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Executive privilege

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

Feminists seem unwilling to scrutinize Clinton's actions

What is it with Democrats these days? They don't know how to squabble.

Republicans know how to fight. They bicker over abortion and International Monetary Fund payments. They shout at one another because of trade policies and approaches to Social Security. They produced Pat Buchanan, a man who can single-handedly send his party's presidential hopes down the toilet and seems to enjoy that power.

Democrats, meanwhile, smile and nod and shake Bill Clinton's hand. They don't care what he does — as long as he has a "D" next to his name, he can be as much of a corporate hack as he wants. Call it selective blindness.

The American people seem to approve of this affliction. A recent survey conducted by communications professors at the University of Massachusetts and summarized in *The Nation* noted that Clinton is popular in spite of not only the slate of sex charges but also his record.

The survey found that Americans heavily back Clinton even though they have no idea what he believes in. Respondents consistently assumed Clinton stood further to the left on a range of issues, including welfare, health care, the environment, foreign policy and free trade. It would seem people are content to think of Clinton as a liberal Democrat even if he isn't one.

Pro-labor voters want to think Clinton is pro-labor. Environmentalists want to think Clinton is an environmentalist. And feminists want to think Clinton is a feminist.

That last point is as sticky as an Oval Office liaison. No matter what charges emerge, prominent feminist leaders refuse to accept that instead of having an understanding of women's issues in his grasp, the president might just have women in his grasp.

William J. Clinton

We aren't saying whether Clinton is guilty of any of the charges leveled against him. But it bothers us that in case after case, Clinton's adherence to the law is considered sufficient to uphold his ethical obligation to women.

People who consider themselves feminists should step back and think about what the charges leveled against Clinton really mean. Consider, for example, the Monica Lewinsky case.

Even as Congress concentrates on accusations of perjury, feminists ought to be thinking about the situation through a different filter. If the 50-something CEO of a major corporation was caught sleeping with a 20-something intern from the mail room, people wouldn't be outraged only because he told her to deny the affair to the board of directors.

The inequity of power suggests the possibility of an abuse of power. This should worry people who are concerned about workplace harassment.

Clinton has adamantly denied the charges, of course, and Democrats have every reason to hope the denials are true. But anyone who supports women should be less concerned about protecting Bill's image and more worried about ensuring that the accusations receive a just hearing.

The potential revelation of damning truths should be sufficient for feminists to reserve judgment. Instead, women are rushing forward to embrace the president.

While this is true in all the cases, it is particularly troubling in the Paula Jones situation. A federal circuit court judge tossed out Jones' suit because she failed to prove it affected her job performance, not because the judge ruled that unwanted advances did not take place.

Instead of viewing this as a vindication, feminists ought to be wondering whether Clinton did proposition Jones in a hotel room. Because of the judge's ruling, that is-

sue remains unresolved, and it ought to be unsettling for women everywhere.

There are many very good questions that need to be asked about Clinton. The GOP has been focusing on legal challenges to the president for obvious reasons, but feminists should ask a few things of Clinton on their own:

What really happened in that hotel room (office, bedroom, etc.)? Why have so many women accused Clinton of inappropriate sexual behavior? And why do some of those accusations, deep inside, feel like they might be true?

Of course feminists shouldn't abandon Clinton just because of the charges. But they also shouldn't label the charges irrelevant in their hurry to stand by the president.

If women refuse to uncover or consider evidence that Clinton is not the supporter of women he claims to be, they shouldn't be surprised if he turns out to be precisely as much of a feminist as he is a pro-labor environmentalist.

At that point, feminists can join other liberal Democrats on the curb as they smile and wave when the president's limo drives by. After all, it would be a shame if the party were to start squabbling.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Thumbs



TO A U.N. REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY:

As part of its role as a human rights investigator, the United Nations sent a team to look into execution practices in the United States. The report found, not surprisingly, that the death penalty is administered unfairly in the United States by judges who have little concern for the rights of the accused. Lower income and minority criminals are more likely to be sentenced to death. Worse, people can be executed for crimes committed as minors, even if they

are still minors, which directly violates U.N. human rights conventions. The United Nations also recently approved a resolution against the death penalty.

TO RESTORING FOOD STAMPS TO LEGAL IMMIGRANTS:

The majority of Congress is backing a move to resume providing food stamps to legal immigrants. The service was withdrawn as part of welfare reform last year. There is no reason anyone who has legally arrived in the country and who pays taxes

and participates in the community should be denied the benefits of that community other than racism and xenophobia. Unfortunately, those seem to be the motivation behind a small group of conservative legislators who are blocking efforts to bring the proposal to a vote, holding up the entire agriculture package to which the proposal is attached. The tax savings from not providing benefits are minimal, but the psychological impact of sending a message of hatred and isolation by not granting aid is devastating.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Active government works

During the past week, I had the opportunity to take part in possibly the single most energizing moment in my time here at the University. Spencer Hamlin, ASUO interns and I were able to get over 200 letters from students concerning the issue of an across-the-board tuition freeze written to Gov. Kitzhaber in one day. This undertaking was part of a larger effort by the ASUO to improve access to higher education. These letters were presented to the governor on Friday during a meeting with the Oregon Students Association, and he was willing to give his full support on fighting for a tuition freeze. Being part of this action allowed me to see a progressive student government in action.

We here at the University will have many choices in the upcoming elections. If the students of this University want to continue seeing such grassroots actions that are for and not against student rights, I would urge you to vote Progressive. A Progressive vote will go a

long way in establishing a government that will empower students to have a voice not only within the sphere of campus life, but also in our national and state legislatures.

The Progressive slate is a group of twelve candidates that are bonded together by our commitment to student rights. We feel that this campus needs to respect a variety of student issues, including the support of victims of sexual misconduct in any form, a halt to the northern development of the Riverfront Research Park, support of student programs such as OSPIRG and the incidental fees that allow them to exist and, finally, protection of access to higher education. As a member of the Progressive slate and a candidate for ASPAC, I will assure the student body that issues such as these are not ignored. You have a choice on April 15 and 16 — vote to empower yourself. Vote student rights! Vote Progressive!

Matt Swanson
Candidate, ASPAC