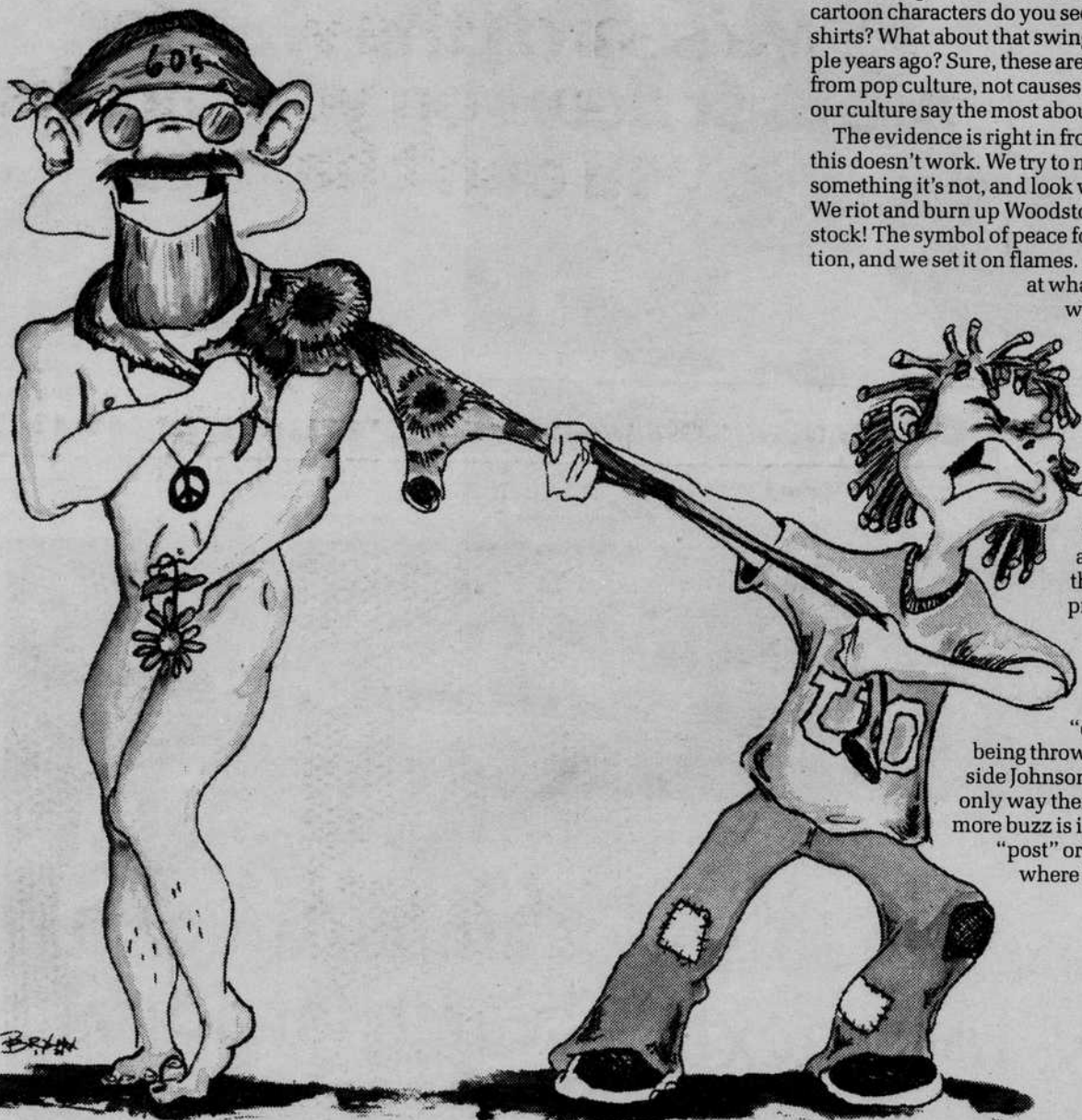


A lackluster cause

In an attempt to follow in the footsteps of past generations' demonstrators, people of today establish futile motives for protest



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Letters to the editor

Practice what you preach

Attending the University for four years has taught me many things, one of which is apparent on the steps of Johnson Hall. First, if you cannot convince the public at large of an idea, then protest management, the establishment or the closest authority figure, whatever works.

From my limited understanding of the election results trumpeted by the protesters, 75 percent of the voting public wants the Worker Rights Consortium. Sounds great, but what was the actual turnout for the election? Historical precedent puts that number in the 10-15 percent range. Where is the other 85 percent of voters? I submit that they are indifferent as to where their \$100 shoes are made.

Countries have for centuries exported jobs that the domestic economy either would not support or refused to work for. That which we should concern ourselves with is if the workers are slaves or not. If they make the decision to go to work each day, then it should be our business to back out of their country's internal affairs.

I support their constitutional right to protest but not their misuse of statistical information. I ask those of you up there shouting slogans this: How much of what you are wearing right now was produced in a foreign country, and have you absolute certainty that it wasn't produced with child labor?

If this is really a big deal, then stop buying the products that these suppliers supply. We as a consumer-based public haven't taken the stance that we are willing to pay more for clothes that are "injustice free."

Moses Messenger
economics

When you look outside Johnson Hall, what do you see? Protests? Painted sheets?

Well, what I see is a bad case of compensation. As the sons and daughters of the flower children, we have quite a reputation to live up to. I'm sure that we have seen old photos of our moms and dads with long hair, tie-dyed shirts, joints in hand or perhaps flaming bras. Who hasn't looked and thought, "Man, that would be fun"? So we regress. We listen to the Grateful Dead, we put our hair in dread locks, we make movies like "Born on the Fourth of July," and we search endlessly for causes to fight for.

We have to search for these causes because we don't have any of our own. We don't have a big war going on. We aren't fighting for our right to vote. Instead, we find things like the World Trade Organization and the Worker Rights Consortium.

When it seems that searching for our own identity is fruitless, we steal ideas from other generations. How many 1980s cartoon characters do you see on 1990s T-shirts? What about that swing craze a couple years ago? Sure, these are examples from pop culture, not causes, but doesn't our culture say the most about our society?

The evidence is right in front of us that this doesn't work. We try to make our time something it's not, and look what happens. We riot and burn up Woodstock... Woodstock! The symbol of peace for a generation, and we set it on flames. And just look

at what happened when we try to bring back "Star Wars" mania. Meesa really sucked.

I am being a little sarcastic, but there are examples from the current protest. I hear words like "system," "upper class" and "oppression" being thrown around outside Johnson Hall. The only way there could be more buzz is if you add a "post" or "neo" somewhere in there. It

seems these words are in some protester's handbook. Students were arrested chanting, "The people united will never be divided!" Come on! At least make up your own chant. I'll give you a hand: "We're staying in the lobby because it's our new hobby!"

Coincidentally, I have just read Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" for my Writing 122 class. Wow! Maybe that class is useful. These essays inspired many of the ideas the protesters seem to be putting into practice. Direct action. Civil disobedience. But both these men were writing about injustices that they were being



Mason West

subjected to personally. I don't see anybody being forced to wear University-licensed clothes. And yet, how many of you have your University hat, shirt, mug, bumper sticker, etc.? What about disobedience? Doesn't the fact that protesters have been granted permission to be in front of Johnson Hall mean that they aren't being disobedient at all?

Right now, the University is the home of a big sleep-over. The metaphorical "parents" let the kids stay knowing full well that they will be loud and stay up all night, but it will be fun for them. I have been asked to come to the protests at night a few times because "it's going to be a party." After that the person told me to support the WRC. But first, it's a party.

There is nothing new in this protest. We have seen it before in our parents' actions and throughout history. But the causes we are fighting for now pale in comparison to those of the past. This protest will hold no significance if Frohnmayer agrees that the University should join the WRC. The protesters will pack up and go back to sleeping in their own beds, and the people who didn't care will continue to not care. And all of us will have a good story to tell our kids about radical social reform and fighting "the man."

Mason West is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the paper. He can be reached via e-mail at mwest1@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

CORRECTION

The article "Frohnmayer to meet today with protesters" (ODE, April 10) should have read that students passing by Johnson Hall Friday shook James Eddy's hand and expressed support for his efforts supporting University President Dave Frohnmayer. Eddy also talked to other students about the flaws he sees with the Johnson Hall protesters' demands.

The article also should have read that the protest began Tuesday, April 4. In addition, Laura Close was not arrested at the April 4 protest.

The Emerald regrets these errors.

Why protest?

As a member of both the Licensing Code of Conduct Committee and the University Senate, I would like to recognize with gratitude University President Dave Frohnmayer's support of mutual governance in the question of a code of conduct and the Worker Rights Consortium.

The committee has worked for several months toward the consensus we articulated to Frohnmayer on April 4 (before the student protests) — that is, that the University should join the WRC to monitor compliance with our code of conduct. Students on the committee were extremely well-informed and articulate — I was very impressed by their contributions.

I look forward to the senate reception of the committee report. It seems very important to me that this decision is being discussed according to the processes of governance that we have

been struggling to make stronger this year. I frankly do not understand why students are protesting.

The demand of protesters for immediate action would eliminate faculty, staff AND student input into this decision at the senate. So ironically — even though I believe faculty and staff will support the WRC — students are in effect protesting against waiting until the University Senate has a chance to be heard on this subject.

These protests seem to be based on a lack of understanding about how students can participate in governance via committees and the senate, according to democratic processes.

Frohnmayer's insistence on following the processes of consultation with the committee and senate is particularly laudable — even courageous — in the face of such protests, which demand more rapid executive decision.

Suzanne Clark
English professor