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Grassroots politics discussed

Speakers expressed ways people can get involved in political change

By Felicity Ayles
Oregon Daily Emerald

Two University professors and a former gubernatorial candidate voiced suggestions for social and political change through grassroots democracy to a crowd of about 30 in the EMU Fir Room Saturday evening.

Blair Bobier, former Pacific Party gubernatorial candidate, spoke of ongoing government problems and how they can be changed.

Democracy is kind of a race, he said. But you have a handicap if you are not part of a major political party.

Bobier mentioned the many problems his party faced during the last election, from getting on the ballot, to being permitted to attend only one of the gubernatorial debates.

Accepting smaller political parties is just one of the things the government needs to change, he said.

"The United States is number

one," Bobier said. "Number one in child poverty, teen pregnancy, people in jail and disparity of wealth. These are the types of things we have to change."

Bobier stressed that the U. S. government is not representative of its population, and proportional representation is a necessity. The United States uses the 'winner takes all' system, he said.

"If it only takes 51 percent to win an election, then 49 percent of the people are not represented," he said.

This is not an accurate perception of the voting public, he said. The reform of proportional representation will help to bring about other necessary reforms.

But University sociology professor Julie Fox stressed the importance of environmental issues and reforms.

Fox spoke of the connection between environmental problems and labor issues.

She told the story of members of her family who have been subject to work-related injury and death because of environmental prob-

lems and stressed that laborers have much in common with the environment.

Farms and farmers are being dumped with pesticides, which, in turn, make their way back to the general public, she said.

"This is a very serious problem," she said. "The toxic circle does come back to us."

Fox said there has to be a natural metabolism between humans and nature.

Dan Goldrich, University political science professor, said students can get involved with grassroots democracy and really make a difference.

Goldrich spoke of the structure of power in the modern world, the role of transnational corporations and the ways students could get involved in local groups to change it.

He said students should focus on the problems of political campaign financing and free trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"You can educate yourself and then get involved in educational efforts in the community," he said.

Books

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will be of use to students.

"Right now, one of the bottlenecks in the store is when students come in and they want to make a list of all of the things they will need," Standish said. "This Web page will allow students to know what they are looking for before they get here, and it will save in their shopping time."

In the future, Standish hopes this Web page will be upgraded so people can submit a book order online.

"Eventually, down the road, we would like people to look up what books they need, new or used, and submit an order over the web,"

Standish said. "People could then come to the bookstore, and we would have their books bagged and ready for them. Hopefully, we'll be able to offer this option for students by fall quarter."

Before Book Hunt was submitted to the bookstore, Preuit and his group completed a survey to see how students reacted to their creation.

"Generally speaking, students liked Book Hunt," Preuit said. "They liked knowing whether a book was optional or required, and they liked having the ability to make different selections and running the total several times. They also liked the fact that this

program is similar to Duck Hunt and that this web page has a help guide."

Tiffany Jewett, a freshman at the University, has used the Book Hunt Web page. To her, this program is convenient, but at the same time, she doesn't believe it will have an impact on her shopping experiences.

"I don't see myself needing to use this Web page because I don't think it will save me any trips to the store," Jewett said. "At the same time, though, I thought Book Hunt was convenient and easy to use."

Book Hunt can be used by accessing the bookstore's Web page at <http://www.uobookstore.com>.

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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

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