

Editor in chief: Laura Cadiz
 Editorial Editors: Bret Jacobson, Laura Lucas
 Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

Perspectives

Oregon Daily
Emerald

\$30 million worth of blame

Phil Knight is upset at the loss of trust and the University is upset at the loss of money — but it is not easy to say who is at fault



OK. The campus has been in confusion for the last several days. Rumors have been flying. Questions have been asked. And now they are answered.

There it is in big black letters: "Knight pulls all money."

More specifically, Nike CEO Phil Knight has withdrawn all of his personal donations to the University for now and for the foreseeable future. Reactions, anyone?

It's tricky. Everything from "that guy's a jerk" to "those protesters cost us \$30 million" to "what does Nike have to hide?" to "donations shouldn't equal corporate influence" is valid. In trying to make sense of what has happened, immediate reactions have turned into a fight over whom to blame.

The Worker Rights Consortium protesters who stood their ground outside Johnson Hall two weeks ago aren't at fault. They had some principles, and the University's membership in the WRC should-

n't necessarily have triggered Knight to pull his money.

Knight isn't at fault, either, though. He has a right to his feelings of betrayal and desire for a sense of loyalty and trust that his relationship with the University has traditionally held. To blame him for feeling hurt is to deny the man his feelings, which are, by definition, valid.

So what about University President Dave Frohnmayer? Well, he's not at fault either. He's in perhaps the most unenviable position on Earth right now: Should he have contacted Knight before the WRC decision and either based his actions on a donor's wishes or joined the WRC knowing we would be out millions of dollars? Should he have the students' interests or the future of the University's finances at heart? He has the task of figuring out whether those claims are mutually exclusive.

And if we can't blame any of these people, what's left? The system. The reason we rely on corporate and private donations as fundamental financial strategy is

because we flat out don't get enough money from our government. If this is truly a public university, then perhaps the best way to fund it is with public monies. But until the state of Oregon can cough up \$30 million to renovate Autzen Stadium or build a new law center or endow more professorships, then can we really complain about the presence of big donors?

We live in a capitalist system that often views financial success as more important than democracy. Real democracy would be the people demanding that public education be public. Real capitalism means that whoever has the money has the influence. To break that hold, we have to change the system.

So right now, take time to understand everyone's point of view. Some protesters and other WRC supporters think we will be fine or even better off without Knight's money. And perhaps they are right, if we only consider the strings attached. But consider the power money has and the good it does. We need the law center. We even need the renovations to Autzen in

order to bring in more money, be more successful in athletics, make future donors happy and make new money to feed into educational coffers. It's not about where the money goes — it's that we need the money at all.

And from Knight's perspective and even from those of other students who may be mad at the vocal protesters, Knight's gifts are a privilege and not a right. We should be glad that even though our own state won't take care of higher education we still have generous donors who can keep us stocked with the facilities and services that keep us competitive.

Again, take the time to inform yourself. Look at all the variables: the WRC, the Fair Labor Association, the future economic concerns of the University, the feelings of Knight, the courage of our University president. You won't be surprised to find that there is no easy answer.

There are just easy targets.

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