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# OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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## Overheard

"I'm appalled that anyone would think that John or I would be involved in such a hideous, heinous crime."

*Patricia Ramsey, mother of murdered beauty queen Jon Benet Ramsey, on police suspicions that she and her husband played a part in the crime.*

"I would eat everything — twice!"

*Newly-crowned Miss Universe Brook Mahealani Lee's response to the question, "What would you do if there were no pageant rules?"*

"We certainly are investigating individuals, and those individuals — including Mrs. Clinton — could be indicted."

*Deputy Whitewater Counsel John Bates, speaking to an appeals court about the investigation, as reported by ABC News.*

"If they think they can bring anyone in to replace Sammy Hagar they're making a big mistake."

*Sammy Hagar reflecting on being replaced as the lead singer for Van Halen.*

"I am happy, very happy to succeed."

*Rebel leader Laurent Kabila on seizing control of the nation of Zaire.*

"The experience has been as painful for us as it would be for any other couple."

*Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford in response to the tabloid the Globe's pictures.*

"They were betrayed. Their lives were trampled upon."

*President Clinton apologizing to a group of black men the government used for syphilis experiments, as quoted in the Los Angeles Times.*

"It makes me feel very, very good. I know that God is still swinging in there for me."

*The Godfather of Soul, James Brown, on his 64th birthday bash.*

# The Right to Take a Stand

**OUR OPINION:** *The University, like any other consumer, has the responsibility to consider political issues when making purchases*

"The University is an open marketplace of ideas. We exist to help students make up their own minds. On political issues like this boycott, the University will not force a unilateral decision through its purchasing choices."

With these words, University President Dave Frohnmayer justified the University's refusal to enforce a boycott on Gardenburgers in the dorms. MEChA had requested University Housing pull Gardenburger for the questionable labor practices of Wholesome and Hearty Foods, the company that produces Gardenburger. Instead of taking a side, Frohnmayer chose political neutrality.

While Frohnmayer and the University have every right not to support a Gardenburger boycott (for better or for worse), political neutrality is not a legitimate reason for doing so. The University is not a politically neutral body and need not act like one.

Instead, the University has every right and responsibility to make political decisions, such as whether to support a Gardenburger boycott. By claiming the University has no responsibility to take a political stand, Frohnmayer has set a dangerous precedent for present and future controversies.

The main reason given for remaining politically neutral on the Gardenburger issue is that the students, as the consumers of

Gardenburgers, are the ones who should decide whether they want to support the boycott. Frohnmayer pointed out: "Students have the right and responsibility to educate themselves about the issue and then decide individually what to eat or what not to eat."

While this point is valid, it is not quite appropriate for the current situation. University Housing, not the individual students, is the real consumer. Students

don't get to decide what kind of meat will be served in the dorms; University Housing does. As the consumers, it is the University's responsibility to decide what it will purchase. And like any responsible consumer, it has the right not to purchase a product that follows "unethical" business practices.

This may or may not be true of Gardenburger. But it is up to the University to decide. If the University has

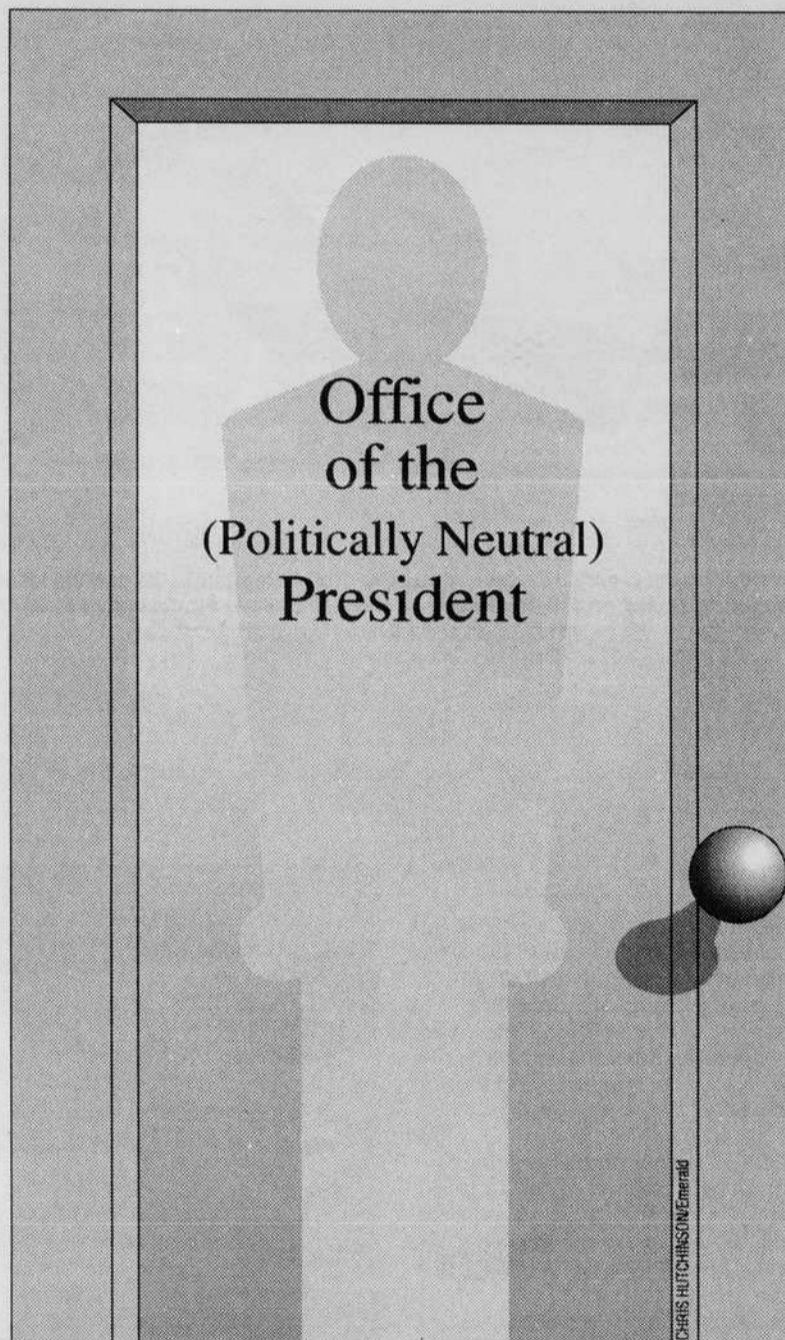
no problem with Gardenburger, it has the right to say so and not support a boycott. If it does have a problem with Wholesome and Hearty Food's practices, it has every right to stop purchasing Gardenburger products.

By claiming political neutrality, Frohnmayer has made the University completely free of any responsibility in future controversies. If the meat the University buys came from slave labor, under Frohnmayer's logic, University Housing would have no right to seek out an alternate producer. After all, that would be forcing all students to accept the principle that slave labor is wrong.

The University has the right to make this kind of "political" decision. It's done it before when it pulled veal from the dorms for the ethical problems with how veal is made, and when it pulled grapes for labor questions.

Even if students don't agree with the University's stand, the fact is, it is just that — the University's stand. Students have a right to protest University decisions, but the University has the ultimate responsibility to make those decisions. Political neutrality isn't an excuse for inaction.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.*



## LETTERS

### Time to lead

To President Frohnmayer: This letter is not one of legalistic concern for you and your struggle to reach a reasonable compromise with the Gardenburger issue.

As a person who holds a position of leadership and represents a diverse student body as well as faculty, it must be hard to find a balance on the fine line of democratic leadership. I can only imagine the stress and weight you feel every day in your pursuit to represent this institution.

In controversial issues such as the Gardenburger boycott, the best interest of the campus is not always apparent. In these situations, it takes true untainted leadership to come to a justified conclusion.

Lukewarm leadership is aimless

leadership and will never attain any amount of justice. We need direction. Direction that is clear and stern and will carry us further down the road to justice and truth.

I ask you, Mr. Frohnmayer, to ask yourself how you want to be remembered as University President. Do you want to be remembered as a man who acknowledged the struggle for justice or one who waded in the warm waters of complacency?

I hope you take all of this seriously, because this campus, this nation and the world are searching desperately for direction that is solid and firm. This is the time to be a leader. Take a risk, and take a stand against injustice.

**John Skalberg**  
Undeclared

### Little light

I'd like to shed a little light onto the Frohnmayer/Oriental issue that has been looming over this campus. I fear the letter written by Guy Barker is a symptom of the overall ignorance on this campus surrounding racial issues (ODE, May 13). We all need to start educating ourselves before we upset even more people because of the uninformed opinion.

First of all, President Frohnmayer never said anything about people from "eastern Asia" eating rice. What he said was: "We have rice now because we have a significant group of Oriental students..." Now was he referring to international students from Asia or Asian/Pacific Islander American students? Or was he clumping

both extremely diverse groups into one pan-ethnic mass?

What was more upsetting was that President Frohnmayer used the rice comment to skirt the issue at hand: Gardenburgers. How does offering rice in the dorms correlate with not boycotting Gardenburger and its association with produce suppliers who violate human rights in their labor practices? Are there different brands of rice to choose from? Do any of those companies participate in, or associate with, other companies that participate in human rights violations?

There are no "Oriental nations," and while rice is a staple of many Asian countries, to generalize and stereotype all Asians as rice-eaters is problematic and, I fear, a symptom of underlying beliefs and prejudices that are lurking in the shad-

ows. I don't believe that the student unions are "searching desperately for a cause that just isn't there." The causes are there; they just keep getting marginalized and oversimplified by the administration and fellow students who aren't willing to see the whole picture.

**Robert Wasson**  
English

### Correction

The pictures of Connie Rawson and Jessie Thompson in the May 16 "Reader Voices" section were reversed. The Emerald regrets the error.