

PERSPECTIVES

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WRC revisited: Will we stay or will we go?

University President Dave Frohnmayer is in danger of losing students' and administrators' respect with his flawed "are we in or are we out?" approach to the Worker Rights Consortium. Frankly, we have had enough of the game-playing. Frohnmayer should step from behind his smoke-and-mirrors policy and make a decision.

Wednesday's act — Frohnmayer posted a vague statement on the president's Web page implying the University was not joining the WRC because of legal concerns before bolting to the Netherlands for a conference — was a breach of responsibility. Frohnmayer had to know that a confusing proclamation would only stir up passions on both sides of the issue, and he should have been the one answering questions about its significance, not the University attorney. (Especially considering the fact that Frohnmayer is an attorney.)

From the outset, Frohnmayer and other Johnson Hall administrators have bad-mouthed the WRC, which admittedly does not

yet have the structure necessary to carry out its proposed plans. Yet, instead of working to help bolster the labor-rights group's standing, or at least offering more constructive criticism, the University has done everything but that.

In July, after attending the WRC's first-ever board meeting in Washington, D.C., Frohnmayer and Vice President for Public Affairs and Development Duncan McDonald returned with armloads of reasons why the WRC was not a viable organization. In mid-September, Frohnmayer used his authority to make a commitment to the Fair Labor Association — a monitoring group that also receives flak for its structure — and again cast a shadow on the University's commitment to the WRC. And now, last week's continuation of the three-ring circus had prognosticators around campus and the Oregon community at large debating what was happening.

One person, and one person only, can clear up the mess. Frohnmayer has proven that any decision regarding the WRC is his alone. He had the pen in his hand

in April to sign on with the organization. He made the commitment to the FLA. And he released the statement that read, in part, "we cannot pay dues or affiliation fees to the WRC, and therefore can not, at this time, become a member."

Out of respect for all of the students who are impassioned about this subject one way or another, out of respect for the administrators who mumble and grumble in private about the situation, and out of respect for the thousands of alumni across the state and the country, Frohnmayer needs to clarify his comments.

Instead, the issue was muddled, thanks to Frohnmayer using the "flagpole" technique of gauging public opinion: Run it up and see who salutes with the most fervor. Frohnmayer then left town and the media jumped in with their own conclusions. And what conclusions they had.

Local ABC affiliate KEZI descended upon campus with the attitude of a vulture at a slaughterhouse. The station's report Wednesday was overdramatic and

assumed that the University had severed all ties with the WRC, when, in fact, the president's statements made no such claim. The following evening's newscast was even more inflammatory, with the anchor standing outside Johnson Hall, stating that if students were going to protest, they would be setting up on the lawn, a la last spring's demonstrations.

Now, we aren't eager to prompt conspiracy theories, but let's step back and look at some facts.

Frohnmayer and the administration have made it very clear that they are not pleased with the WRC. Nike President and CEO Phil Knight certainly wasn't happy with the decision, as evidenced by his withdrawal of \$30 million and future donations to the University. Frohnmayer needs public sentiment to swing in his direction in order to make the final decision to pull out of the WRC and squelch the pro-WRC voices. The best way to gain public sentiment is to get the media to basically run a hatchet job on the WRC and effectively kill any promise of its survival at the Uni-

versity, which is arguably what KEZI did in its reporting.

Hmm, isn't KEZI owned by Chambers Communications? And doesn't Chambers Communications have a pretty large financial stake in the Autzen Stadium expansion and the overall success of Oregon athletics? Doesn't the station have the contract to televise Duck football games and doesn't it also manage and run Duck Vision, the big screen production at Autzen?

These questions are not meant to imply any kind of dirty business behind the scenes. We are just pointing out that the longer Frohnmayer keeps the community guessing about what is really happening, the more the entire situation is open to interpretation.

Frohnmayer can take the first step in putting a kibosh on all the rumors and innuendo when he returns this week by answering a simple question about the WRC: Are we in or are we out?

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

Simple building economics or an extravagant, wasteful move?

Lane County and Eugene taxpayers currently pay more than \$90 million a year to fund public safety programs. Taxpayers are being asked, again, for more than \$150 million to fund two county ballot measures (20-38 and 20-39) and a Eugene ballot measure (20-36) for public safety. Last November, nearly 75 percent of voters made their views clear by rejecting a \$150 million public safety tax increase.

Just last May, Eugene voters turned down another proposal to build a three-story police complex. Most voters feel overtaxed. Property tax bills, now coming due, will underscore these concerns. But city bureaucrats have rushed back to voters with yet another tax increase proposal.

The tens of millions of dollars requested for more government buildings could be spent improving our decaying schools. The proposed new police station is extravagant and wasteful. Particularly troubling is the fact that \$22 million of Measure 20-36's \$47.5 million is paid to lending institutions for interest — not for actual building construction.

City Hall could be upgraded for a fraction of the \$47.5 million that the city is requesting. One city-commissioned architectural study reported that City Hall could be earthquake-braced for \$500,000. A later memo from WBS Architects estimated the cost of a seismic upgrade at \$2.5 million to \$4.3 million, much less than required by Measure 20-36.

Lane County voters want prevention, not more jails. A county survey last year found that 67 percent of voters favor crime prevention, rather than arrests and incarceration, as a more affordable method for improving public safety. Only 17 percent favored increased emphasis on punishment.

Also contrary to a Lane County survey of voters, effective drug rehabilitation programs are being underfunded or cut completely. Recently, the successful drug rehab program, Passages, was completely cut from the county budget. Instead, county officials approved more money for the Forest Work Camp. Enough is enough.

Crime rates are going down for both adults and juveniles. Additional tax increases for police and jails are not warranted. Proven methods, focusing on crime prevention and social support services, will be short-changed by Measures 20-36, 20-38 and 20-39.

Vote "No!" on Measures 20-36, 20-38 and 20-39.

Carol Berg and Gary Kutcher are co-chairs of the Enough is Enough Committee, a citizen group addressing concerns about unfair taxes, public accountability and local government.



When any organization needs significantly more space, a new building is usually the most economical choice. Organizations as diverse as Symantec, The Register-Guard and the First Baptist Church have all come to that conclusion. Remodeling their existing buildings proved more expensive than new construction. No one should be surprised that building a new police station is the most economical choice for Eugene taxpayers.

The police long ago outgrew the existing police station. It was built nearly 40 years ago, when Eugene was just a little larger than Springfield. As the city has grown, additional staff have been stuffed into every available space. Today, nearly twice as much space is needed for the existing police staff to operate efficiently.

But there is an additional problem that makes it not economical to remodel City Hall: It is a very weak building that will not withstand even a moderate earthquake. Neither City Hall nor any other building downtown meets the stringent earthquake standards required for a public safety building. As a result, remodeling any existing building for police will be prohibitively expensive — \$19.6 to 21.3 million for City Hall. Expanding City Hall to get the space necessary for police would cost even more millions. The engineering firm WBS concluded that a major expansion of City Hall is so impractical that it wasn't even worth an engineer's time to develop a cost estimate.

The average homeowner will pay about \$45 per year for the new police station, as well as to purchase land for a new fire station. The police station will be built on a site owned by the city on 8th Avenue between High and Pearl. Long-term operational costs will be lower because police will remain close to the courts, where officers must frequently go.

The cynics among us can always find a dark cloud inside every silver lining. They propose a wide range of theories about why the city wants to build a new police station. They're all wrong. The citizen committee and council decisions that lead to Measure 20-36 are based on simple building economics and the need for police to be located near the other justice agencies they work with every day. Measure 20-36 is essential for Eugene's future. Please vote yes for 20-36.

John Brown is chair of the campaign in support of Ballot Measure 20-36.

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