

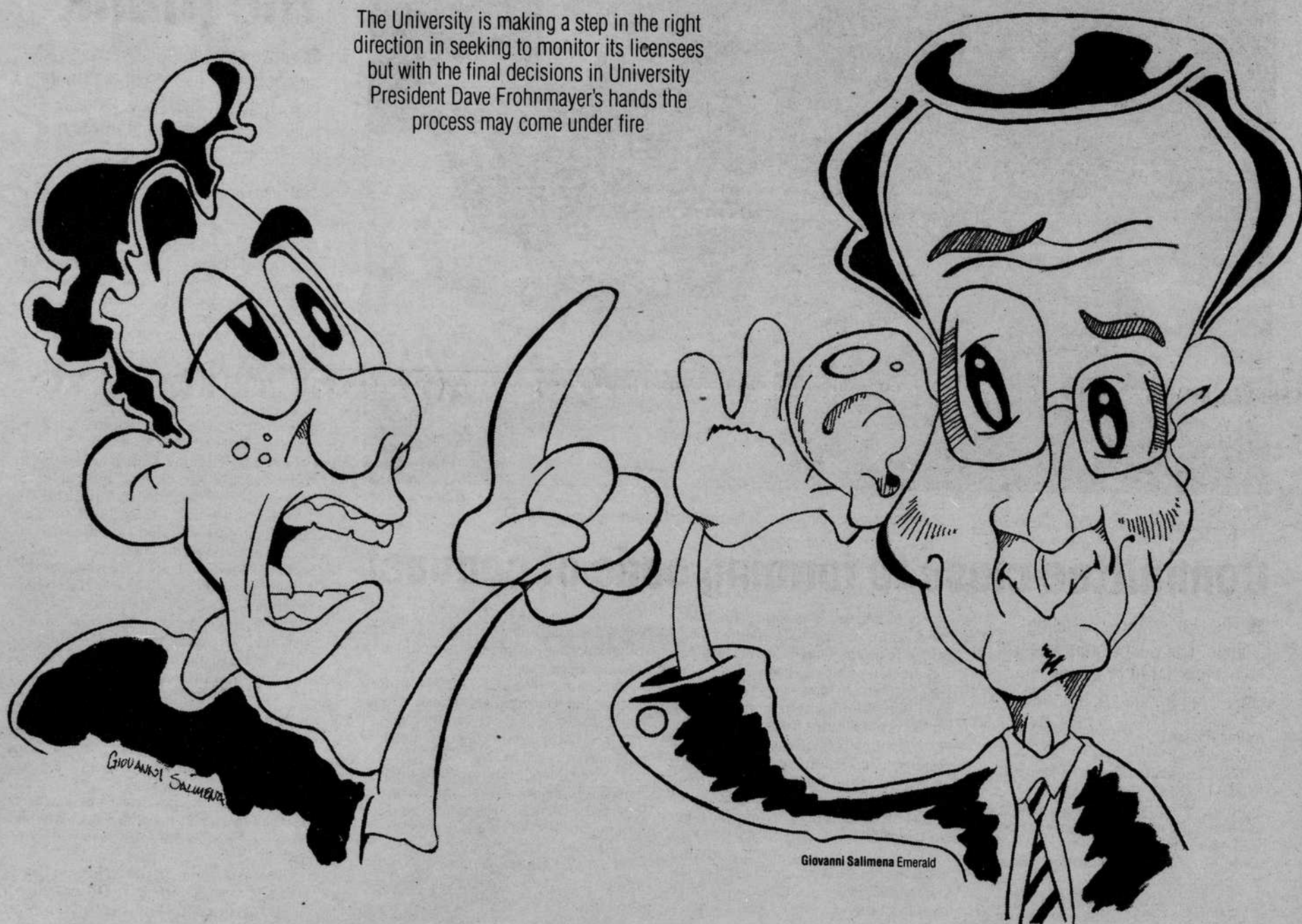
Oregon Daily
Emerald
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The FINAL SAY

The University is making a step in the right direction in seeking to monitor its licensees but with the final decisions in University President Dave Frohnmayer's hands the process may come under fire



There is no lack of strong opinion regarding the issue of the University licensing its trademark to apparel companies that have questionable foreign labor practices. But finally the process has begun in an attempt to make a policy decision on the University's requirements for its licensees.

The Licensing Code of Conduct Committee held its first meeting on Tuesday — an important first step toward a noble goal. The committee has been charged with some very important tasks. The members are to recommend policies for disclosure of factory locations of licensees, a method for monitoring licensees of University trademarks and a way to enforce these

policies.

But while the goal of a responsible University position on licensees is a positive and much needed step, the process to reach the final decision may be flawed. Because the decision lays solely in the hands of University President Dave Frohnmayer, the process has the potential to lack the democratic ideal. However, if Frohnmayer listens to the recommendations of the committee, the outcome still has a good possibility of success.

The labor questions posed to the committee are a response to the concerns of many human rights activists who consider the labor practices of many companies to be inhumane and often dangerous. The wages often fall

short of a nation's living wage, a fact that incenses many who examine that fact and compare it to the considerable profits made by some companies.

So between the concerns of human rights activists and the nearly 300 licensees annually contracted with the University, it's easy to see why a policy needs to be formed.

But there is cause for concern anytime one person has a final decision over such an important matter. Even with such a respected man as Frohnmayer, any decision not reached by a democratic body is subject to the criticism of hindsight. Accusations of personal politics or ties to corporations often come anytime a decision is too centralized. The only

way to assure that the final policy will be respected is to make sure it has agreement among many groups.

The final decision can still warrant respect if Frohnmayer listens closely to the advice of the committee. The strength of a committee is that it can congeal the differing talents and broad range of perspectives offered by several different groups. It's in this way that Frohnmayer can lend credibility to his decision by claiming that he took into account the unified visions of responsibility put forth by many varying opinions of committee members.

Whatever decision is reached will undoubtedly find detractors who either worry that business

or foreign workers will be hurt by whatever decision is reached. But that's down the road and the most appropriate focus for on-lookers now is to assure that the process has integrity.

The Licensing Code of Conduct Committee is an important body and should continue to be monitored closely. And while there is a possibility that the final decision will be criticized because it came from one person, there is a good chance that it will be a just and fair decision if Frohnmayer listens to the students and faculty who comprise that committee.

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