on the EMU East Lawn in the past two weeks, I propose eliminating the lawn completely. Maybe paving the entire lawn

over with concrete would be more appealing to some, and would certainly eliminate the costs of fixing the greenery around the EMU year after year. Then again, maybe the University should just install permanent seating in the lawn and rent it out weekly for concerts. It wouldn't be a stretch from what is happening now.

Granted, the folk festival gives the University community the chance to experience a bit of the local culture, such as what hemp candy tastes like. After all, how could we get along without that?

Another of my favorite activities from the folk festival is getting to meet all of the neat people. You know, like the guy who appears so wasted that he just sort of collapsed on a nearby dorm lawn, or the person who asks you for money. And some people wonder why the dorms were on 24-hour lock-up.

There should be a sort of University clean-up after the lawn is used for the last time in the spring. Perhaps University Day, the day when University groups and individual students work on cleaning up the campus, could be moved back until after the folk festival. It would help clean up the area.

I can understand how festivals like this one can benefit the local community. I'm not totally down on the folk festival. It's just that this one lasted the longest and was the most irritating. But is there a way that organizers can handle the event differently? Perhaps festivals could be held

in the Quad, the lawn area bordered by PLC, Condon and Chapman halls, and the Knight Library. The area seems bigger, and no one would probably care if the community ground the lawn into a pulp. Overflow viewers and participants could listen from the ninth floor of PLC.

Even if outdoor concerts were rotated between the two areas, it would be better. I'm getting really sick of having a different band play daily in the immediate area around my dorm. It would be less irritating if someone just banded two metal garbage can lids in front of my door all night long. Then again, given the right justification, that could probably be called folk music as well.

But, being a realist and knowing that I'll be in the dorms again next year, I'll gear up for the folk festival. Maybe I'll go to the coast for the weekend. Whatever I do, it won't have a thing to do with the University campus.

If I want to buy something from festival merchants, I'll go to Saturday Market. If I want to listen to music, I can go just about anywhere in the city and find musicians playing. But let me come to you. Having numerous musical and festival type groups moving into my "backyard," so to speak, can get pretty damn old after a while, like two weeks.

I guess I'll look forward to the folk festival next year. That is, looking forward to leaving town during the festival.

Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.

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ET ALS

MEETING
 Race Task Force will meet today at 8:45 a.m. in Room 360 Oregon Hall. For more information, call 346-1133.

MISCELLANEOUS
 Hillel will conduct a Shabbat vegetarian potluck tonight at 6:30 at 707 E. 17th. For more information, call 343-8920.
 Vietnamese Student Association will conduct the Senior Banquet tonight at 6 at the Fortune Inn. For more information, call 346-9487.
 EASCNA can help with recovery from drug addiction. For more information, call

341-6070.
 International Student Association will conduct elections tonight at 6 in the EMU International Lounge. For more information, call 346-4387.
 International Student Association will conduct an end of year social and award session today at 5 p.m. in the EMU International Lounge. For more information, call 346-4387.
 University Housing will conduct an open meeting of the Housing Advisory Board today at 4:30 p.m. in the Bean West Conference Room. For more information, call 346-4269.
 Pacifica Forum will present a news commentary today from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

in the Wesley Center at 1236 Kincaid St. For more information, call 344-0483.

Deadline for submitting Et Als to the Emerald front desk, Suite 300 EMU, is noon the day before publication. Et Als run the day of the event unless the event takes place before noon and is requested to be published earlier.

Notices of events with a donation or admission charge will not be accepted. Campus events and those scheduled nearest the publication date will be given priority. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for grammar and style.

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