

Indonesia kills innocents; 'ODE' prints stream of drivel

The Emerald's editorial policy of publishing genocide cover-ups is an exciting new approach to journalistic balance.

I'm tempted to write a letter to the ODE declaring Hitler a hero and the Holocaust a cheap bid for sympathy. It would look good alongside your typical editorial, with themes like "US military underfunded, unprepared," and "Raising minimum wage hurts the poor" (7).

It would also be an excellent follow-up to Ahmad Fauzie Gani's letter about Indonesia's human rights record (ODE, Feb. 27).

Commentator-style editorials are bad enough, but it is astounding that the Emerald would choose to print a letter like this one. I appreciate that letters to the editor should represent a diversity of perspectives, but there are some standards of journalistic decency that preclude absurd and perverse claims such as Gani's.

Gani disputes the claim that Suharto's regime mercilessly suppresses dissidents and labor. In fact there can be no dispute.

The Multinational Monitor, Human Rights Watch, UN Commissions and even the Economist have documented a huge array of human-rights abuses.

Protesters and labor organizers are fired from their jobs, beaten, tortured and killed. Gani claims that Indonesia is a "democracy" with regular elections. Forget that the same person gets elected each time. Forget that Suharto was placed in power by a military coup.

Later in his letter, Gani refers to Indonesia's "long record of government stability." The mainstream media might consider that democracy. In the real world it's called a dictatorship.

Gani's double-speak would make the Pentagon proud. He brags about Indonesia's "highly productive laborers" — a code-word for slaves that work 16 hours a day for 50 cents or less. He admits that there have been "some inadequate policies in the process of Indonesia's development" — an interesting way to describe the murder of more than a million people in Indonesia's invasion of East Timor.

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This invasion, widely regarded as the most horrendous example of genocide since the Holocaust, was described by the U.S. State Department as "welcoming Indonesia back into the free world."

No less a humanitarian than Jimmy Carter authorized huge weapons shipments to Indonesia, knowing they would be used to exterminate civilians. The slaughter of East Timorese continues to this day, aided by President Clinton's shipments of F-16 fighters and other military supplies.

The U.S. State Department has known since the early '80s that East Timorese children are routinely kidnapped by international slave dealers, sold into sweatshop slavery or operated on to remove vital organs for medical research in the United States and Europe.

Again, these are facts — gruesome and true. Despite the mainstream media's censorship of U.S.-backed atrocities, the

information is available to anyone willing to put in a tiny amount of time and energy.

It is easy to ignore these facts because U.S. corporations such as Nike have a huge interest in maintaining "government stability" in Indonesia. The "productive laborers" in Nike's Indonesian plants make the company millions every year.

The facts are easy to ignore as our own university negotiates a multimillion-dollar contract with Nike for athletic wear. Will we ignore reality, or will we confront the corporate forces creating misery for millions?

The shoddy and dull-minded journalism that characterizes the Emerald is its own prerogative. When it receives \$129,000 worth of students' money, however, it has an obligation to serve the common standards for human decency. The endless stream of reactionary drivel that parades across its pages is inaccurate and dumb. It's time for the Emerald to get its act together.

James Johnston is a worker for the Student Insurgent.

'Emerald' misrepresents Solar Information Center

My reaction to the article on the Solar Information Center (ODE, Feb. 27) was a mixture of humor and horror.

Seldom have I read such a misrepresentation of the truth. Many of the elements listed in the article were removed from their contexts, and tangents of interest exhibited by the interviewer were presented with little or no relation to actual SIC activities.

Others were simply wrong, inaccurate and misleading. What follows is an attempt to clarify the truth, make sense of the information put forth in the article, and illuminate the actual purpose of the SIC.

The SIC is a student-run, interdisciplinary group affiliated with the architecture, physics and environmental studies departments. Its focus is the integration of ecology, renewable energy and sustainable technology into the built environment. The SIC welcomes involvement from all student disciplines as well as community members and is not just a secular group of architecture and physics students alone.

The SIC does undertake numerous research projects each year. These are student-initiated inquiries, often shared in our quarterly publication *Solar Incidents*. As for "human fecal matter," however, no one at

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the center has taken it upon him or herself to research that subject in depth. So hold your wheelbarrows; the SIC is not seeking donations of new composting material!

In the article I was quoted as saying that the "SIC is working on developing new ways to use renewable resources such as mud, sand and rubber..." First, mud and sand are not renewable resources. They are, instead, ecologically sound materials. Second, the rubber in this case referred to the use of recycled tires in underground construction. Tires are primarily made of oil byproducts and are thus not renewable.

"Lobi" is a nonsense word. "Cob," the intended word, is a building material made from sand, mud and straw. Although developed and used traditionally in the United Kingdom, it has more recently been adopted in Oregon and elsewhere.

It is true that the SIC has a modest budget compared to other University organizations. We are not, however, unable to compensate our staff or "any other people who work for us." We are co-funded by the Eugene Water and Electric Board as well as

the ASUO in addition to other outside grants and co-sponsorship.

This allows us to compensate lecturers and other visiting professionals for their time while providing free events for the University and surrounding community.

As for our staff, the Student Senate approved our special request this past fall, allowing us to more properly fund the two work-study and two director positions that form the core of our staff.

Finally, the title of the article — "Solar Center seeks larger research facility" — is misleading. The SIC submitted a proposal to the University's request for Capital Construction Projects this past fall. The proposal was based on a desire to implement sustainable building technology on a modest scale at the University in the form of a demonstration building. Although the proposed building might indeed host the SIC and other groups one day, that remains a secondary issue. Our primary interest is in helping the University apply sound ecology and sustainable practices in their future building projects.

Thank you for setting the record straight.

Matthew Swett is the co-director of the Solar Information Center.

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