

U.N. wasteful, inept, lacks leadership

This week marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of the United Nations. To the Wilsonian idealists of the American journalistic and political elite, this is cause for celebration. However, for those who do not have a stake in its survival, an honest examination of the U.N.'s track record will show that the organization has not lived up to the promise it gave on Oct. 24, 1945, and that the United States should seriously consider withdrawal.

Over the past 15 years, events in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Bosnia (not to mention Somalia) have shown the U.N. to be incompetent in handling necessary humanitarian tasks.

In Ethiopia during the early 80s, we can recall the scenes of starvation which shocked our nation. As the U.N. began shipping food to the area, the group ignored claims of journalists and independent observers that the domineering government of Mengistu Haile was actually stealing food meant for famished civilians and diverting it to the military. This led not only to greater human suffering, but also to increased power for Haile.

Commenting on the tragedy, Alex de Waal, former co-director of Human Rights Watch-Africa told Peter Beinart of *The New Republic*: "It was criminal ... The U.N.'s role in that cost many lives and strengthened Mengistu. The government would have fallen years earlier without their help."

This is not the type of action the world should expect from a group such as the U.N. Its charter states that one of its duties is "to reaffirm fundamental human rights," a task which was obviously neglected in Ethiopia. If it were not so tragic, the hypocrisy of the group would be laughable.

Another all-too typical example of U.N. incompetence can be found in their role in the current rebuilding of Rwanda. In the previously mentioned article, Beinart reports that the very forces responsible for the horrific genocide a few years ago now control many of the U.N. camps.

Christine Umutoni, the Deputy Minister for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in the country's new government told Beinart that the U.N. was "unwilling to take the steps necessary ... to keep the killers away from the refugees."

It is unfortunate that these two examples are not aberrations, but the norm. All of us recall the horror of watching a dead American soldier, part of a U.N. force, being dragged through the streets of Somalia. Or more recently, the gross

spectacle of French and British U.N. soldiers in Bosnia being tied to flag posts, used as human shields against probable NATO air strikes.

It is obvious that in our world of civil wars and internal strife, the gentlemanly elites of the U.N. are completely and absolutely unequipped to deal with such messy political entanglements.

Nations acting individually and in treaty on their own could be much more effective without the chains of the U.N. shackled about their arms. Their operation of recent memory, which could be even closely construed as a success, was Operation Desert Storm — even this, in reality, was the United States acting under the guise of the U.N.

Besides the fact that it doesn't work, the U.N., like most governing bodies, is a vast wasteland of profligacy. In a recent report in *Time*, some excesses of the group were reported, including an audit that discovered \$10 million unaccounted for from a UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) mission in Kenya, with a new sewage system and a barbecue pit making the list. Another "peace-making" item was the one-million-dollar-a-day price tag for intervention in Somalia, which included funding for air-conditioned apartments.

To track, and hopefully clean up such spending, the U.N. has hired Karl Paschke, the Under Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services. His first impression? "After seven months on the job, I think the U.N. is a good example of waste and inefficiency."

Since we have lived in America, we are accustomed to a governing body which spends money like there's no tomorrow. However, as we begin to question the wisdom of our own government's spending patterns, those of the U.N. should be open to question as well.

Aside from problems with its effectiveness and budgeting, in an era when freedom and flexibility are important, the U.N. impinges upon America's sovereignty. As President Clinton stated in a speech on Oct. 6: "In Bosnia, as elsewhere, if the United States does not lead, the job will not be done."

As the world's largest and most able military, this leadership is our obligation and our moral responsibility. The U.N., through its dithering and bureaucracy, does not allow this mission to be carried out effectively.

We live in a violent and ever-changing world. It needs true leaders, not simple bureaucrats.

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OPINION



Primo A.J. Fontana

The Oregon Humanities Center presents:

UNIVERSITIES and The Public Perception

2:00 p.m. Jaroslav Pelikan, Professor of History, Yale University, and author of *The Idea of the University, A Reexamination*, speaking on

The University as Partnership

3:30 p.m. Panel Presentation by UO faculty on how citizens have viewed higher education historically in the United States, Western U.S., and Oregon, featuring Professors

- Richard Maxwell Brown, emeritus, History
- Christopher Toby Edson, Education and Policy Management
- Risa Palm, Geography; Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
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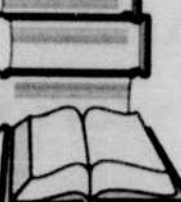
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