

COMMENTARY

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

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

Friday, November 16, 2001

Editorial

Eight young men

Yesterday the papers carried a story about eight young men in New York who, as conscientious objectors to war, received a sentence of a year and a day in federal prison because they refused to register for the draft.

Picture the crowded courtroom scene: eight tense featured theologians and numerous grave-faced spectators watching the show. The judge asks the eight if they would like to reconsider and register "at this last minute."

Can they do it? Can they abandon their principles? Can they allow themselves to be beaten into submission?

The answer, of course, is no. The eight young men hold, in principle, that a soldier's first duty is not to lay down his life for his country, but rather to be prepared to murder other young men. They believe that war and mass slaughter are evil, and that two wrongs can never make a right.

Who is there to say that the young men's beliefs are wrong? Who is there that would enjoy wantonly annihilating his fellow creature?

And yet in our country we believe that the whole is only as strong as its parts. We also believe that one unit takes its strength from the strength of the whole. Thousands of other young men who registered for the draft felt repulsed at the thought of murder, the soldier's business. But weak individually, perhaps, they felt that in a united country there is strength.

The significance of this clash of wills and beliefs seems to be a revelation of a degree of tolerance in our national spirit. We are still free people. Eight young men who violently disagree with the mob rule are permitted to defend themselves. Those who disagree with the young men's action can still sympathize with the young men's principles.

Consider what would happen to the eight young men in a totalitarian world.

Editor's note:
This editorial was taken from the Nov. 16, 1940, edition of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

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.

Stupid driver, sudden stop

GUEST COMMENTARY

Sasha Tavenner Kruger

18th Avenue with wet roads and heavy traffic and a tailgater right behind me. A stoplight turned yellow, I braked, and the car behind me braked so hard that I couldn't see the headlights in my rearview mirror except while the car was still bouncing up and down from the sudden stop. If you run into a heavy, stopped vehicle your car will stop before you do. Your whole body will continue moving at 30 mph until parts of it are stopped individually: your torso by your seatbelt and your head by your neck. This is why neck injuries occur in this situation. You have momentum, and your car has momentum.

Momentum is mass times velocity; since you mass about 10 percent of your car's mass, your car has the greater momentum. Things with momentum which are suddenly stopped have to transfer their momentum. For inelastic collisions, some can be lost as heat and crumpling of the car body itself. Or, the momentum can be transferred to people in the

car (this is how people get thrown through the windshield).

• Sliding without rolling: It is winter and has recently rained. Overnight the temperature has dropped and the bridges (being in contact with more air than ground, and the air temperature being lower than the ground temperature) are a little icy. I'm near Centralia, Wash., and there is a little slowdown half a mile ahead. The car ahead of me hits an overpass going about 70 mph and while on the bridge tries to brake in anticipation of the slowdown. The car begins to turn sideways while not slowing down. The driver panics and hits the brakes hard and turns the steering wheel too much. He gets off the ice and because he has overcorrected with the steering wheel manages to drive off the road and off the shoulder and only barely succeeds in driving back onto the shoulder without sliding down the bank on the side of the road.

Moral of the story? Don't overcorrect your steering and don't hit the brakes hard while in puddles or on ice.

Drive safe, folks!

Sasha Tavenner Kruger is a graduate teaching fellow in the physics department.

Letters to the editor

Free speech isn't a shield

The peace activists who hold American policies and culture responsible for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks air their opinions as free citizens of the United States — writing, speaking and protesting under the protection of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

In his letter to the editor "Patriotism means respecting dissent" (ODE, 11/2), Garger accuses me of wanting to deny these peace activists their freedom of speech when I criticized their opinions in my letter to the editor ("Peace activists are hypocrites," ODE, 10/22).

This is undiluted absurdity. Using the same liberty guaranteed by the First Amendment, I simply conveyed my personal judgment that these peace activists are hypocritical and that their views are outrageous and indefensible.

Suppressing people's freedom of speech should not be confused with discounting foolish opinions. While I may be disgusted by these peace activists' repellent views, I also defend their freedom to state them because the First Amendment is a bedrock of American liberty. The First Amendment is not, however, a shield against denunciation of

people who express unpopular or misguided points of view.

Sean Walston
graduate student
physics

'United We Stand' oversimplifies issue

On Nov. 5, the United States Postal Service issued a stamp with an American flag along with the phrase "United We Stand" across the bottom. However appropriate this initially seems, the phrase has taken on a damaging, polarizing character.

To suggest all U.S. citizens support the Bush administration's current policy in Afghanistan stifles public debate, polarizing our country into a "with us or against us" mentality. A united course of action implies those who sway from popular opinion aren't only unsympathetic to victims, but "un-American." Censoring discourse, especially at a time when it's most needed, is to silence the voice of democracy.

During the Vietnam War, we suffered a similar split, where you were either a "warmonger" or a pacifist. The Vietnam War is still fresh in the minds of those who fought the military war and the social and political war at home. The political and military lessons are still humbling influences in our foreign policy.

Lessons of the Vietnam War,

however, tend to be forgotten, substituted by an easier-to-swallow version of war, where good versus evil is clearly defined and public support is unanimous. This picture, painted after World War II, led us down the long, bloody road to Vietnam. History may repeat itself if we forget lessons of the past.

As the USPS issues the new stamp, Americans should consider implications of such a limiting statement in a country that prides itself on tolerance and acceptance, and disassociate patriotism with unquestioned allegiance.

Levi Strom
junior
political science, sociology

People have insurance rights

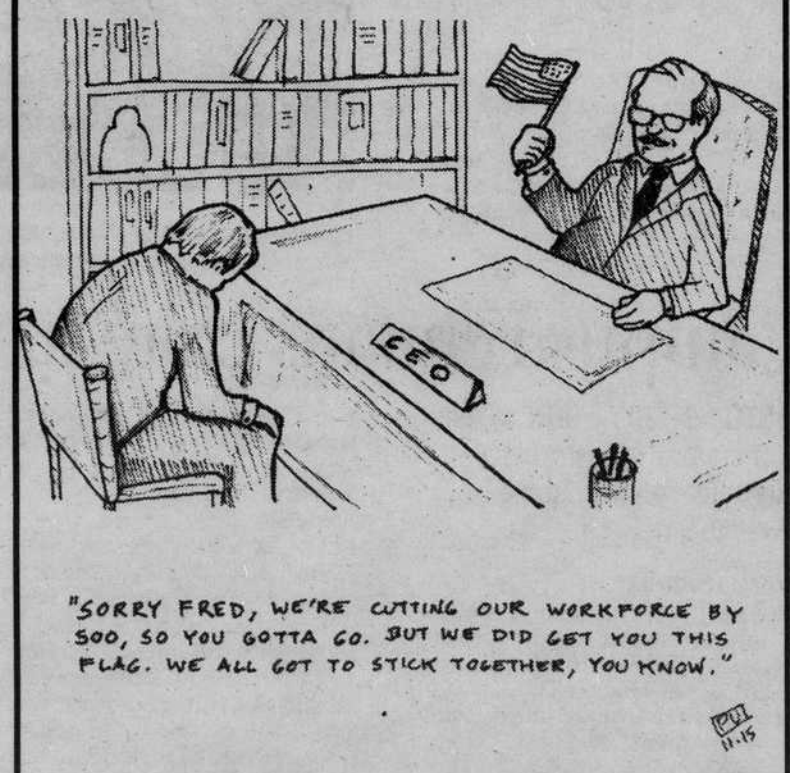
After the grief following a disaster comes another disaster — the reality of insurance claims and a public left in the lurch.

The public deserves access to information about their fundamental insurance claim rights and the rules that govern insurance company behavior, but policyholders will demand that information only if told they have the right to it.

Ask yourself if you have been provided with such information, and then imagine having to file claims after a disaster without it.

Tony Braga
Fall River, Mass

Peter Utsey Emerald



"SORRY FRED, WE'RE CUTTING OUR WORKFORCE BY 500, SO YOU GOTTA GO. BUT WE DID GET YOU THIS FLAG. WE ALL GOT TO STICK TOGETHER, YOU KNOW."

CLARIFICATION

Wednesday's story about the ASUO special election ("Students approve funding," ODE, 11/15) misidentified the placement of the Clark Document. The Clark Document is included in the ASUO Green Tape Notebook, but is not a part of the ASUC Constitution.