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Perspectives

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Too little too late

Students now questioning the decision to sign onto the WRC should have been involved from the beginning, rather than making an uninformed vote or no vote at all



I know you've been hearing about it for weeks now, and the three letters W-R-C are rudely invading even your most peaceful dreams. The result of the Johnson Hall protests and Nike CEO Phil Knight rescinding his \$30 million pledge is an indelible and ubiquitous mark on campus. But the source of all this fuss is just recently being scrutinized and the average individual is just now asking, "What exactly is the Worker Rights Consortium?" This should have been interrogated much sooner, but angry students are only now paying attention because of WRC's aftermath.

Did students even know what they were voting for when they marked "yes" next to WRC on the election ballots back in March? Of course those who voted must have associated the term with human rights. If any of them have changed their mind since, claiming they were misinformed, that's their own fault. And others who didn't vote at all just didn't care enough to be informed. Oh, but now they care. Only now are angry students investigating the WRC, but only because Knight got their attention. Losing \$30 million dollars can create a whole new perspective.

Students who walked by the protesters indifferently, making ignorant comments such as "just those damn hippies again," are just now criticizing the WRC. But it doesn't mean much now, does it? If they would have educated themselves in the first place, perhaps they could have made an effort to change the final outcome. For example, since there's always two sides to every controversial issue, why didn't anyone step up and form an anti-WRC organization? Why didn't people like Andy Koper and Caleb Smith, the sports marketing students selling "I agree with Phil" T-shirts, form a campaign earlier to warn students of what could happen if they didn't vote



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"no" for the WRC. Smith told the Emerald on Tuesday, "Basically, we're just trying to ... get students motivated on the other side of the issue ..." That would've been useful before the final decision was made.

As a consequence of students not being

fully aware of the subject and not voting, the decision that was made was in favor of the minority. But again, whose fault is that? University President Dave Frohnmayer even said that if the student vote had turned out differently, then it could have affected the end result.

Many are just now learning about the WRC or finding out new information about it. Some actually had the impression that the WRC was an established organization that monitored sweatshops better than the Fair Labor Association. But as Duncan McDonald, the University's vice president for public affairs and development, said in the May 1 issue of the Emerald, "The thing that I think has never been made very clear is that the WRC is still a concept, not an organization." Those who are just now criticizing this fact should have figured this out sooner and voted no for the WRC when they had the chance.

Because of the lack of knowledge among students, our University signed on to a group that many knew nothing about. Students are suddenly focusing on the monitoring group's flaws and concluding that we made the wrong decision, but only after the University suffered financially. People are just now questioning whether this "concept" can even live up to its aspira-

tions. McDonald also noted that the WRC could possibly be two years away from any factory monitoring because it has no governing body and lacks sufficient financial means and staff infrastructure. But apparently we voted for this, so why are we discovering these weaknesses just now?

The WRC has an uncertain future, and there's no guarantee that it will even accomplish its goals. This means that the loss of Knight's donations and all the anger and commotion it caused could end up being all on the account of something that may not even work out. WRC critics should have presented this side of the issue earlier.

Decisions such as signing on to the WRC are the results of people not caring from the beginning. Students who went from disinterested to deeply disturbed about the issue should have become involved sooner for their complaints to be justified. But unfortunately, it seems these days \$30 million dollars is the going rate for people to turn their heads and pay attention.

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