

PERSPECTIVES

Campus politics: Where is the love?



Student activism is back—
with a vengeance

A friend called me up the other night positively livid. It seems that he had just engaged in a very heated, very public discussion ignited by, of all things, a Gardenburger. After debating the merits and follies of secondary boycotts and migrant labor, he dialed me up to vent his indignation. As I listened to him rant for 10 minutes or so, I had only one thought. This is so great. At last, casual political debate raised from the dead.

Those of you who have been keeping track of campus politics for the past couple of years might understand my exuberance.

Whereas the University once stood out as one of the most politically active campuses in the country, recent years have seen student activism fall. Outside of the occasional flap, like last year's OSPIRG vote, grievances about how many candidate fliers can be hung on a bulletin board, and ongoing anti-Nike sentiment, there hasn't been much going on.

This year, however, has been a doozy. Whether it's the Athletic Department trying to screw students out of their seats or chicken-grams left on doorsteps, students are once again interested enough to get involved.

But then my friend continued his story and made me less happy. He told me that the argument ended when the other party accused him of not caring about human rights, a remark he found deeply offensive.

This wasn't the first time I'd heard a story about a debate that degenerated into an insult session. In fact, I've seen it happen first hand. And the more I think about it, the more it seems that all this pro-activity has a disturbing dark side.

Campus politics is no longer about shiny happy environmentalism. Quite frankly, things are getting kind of ugly.

People have forgotten (or perhaps never learned) the most basic tenant of rational political discourse: People are allowed to disagree with you.

No matter what side of what issue you champion, have yourself a long, hard think before you fling an insult or accusation. Make your argument strong enough that you won't have to resort to labeling people as racist, radical or anything else.

If we're going to have campus politics, then we need to have some measure of civility. Without at least that much, we might as well scrap student government and all outstanding campus issues and content ourselves with debating the cancellation of Melrose Place (an idea not entirely unappealing). Without rational discourse, politics at any level becomes little more than a forum for grandstanding and intellectual wanking.

If you can't make your point without resulting to name calling or some other type of cheap shot, go check out a book or read a pamphlet until you feel secure enough in your beliefs to have a civil discussion. Otherwise, you will only be hurting whatever case you were trying to make in the first place.

In the grand plan, I doubt this column will do much to change the way people conduct themselves. It will probably cause some people to insult me or the Emerald. I'm OK with this.

I'm OK partly because I'm ever so close to graduating and catching the first thing smoking out of this town, and partly because I actually get a bit of a thrill from the possibility that at any moment, someone could spring forth from the bushes, call me a nasty name, and start pelting me with Gardenburgers.

To paraphrase the old admonition about playing nice, if you can't say anything logical or intelligent, don't say anything at all because it makes you and your cause of choice look stupid.

That being said, you may direct your ire to kcoble@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Kameron Cole is an editorial editor for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Opinion



Kameron
Cole

Letters to the Editor

Article appreciated

I am so pleased to hear that finally someone has spoken out about the dangers of dioxin. This very common toxin is all around us because of massive amounts of pollutants in the air that we breathe and the water that we drink due to industrial companies.

In my own readings and research, it is so apparent that recent reproductive problems (including the breast cancer link so presciently mentioned in your article) are due to the many dioxin and dioxin-related materials in our environment. As a Willamette River salmon fisherman, I have been very worried about dioxin levels in the fish that I catch and eat. Often times, I decided not to fish based on concerns about the amounts of dioxins in the fish I catch. Because of these long-lasting toxins, any fish I would eat would contaminate me with high levels of dioxins.

I would like to sincerely congratulate both the student environmental activists and the Emerald on this fine article.

Jim Tung
Inorganic chemistry

Transfers unfair

I usually tend to agree with the opinions set forth in Rob Moseley's sports columns. I must mention, however, my disappointment with his latest column about the standards involved with the NCAA's rules regarding transferring (ODE, Feb. 18). The student-athlete must realize that, as sad as it may be, college athletics is basically a business and coaching changes are part of it. If you were to allow the student athlete at "State U." to transfer to "East Coast College" if his old college coach switches jobs, what do you tell the student athlete at E.C.C. whose spot on the roster has been removed? If you were to allow a stu-

dent-athlete to transfer at will to be with a coach, how different is that than free agency? We often see players in the NFL move to be with a coach they are comfortable with.

The mandatory redshirt rule was made to combat this, among other things. I agree that it would be tough to play and stay motivated for a coach you are not used to. Once you reach this level, however, you must suck it up and be a man. Quitting is the easy way out.

Tony Fox
Business administration

No joke

I am not amused. The denizens of Suite 4 are succeeding in undermining the little trust people had in their "voice." Once again, the elections process is being tampered with; once again groups try to sneak back onto campus and into student's pocketbooks; and once again the students

are supposed to lie back and take it.

Apathy is not an excuse.

Every group on campus should remember that they are really supported by only 10 to 15 percent of the greater student body. Simply because the great majority of the student body doesn't care enough to voice their opinions at the ballot box doesn't make a bad thing good. Look at exactly who is out there. You have protesters putting dead chickens on the doorsteps of Constitution Court officers. You have an executive that sees nothing wrong in tinkering with an already unstable elections process, and they cry "foul" when they don't get their way.

Perhaps the people involved with this issue should place blame where it started and let the Constitution Court do its job.

Brent M. Diskin
Salem

CORRECTION

The entertainment brief titled "Folk singer to perform on University campus" [ODE, Feb. 26] should have said "The UO Cultural Forum will present folk singer Joules Graves on Tuesday, March 2." The Emerald regrets the error.

In the Feb. 24 ODE article titled, "Anti-neon campaign holds public forum," it should have said dioxin is any of several carcinogenic or teratogenic hydrocarbons that occur as impurities in petroleum-derived herbicides. In the recycling process chlorine attacks the hydrocarbons in the paper and inks creating dioxin. The Emerald regrets the error.