

GTFs fight for their rights

I am writing to call your attention to a glaring omission in your article "GTFs may receive increased salary" (ODE, Sept. 28). I found it odd that there was no mention of the Graduate Teaching Fellow Federation members in your article.

Is it possible that you do not know that staff members Diane Rau, union representative and Larry S. Williams, communications assistant, are the people responsible for bargaining the GTFF's contract with the University? You chose to interview two other board members instead.

Rau and Williams have also been responsible for the management of the insurance benefits that graduate teaching fellows now enjoy. Your article's omission made me wonder if GTFs know what their union does for them and how the work of their union is accomplishing the every-day tasks of the union; they may also be unaware of the current labor dispute between the GTFF elected leadership and the GTFF staff union.

While I am not surprised that Bob Roberts and Alan More would take credit for the recent contract bargaining gains, I find it highly unlikely that these very same GTFF board members would be able to completely bargain such a contract themselves.

I do not say this in jest, nor is it my sole intent to insult. I have, however, been consistently scandalized by Bob and Alan's callous disregard for basic labor tenets regarding their own contract bargaining with GTFF staff.

The staff and board are now entering the seventh month of negotiations. The staff has been working without a contract since Aug. 31. One example of the board members blatant disregard for union principles is their position statement (Aug. 11, 1995) claiming that collective bargaining was an unnecessary process. It said:

"We believe that a collaborative approach between the GTFF Board and staff is a more

COMMENTARY

Teri D. Ciacchi

favorable model than existing models of contract negotiations ... We believe that with staff guidance and suggestions we can make compensation gains fairly and equitably."

In case the implication of this statement is unclear to you, I will spell it out.

The GTFF board of directors (management) does not believe that the staff (workers) needs collective bargaining and should voluntarily waive its union-guaranteed rights to the bargaining process. Board members suggest that staff members should trust them to provide adequate wages and benefits based on mutual goodwill.

"
The level of stress and tension between staff and board members has continued to escalate.
"

This position statement was issued after more than one attempt by staff to negotiate substantial wage and benefit increases that remain unresolved.

The level of stress and tension between staff and board members has continued to escalate.

Rau is on medically-advised sick leave and Williams has sought and attained other employment. I hope the lack of support and concern shown for the GTFF staff so far has been because of a lack of information.

I urge readers to get informed about and involved in this important local struggle for workers rights! Demand that GTFF board members educate themselves and hold themselves accountable to basic worker rights and tenets of unionism!

Teri D. Ciacchi is a resident of Eugene.

LETTERS

Try tolerance

In your editorial (ODE, Oct. 2), you refer to "free-loaders," "trendy transients," and "tangle-haired, money-begging, street folk." Name calling does not do you credit.

There are many different people without evident financial means who choose to be near the University. They have different reasons for being where they are. Throughout history and across cultures, poverty and begging have been traditional paths for those learning to follow their hearts and their spirits.

What of your fellow students? Many or most of them also live off the wealth of others — either their parents' or the taxpayers'. And to what end? Many train themselves for careers in which they will do people and the environment more harm than good. It is by such choices, rather than by a choice to be impoverished or to beg, that the magic potential of life is most wasted and that the world is most harmed.

John Edward Davidson
Legal Services

Vote!

I have been organizing the ASUO's voter-registration campaign, and I have been struck by the number of students who feel they do not have a say in what happens at the state or federal level.

The Students-Are-Getting-Slashed event showed students how the proposed cuts in financial aid may prevent them from continuing in school. Financial aid is facing historic cuts right now!

Everyone needs to take the time and register to vote. It's your right, so use it. You do have a voice. Your voice has impact.

Mandi Hood
ASUO State Affairs
Coordinator

Public deserves eco-truth

COMMENTARY

Kelly Andersson

If I see one more dirty, dreadlocked forest hippie whining on TV about the destruction of the forest cathedral, I'm going to scream. And if I see one more TV commercial with endless, rolling hills of lush, green forest with the soothing voice-over of a Weyerhaeuser PR jockey assuring me that it cares about the forest because it replants eighty skejillion trees every year, I'm gonna puke.

The key players in this forest conflict seem to be only the industry and the enviros. At least they're the only ones getting air time.

Why? What about the professionals? The biologists, hydrologists, geologists, foresters, ecologists and other assorted experts surely have something to say — why don't we hear from them?

First of all, they aren't as motivated to speak as the other groups.

Industry's motivation is profit. Not greed — PROFIT.

The enviros' motivation splits off between their key players and mass members. The key players (e.g. the leaders of the Oregon Natural Resources Council and Sierra and Audubon) are also partially motivated by the need for revenues. The environmental movement is a conflict industry; i.e. without conflict in the forest, it would see a drop in revenue.

Most of the camo-and-dreads-and-tie-dye crowd have no profit motive. They believe spiritually in their cause.

But what about the silent group? What about the specialists who spend months or years planning and revising and working on a project only to find themselves in court?

For some, the motivation might be preserving their own jobs and hides. For others, it might be professional pride in a job well done, or it might include the long-term health and vigor of the land, species and habitat they are charged with minding.

Imagine that. Check out the next few stories you read in the paper or see on TV. You will hear from someone on the green side, and

you will hear from an industry mouthpiece. But see how long it is before you encounter a story that includes the perspective of one of the experts.

Think of it this way. If I start a garden in the spring, I find an expert: someone who has devoted her or his life to the growing of plants — a master gardener.

The master gardeners of the forests are employed by the Forest Service. But they're not supposed to talk to the media. Agency personnel are strongly discouraged from becoming involved or visible in the political volleying of the forest conflict.

Congress doesn't like the Forest Service speaking out, especially on politically sensitive topics.

In addition, media editors usually cut the material.

Imagine you're an editor and you have a minute of videotape to cut in half. You have a scruffy but cute woman lying in the road at the entrance to a timber sale. You have a well-dressed lawyer and you have a grizzly lookin' logger who is just tryin' make a livin' for his poor family. Finally, you have an ungulate habitat-specialist droning on about forage preferences.

You know who will show up on tonight's news broadcast — the Lady and the Logger.

I already know about the environmentalists' opinions on the Sugarloaf sale and Warner Creek and the Roman Dunn sale. And I know what the industry guys think about it too. But I'm tired of listening to both of them, and I'm tired of watching their predictable photos in the predictable papers.

I want to hear what the professionals have to say. I think they have a lot to say, and I think their viewpoint is more valid than any other in the debate. And I want the media to give it to me.

Kelly Andersson is a junior majoring in journalism.

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