

## Activists need pro-active stand

After weighing the benefits and the risks of saving Amazon housing for several months, University President Dave Frohnmayer decided to go ahead with the planned demolition of the 47-year-old structures. The existing housing will be replaced with a new, 280-unit complex by 1996.

Before rendering a decision, Frohnmayer considered turning Amazon over to a nonprofit, student-run cooperative. The cooperative planned to renovate the complex and maintain relatively low rents.

Frohnmayer made the right decision.

The original intent of the prefabricated apartments was to temporarily house returning World War II veterans. Due to constant demand and low-vacancy rates, the University turned the complex into permanent housing. But years of haphazard maintenance, age and normal wear have left the buildings in an obviously dilapidated state.

Several of the buildings have leaky roofs and severe plumbing deficiencies. Most have irreparable cases of dry rot and a majority of the buildings don't have fire walls to separate the apartments. There are also concerns about asbestos and lead paint.

The Save Amazon Coalition, a group of students and community members dedicated to saving Amazon, should be commended for its efforts.

However, to document its platform, the coalition relies on an "independent" engineering report that says renovation is possible. They disregard two other reports claiming that reparations would not be cost effective.

The coalition argues that the decrepit structures pose no safety hazard and could be rehabilitated for \$3 million. The coalition further states that the cases of asbestos are isolated and new paint can cover the lead paint.

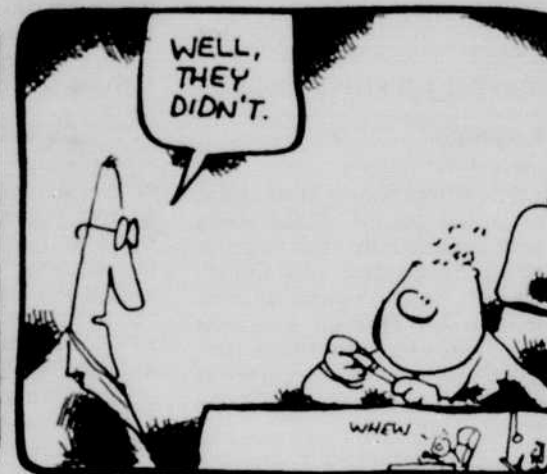
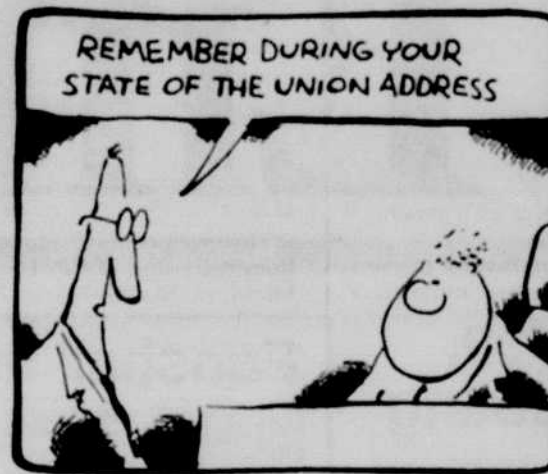
The proponents of rehabilitation correctly say that a new complex will eliminate the already-strained, low-income housing market in Eugene. The University has a duty to protect students and protect the state from liability concerns. By keeping the postwar housing, the University places itself in a dangerous position, wide open to lawsuits in the event of fire or a collapsing roof.

When the coalition asked the state's auditing division last week to examine the University's decision to demolish Amazon, the action was reminiscent of a small child throwing a tantrum. The purview of the auditing office does not include policy decisions.

Hence, the decision is made and won't be reversed.

The coalition's insinuation that Frohnmayer doesn't know what is going on in his own backyard is a slap in the face to a man with unquestionable integrity. He is the same man whom Amazon activists hailed as fair and open-minded before he made the decision counter to their desires.

It's time for those trying to save Amazon to become more pro-active and constructive in their efforts. Residents could begin to find ways to lower the new rents, such as applying for grants or contacting alumni for donations.



### OPINION

## Art displays exposure, debate

Well folks, it seems that the curtain controversy of 1994 has finally, thank goodness, come to a close. The 'Uncensored Celebration' exhibit (which was sponsored in part by the ACLU) has left the EMU, and hopefully the whole incident will soon fade from memory.

The procession of idiocy which we have witnessed has been great, even by the rigid standards of the University. But besides a good laugh, the situation was serious enough to discuss in depth.

Let's start at the bottom line: The curtains did not constitute censorship by any logical or thoughtful measure. The obvious root of the word censorship is "censor," which, according to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, means "may prohibit what one considers morally or otherwise objectionable." The paramount word of this definition is "prohibit," and in no way, shape or form was the art (I use the word loosely) prohibited from those who, pay attention here, *wished to see it*. If the showing was restricted to interested viewers, then we would have had a clear violation of the First Amendment on our hands. Obviously, this did not happen, so there should not have been a problem.

Alas, this being Eugene, there was. All of us heard the woof and poof from various campus organizations and individuals — that our homes would be next, our books would be burned, and Dan Quayle would soon be the Galactic Emperor of the Universe, taking a part in every major decision of our lives.

This sort of asinine Oliver Stone conspiracy nonsense to which we have unfortunately become accustomed is always good for a laugh, but it is serious also. Through all of the acrimony, the pundits forgot one important fact: not every student on this campus maintains one homogeneous opinion.

Some people, I kid you not, actually found the contents of



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

this exhibit offensive. They did not want it on public display. And, apologies to the special interests who think toward the contrary, the EMU is a public place. It is meant as a campus center for all students to congregate, study or conduct business of their choice. As long as, and this is the crux of the issue, they do not offend others, Lori McDowell, 28, a linguistics student at the University who found the works offensive, was glad that the curtains went up. However, she did not wish the works to be censored from the view of others. She merely felt, and correctly so, that the drapes "showed respect for people who found it offensive."

The curtains were perfect. Those that wished to see the exhibit were allowed to do so free of charge or of hindrance, and those that did not were able to avoid it. To many, this was not enough. In last Thursday's *Emerald*, EMU board member, Jessica Frahs, said that the offended could merely "close their eyes and walk through." Although many on campus would agree with Frahs, they are missing the point.

Students in the EMU should not have to wear blinders in order to avoid offense, for it is meant for all of us. Presumably, at this point in the column, disgruntled readers are going to sigh and comment that people are offended by anything, so who, among us, should be allowed to define what is and is not offensive?

Discussion about the exhibit creates a ludicrous argument. We're talking about remote-control vaginas, not *The Catcher in the Rye* or *Alice in Wonderland*.

Censorship has been a serious problem in this country. Admittedly, to some extent, it still is. But if situations such as this are deemed newsworthy, the public will find each more and more reminiscent of the boy who cried wolf.

Besides the false cries of censorship, the curtain controversy also brought to light the ever-growing hypocrisy of the "politically correct" factions of this campus.

When concerned students wished to be shielded from pictures which they found objectionable in the EMU, they were called over-sensitive, conservative, old-fashioned and worse. However, if a man opened a *Playboy* for all to see in the EMU, or played a 2 Live Crew album out loud, he would be publicly ridiculed and branded insensitive to women, which obviously would be correct. But why the double standard for the people who found the artwork offensive?

Don't they have the same rights as anyone at the University? Probably not, since they have been deemed out of the "P.C." loop, and therefore are unworthy of protection and representation for their beliefs.

This should not go unnoticed by us on campus. The selectivity of "P.C.ness," as we have seen with this exhibit and in numerous other instances, does a disservice to all of us. It is also unjust by any reasonable measure.

People should be allowed to view what they please. Similarly, none of us should be forced to see anything from which we wish to be shielded. It is astonishing that these two ideas are not allowed to work together.

It really shouldn't be so difficult. Perhaps if it weren't for the OCA, the ACLU, and other ideological zealots needlessly butting into our lives, we could simply allow everyone to do his or her own thing.

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