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Perspectives

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SCAPEGOAT THE STUDENTS?

Some are blaming the students for Phil Knight's actions and are even threatening to take it out in the workplace

It seems we are still not done with the aftermath of Nike CEO Phil Knight's withdrawal of private donations to the University.

While student reaction to the situation has been intriguing and varied, so has the reaction from the off-campus world. Visitors to the Emerald's Web site and other Duck fan sites have opinions of their own. And some of them aren't pretty.

As we've said earlier, everyone's reactions to this situation with Knight are to place blame: on protesters, on Knight, on University President Dave Frohnmayer. But because the capitalist system is really what has created this financial and ethical nightmare, who can really be blamed?

Well it seems that some of the community — or at least those most vocal on our Web site — are blaming students for what has happened. Apparently some business people who generally hire University graduates have decided to spurn this year's crop because we "irresponsible students" have forced the University to sign onto the Worker Rights Consortium and cost the University more than \$30 million.

A comment made by "J Browning" popped up on Tuesday: "My company employs 3,000 people and last year hired 113 University graduates. Effective immediately my company will not hire anyone who attended the University in the year 1999-2000. ... I feel the current students at the University have shown they are irresponsible and lacking intelligence." And more comments have come via letters to the editor. "A lot of alumni are absolutely disgusted, and I am one of them," writes Murtuz Zamanly.

Because we voted (all 2,000 out of 17,000 of us) for the WRC, and be-

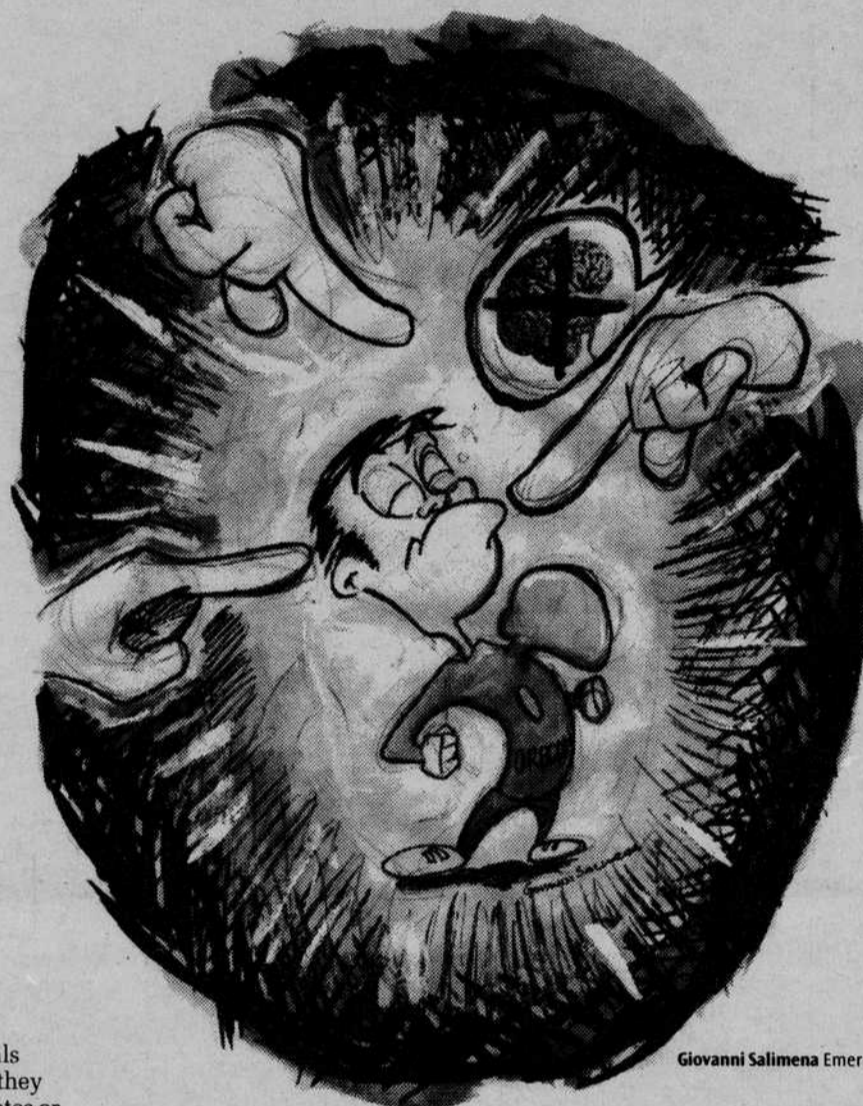
cause some very vocal protesters camped out on the lawn of Johnson Hall to the same end, students are seen as the instigators of the whole fiasco. For the Knight supporters who want to deny University graduates a job in their companies, the logic is that we had no foresight and did not look at the whole picture when making the decision to join the labor group. We acted passionately, and apparently that's not a good business skill.

Well, because this University practices a form of shared governance, there is just more to it than that. The University Senate and the Licensing Code of Conduct Committee recommended the WRC, and the University president signed onto it. Students were just one part of the whole process, and those with the least power. It seems ironic that now, when people want to place blame, they turn to the students.

The companies or individuals who have gone so far as to say they will not hire University graduates or who will forever spurn the University because students here are "irresponsible" are just being irresponsible themselves.

They don't understand that it was Knight who ultimately made the decision to pull his money.

Most of us don't want to see Knight's money go. The fact that his reaction to the WRC is to pull funds without even attempting a compro-



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

mise is unfortunate.

But to blame University students for what has happened when they held the least decision-making power is even more ludicrous. It's letting emotions rule reason. And isn't that what these anti-University graduate business people are blaming us for — being too emotional and not thinking of the bigger picture?

Each individual should be judged on his or her own merits. If the "stigma" of being a Duck is so great as to cost any of us a job, then the world is a very sad place. In fact, it's the same sad world that got us into this mess in the first place.

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

Letters to the editor

Money shouldn't steer principles

I would like to address recent letters that objected the University's commitment to the Worker Rights Consortium on the grounds that Nike CEO Phil Knight withdrew his money from the University.

We should be thankful to our corporate donors. However, a donation should be a gift; it is naturally an unconditional grant. Donating money to the University for a specific purpose is one thing but getting mixed up in how the University conducts its affairs is quite another. That would make it not a donation but a sellout to the highest bidder. Principles should not be compromised on the basis of money.

The issue is not Nike specifically, but how we, as the University, make our decisions. Issues of shared governance and campus democracy need to be addressed. We do not need to add to these the issue of being controlled by our donors. We need to make it clear that any exchange for

"donations" is an obstruction of democracy. This will create financial difficulties for us, but there are certain principles that are worth a little suffering.

I don't necessarily agree with everything the protesters were demanding. I do, however, respect them for standing up for their beliefs. I am proud to call that group — an educated group concerned with integrity, democracy and human rights — a part of this University. Those who think that the protest was about Nike or copying the 1960s need to educate themselves before making unfounded accusations. They could start by talking to the protesters themselves.

Evgenia Fkiasas
 English, Spanish

Capitalism not discussed

I am a little concerned about the discourse that has risen out of the Worker Rights Consortium protests. Although I understand the rationale for promoting the WRC from the perspective of the protesters, I don't see anyone making the connection in global, economic terms, which I feel is more important than sweatshop labor, Nike funding or governance:

namely, our relationship with capitalism.

The main tenet of capitalism is inequality or the ability of one to subjugate another for profit. To protest against the effects of capitalism without addressing their cause is like putting a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. The content of the protest shows that there is a large unawareness of capitalism, due mainly to its pervasiveness and the promotion of capitalism as the only avenue to democracy and (oddly enough) equality.

If capitalism is to remain, expect inequality, domination and expansion. If, however, we are able to view individual issues in relation to capitalism on a level that is above individuals or nations or even international relations, we can find the nature or essence of the problem: not apathy or stupidity or powerlessness, but our own constructed system of economic exchange.

Charles G. Haller II
 international studies, journalism

Knight had no choice

I've kept up with the whole Worker

Rights Consortium situation, and while I believe that it is probably a good idea to join, it had to be obvious that because the action was affecting his company, Nike CEO Phil Knight had pretty much no choice but to stop donations. I, for one, think that it is great to stand up for the rights of others but don't condemn our benefactor for responding in the appropriate way.

By the way, did it ever occur to anyone to thank the man for all he's done for this campus rather than complain and whine about ethics?

Matt Cogorno
 physics

Rally against WRC

Something really needs to be done. It is not about Nike CEO Phil Knight or Nike or even money. It is about a respectable university such as ours joining an extremist highly-politicized Worker Rights Consortium that is backed and funded by American labor groups who don't even care about workers in other countries.

Shame on the 17,000-strong stu-

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THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To a little encouragement

Legislators including Oregon Rep. Peter DeFazio, State Sen. Tony Corcoran, Rep. Vicki Walker and Rep. Floyd Prozanski visited the University campus this week to invite students to register to vote. The Oregon state primary elections are this May.

To revealing topics

A three-day conference at the University this week, InterSEXions, explored the issues surrounding gender and the medical condition of being born intersexed. Transgender issues don't get a lot of attention normally, but that seems to be changing thanks to conferences such as these.



To those damn monkeys!

Once again a monkey in some part of the world has become violent with people. In Delhi, India, a wild monkey population is so out of control that a 48-year-old man died after being struck in the head by a flower pot thrown by one of the animals.

To raping a people

New testimony this week in the war crimes case against Serbian soldiers confirms that the use of rape was a planned part of war strategy. After being raped more than 100 times, one woman had the courage to speak out against the horrible crime.