

COMMENTARY

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
E-mail: editor@dailyemerald.com
Online Edition:
www.dailyemerald.com

Editor in Chief:
Jessica Blanchard
Managing Editor:
Michael J. Kleckner
Editorial Editor:
Julie Lauderbaugh
Assistant Editorial Editor:
Jacquelyn Lewis

Tuesday, September 25, 2001

OPEU settlement still not enough

Food services. Maintenance. A clean learning environment. They are just a few of the campus amenities we usually don't think much about.

However, members of the Oregon Public Employees Union work behind the scenes every day to keep this and other Oregon universities functioning. Without these workers, campus life would not run as smoothly.

In return for their services, union members requested reasonable wages and benefits when they initiated a "re-opener" clause in their contract in April to discuss issues such as health insurance and salary.

After a long and frustrating negotiation process, fed-up OPEU members declared a bargaining impasse. On Sept. 6, union members voted to go on strike if these requests were not met. Even after this, there were more negotiations with little progress. OPEU and the Oregon University System finally reached a tentative agreement Friday.

We are glad OPEU workers didn't strike. However, we also feel the classified workers deserve more than they received. Whether we realize it or not, OPEU members are integral parts of this campus. They perform job functions essential to University life. If these classified workers would have gone on strike, the effects would have been felt by everyone at the University — from students moving into dorms to faculty members needing clerical support.

While the settlement between OUS and OPEU includes small cost-of-living salary increases — 2 percent starting Jan. 1, 2002 and 3 percent Feb. 1, 2003 — along with full health coverage for full-time employees, it is still not enough for employees trying to make a living and take care of families. Jacobson said OPEU has been behind for at least 10 years in terms of what classified workers make elsewhere in most comparable job categories. Even if it is comparable to other workers, the increase barely covers inflation and isn't enough for workers being paid so little.

The increases requested by OPEU were not extreme but could have made a big difference to these workers. A minimum wage of \$9.95 per hour along with modest salary and health benefit increases are not outrageous requests from employees that are the lifeblood of the University. OUS should have met their requests and given these underappreciated workers the contract they deserve.

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to editor@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Let the thoughtful discussions begin

STAFF COMMENTARY

Julie
Lauderbaugh

Most professional columnists are able to spout long and complicated rants while leaning hard to either the right or left side of the political spectrum, preaching from the safety of an impressive office space located in the ivory tower of a respectable newsroom. These professionals are also able to use run-on sentences at will.

I am not claiming to be one of those professionals. In contrast, my preaching will be done from a small Macintosh in the armpit of the EMU.

Either by luck, hoax or divine intervention, I have become the new editorial editor for the Emerald, an independent publication that has come under fire over the years for its annoyingly liberal undercurrents.

Personally, I don't know how to label myself politi-

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Show hosts carry on with laughter

At one o'clock in the afternoon New York time on Dec. 7, 1941, everything stopped. At that time, 8 a.m. in Hawaii, the Empire of Japan launched an attack against the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, drawing the United States into World War II. At that same time, people in New York were waiting for the 7 p.m. Sunday broadcast of the wildly popular "Jell-O Program," starring the radio and film star, comedian Jack Benny.



Pat
Payne
Columnist

I can almost imagine the cast gathering around a radio or listening to announcers in the

broadcast booth and discussing what to do next. Then perhaps Benny or another cast member rallied everyone, telling them that the show had to go on.

With the expanding national emergency, those tuned into NBC stations at 7 p.m. heard a short blurb about how news bulletins on the station would be inserted as developments warranted. Then the populace heard the reassuring sounds of a quartet singing "J-E-L-L-Ooooo!" and Don Wilson's jovial voice saying "It's the Jell-O Program, starring Jack Benny!"

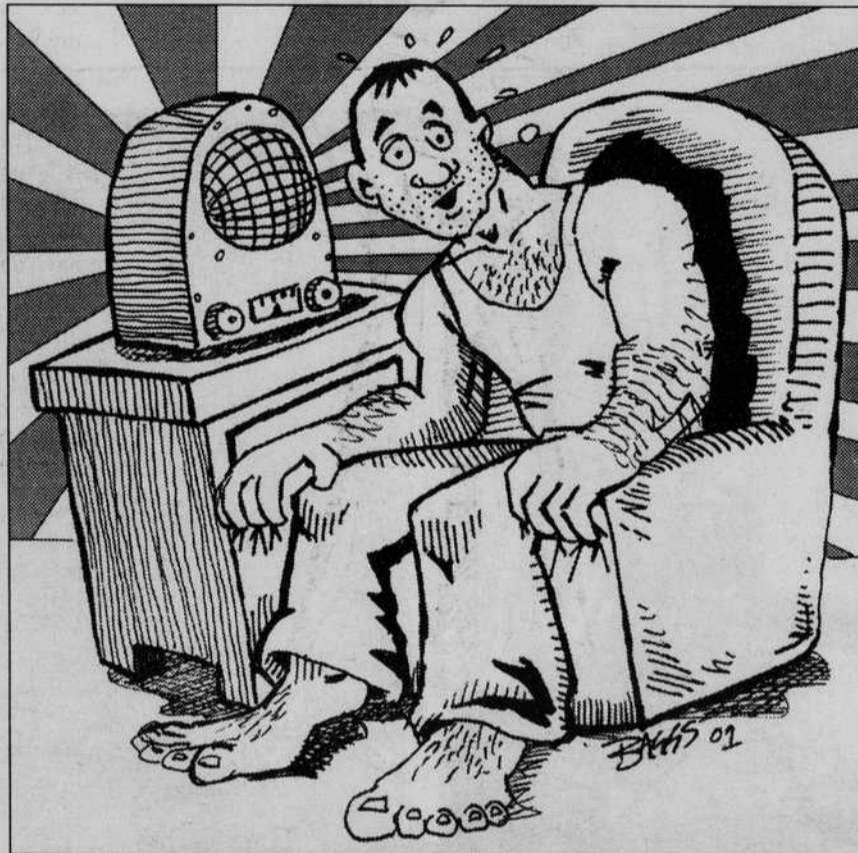
The episode concerned the whole cast's trip to New York and included the running gags concerning Jack's vanity and his sub-par violin playing. When Benny talked of a performance he had given at a local hall, he got this comment from co-star Mary Livingstone: "Well, Jack, if you toy with the word 'lovely...'"

"Lovely, lovely, lous — That's *Mister Benny* to you!"

In short, the cast did not allow the war to intrude on their broadcast. There would be plenty of time for that in the coming four years. After Benny's personal friend Carole Lombard died in a plane crash, for instance, he refused to do a program that Sunday. He insisted that tasteful music replace the broadcast.

But on Dec. 7, they soldiered on. It was a time to give the American people something to laugh at.

At nine o'clock in the morning New



Steve Baggs Emerald

York time on Sept. 11, 2001, everything stopped. As everyone knows now, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

For nearly a week, all of New York's entertainment ceased after the tragedy hit. Broadway shut down in anticipation of more attacks. The New York Yankees had their longest game stoppage since the United States entered World War I. Dave Letterman's "Late Show," usually taped daily in the early evening at the landmark Ed Sullivan Theater, was scrubbed. Although a few cable networks continued with regular broadcasts, even MTV and VH1 for the first time in their existence scrubbed their usual programming to take on the CBS newsfeed.

For the New-York-based shows, they resumed after a week and a mayoral request that life began to return to normal. "Late Night" was not its usual zany self on Sept. 17. The show began with what is known as a "cold start," meaning no music or opening monologue. Instead, we saw Letterman at his desk, giving his impressions, with a somber tone, of the previous five days. Although he

usually poked fun at New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Monday night there was nothing less than high praise for the way the mayor handled himself during the crisis. The comedian nearly burst into tears as he said that "because of (Giuliani), I'm here tonight."

The only real laugh came when guest Regis Philbin came on. When asked about his working relationship with former co-host Kathie Lee Gifford, he replied "There's someone who can end this in a hurry! You want a quick end to this? You send Kathie Lee over there!"

There is one defining characteristic of both these anecdotes. Even through severe adversity, both Jack Benny and Dave Letterman carried on. It would have been very easy to just walk away and never perform again, thinking that in the changed world, there was no room for laughter. But then, if that were true, then the Axis, or the terrorists, would have already won.

Pat Payne is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. He can be reached at patpayne@dailyemerald.com

Foundation funds spent appropriately

GUEST COMMENTARY

Dave
Frohnmayr

A misleading editorial appeared in yesterday's Emerald regarding an audit by the Secretary of State. I was dismayed by this editorial both because of the inaccurate picture it paints of the use of donor funds and the numerous factual errors upon which its spurious argument is based.

The editorial ignores the fact that the audit found no problem with the way in which the vast majority of funds were spent. It also declares that funds in question were "meant for academic improvements in individual departments." This is simply false. The funds in question were given for discretionary purposes to be spent by the appropriate authority as it determined. The Univer-

sity Foundation scrupulously examined every expenditure to be sure that the donor's intent was followed. Every one of the items questioned was found by the University Foundation to be within the intent of the donor.

The Foundation must ensure that funds are spent in accordance with donor intent, but it is the University's obligation to ensure that funds are spent for purposes that achieve the institution's purposes. The expenditures noted fell primarily into three categories: cultivation of donors, team and morale building within academic units, and business-related expenses. Each of these expenditures was within donor intent and was for legitimate university purposes.

The statement that these expenditures "benefited the individuals who abused their authority" is patently false. There has been no abuse of authority. What has occurred, within the intent of the donors' restrictions, is the exercise of judgment.

One can argue with a given judgment. But to categorize these expenditures as violations of donor intent, abuses of authority, or benefiting individuals, is irresponsible and untrue. Your editorial does precisely that of which you accuse the University, which is to "put the University in a negative light when the Oregon legislature decides to delegate funds to higher education."

The audit did point at a number of areas where procedural problems existed, and the University has acted to rectify those as you noted. Running this University is a public trust that my colleagues and I take very seriously. One can always question individual judgments, but we are responsible stewards of the dollars invested in the University, whether public or private. I would challenge you to find an institution that has accomplished more with less.

Dave Frohnmayr is president of the University of Oregon.