

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Jessica Blanchard
 Managing Editor:
 Jeremy Lang
 Editorial Editor:
 Julie Lauderbaugh
 Assistant Editorial Editor:
 Jacquelyn Lewis

Wednesday, January 30, 2002

Editorial

We should stay open-minded about detainees

The 158 detainees being held on suspicion of terrorist activity have received a lot of media attention regarding their treatment by American military forces at the Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba. But details of how American officials are treating the captives are ambiguous at best. Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed this issue Jan. 27 when he publicly entertained the idea of allowing the captives prisoner of war protections outlined under the Geneva Convention. The detainees are neither prisoners nor convicted terrorists until they have been proven guilty by the American justice system.

The captives need to remain classified as detainees because the United States needs time to conduct thorough investigations. The White House should refrain from officially labeling detainees "terrorists" and "killers," as President George W. Bush told reporters at a joint news conference earlier this week. Marking them terrorists assumes the detainees are guilty until proven innocent, a decidedly un-American form of justice.

Concern that the United States may appear shockingly arrogant about the situation to other countries is valid. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer epitomized American insolence when he said the detainees in Cuba were "lucky" to be captured rather than killed. "They're being treated well, because that's what Americans do," he said.

With this latest opposition to complying with the POW treatment demanded by the Geneva Convention, the White House is revealing a frightening trend of resistance to international treaties. In August, Bush broke away from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, and in March 2001, the White House refused to implement the Kyoto Protocol, sending shock waves as the world reacted to Bush's blatant disregard for environmental treaties.

Powell made the right move to break with the White House's stance on the rights of the captives in Cuba. There are too many questions concerning the treatment and guilt of the detainees to impose any protections on them. No one is positive of where the captives came from, although there are reportedly captured combatants from about 30 countries. What's worse, it has not been clarified whether al-Qaeda terrorist network members or Taliban soldiers are part of the same vilified group, or whether one of the groups holds more clout than the other.

The detainees being held in Cuba should remain there, without POW status, until more information about their possible involvement in the attacks on the United States is found. The White House should heed Powell's suggestion to remain open-minded to the possibility of adhering to international rules governing the treatment of the captives. No one can make assertions about the guilt or innocence of the captives at this point, but inflammatory remarks about their treatment or guilt will only contribute to the world view that the rules apply to everyone but the Bush Administration.

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.

Hard road to Roe

Seven years before I was born, the U.S. Supreme Court assured me one of the most important rights I have as a U.S. citizen — the right to make decisions about my own body. Now, 29 years later, the same legal body is poised to try to take that right away.

The decision I am talking about is of course the infamous Roe v. Wade case. However, if the small but vocal minority of anti-choice activists in this country get their way, Roe v. Wade, along with any chance of my equality as a woman, will be history.

The connection between a woman's control over her body and a woman's status in society has even been recognized by the Supreme Court. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the opinion of the court was that "the ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives."

The danger of abortion laws being repealed is ever-present but covert. In a recent survey by Lake Snell Perry, 58 percent of women under the age of 30 reported they would be worried if President Bush tried to overturn Roe vs. Wade by appointing conservative justices to the Supreme Court. Even the retirement of one justice could upset the very tenuous 5-4 balance.

But being worried is not enough. In this day and age, when a woman's right to make decisions about her own body is being rapidly reduced by ridiculous and punitive court decisions, it is of the utmost importance for young women and men to work to preserve that right.

Roe vs. Wade was not a decision about abortion or morality; rather, it was about believing that women are human enough to make up their own minds about their own bodies.

In a perfect world, where everyone regardless of gender, economic status or race receives honest education about sex, has access to free contraceptives that work 100 percent of the time and where rape is nonexistent, abortions would not be necessary. But there is no such place.

Abortion is a hard and important decision for a woman, but it must remain her decision.

A fundamental belief in democratic societies is in the right to self-determination. To deny a woman the right to control all aspects of her body is the same as saying that she is not an equal human.

Indeed, the influences of societal attitudes that deny women the right to choose are far-reaching. If a woman isn't allowed to decide what stays in her body, then a society feels more justi-

fied in taking control over what enters her body and what action occurs to her body.

The statistics bear this out. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that one woman is raped in the United States every 90 seconds, and according to the United Nations Study on the Status of Women, one woman in America is beaten every 15 seconds.

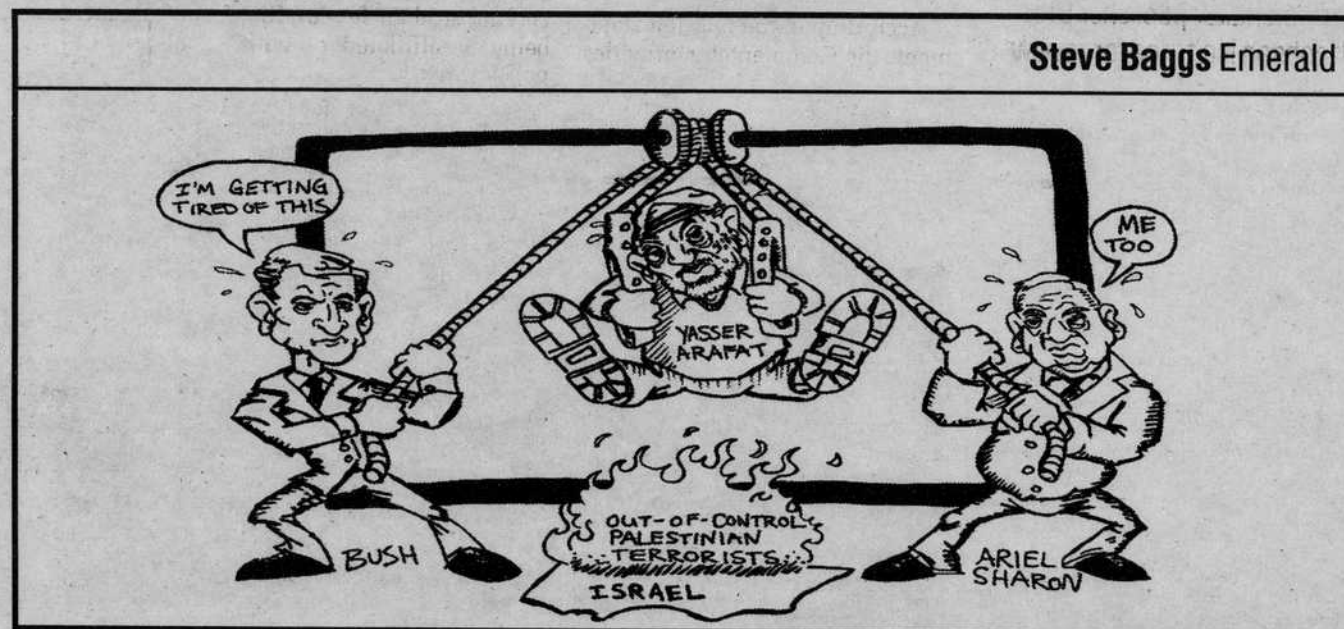
Our attitudes toward reproductive freedom and equality for women go hand-in hand with our societal tolerance toward violence against women.

Along with this, though, is a very potent solution that we as young adults can use to ensure our rights and the rights of the next generation. We must not take for granted the work of our predecessors. It is the responsibility of all people in this country who believe in individual freedom to become informed of the issues and to translate that knowledge into active advocacy and change.

The path will not be an easy one, and the victory will not be won by passive recognition of the problem. It will take a lot of voices and even more courage, but it is perhaps the greatest challenge that we must meet.

This column, by Kasia Rutledge, is courtesy of the University of Missouri at Kansas City's student newspaper, the University News.

Steve Baggs Emerald



Emerald opinions too hypocritical

GUEST COMMENTARY

Bret Jacobson

The Emerald has once again proven that their meek intellectual capacities are rivaled only by their moral weakness. Not only has the editorial board come down on the wrong side of the growing Commentator funding controversy, but it has also sold out its journalistic integrity.

The Emerald, in its infinite wisdom, has decided that the Oregon Commentator should change its mission statement for the sake of not making waves. The only problem is every single argument the newspaper made in its editorial was wrong in assumption and conclusion.

The worst argument is misunderstanding the need for viewpoint neutrality. It is the process by which student groups are funded that must be viewpoint neutral according to federal law, not a publication funded by students. The editorial board should understand simple but important legal issues before basing entire editorials on faulty knowledge.

The outcome of the recent Southworth Supreme Court decision is not that student groups cannot have opinions. After

all, from where would the much ballyhooed notion of diversity originate if there were no dissenting voices? The shortsightedness of believing every group should remove from their missions their inherent philosophies — in the Commentator's case, a political philosophy — would have a crippling effect on the campus "war of ideas."

A critical point in this concern is that a publication cannot consider itself to be faithful to its mission if it changes its mission statement to supplicate a governing body comprised of those who clearly aren't capable of fulfilling their duties.

And to the dismay of the editorial board, the Commentator will continue to fight to keep its mission statement intact, as it has every legal right to do. It has never been the position of this magazine, or that of any respected publication, to fold just because a govern-

mental organization has run afoul of the law or a weak daily paper has urged acquiescence. So while the illusory ivory tower of University publications may feel it proper to prescribe aristocratically gentle notions of keeping the peace, those who have firm beliefs must fight for them.

There is also a great deal of hypocrisy in the editorial. The Emerald has been extremely critical of the Programs Finance Committee in the past, especially last year when the newspaper was hit significantly in the student fees it received after a PFC decision.

At one time, I had the good fortune to work at the Emerald on its editorial board. I saw then that only the most careful examination of issues and strongest adherence to critical journalistic values makes for respectable opinions. The editorial failed on both those counts, and it is unsurprising that the opinion is that of arrogant, petulant children.

Bret Jacobson is publisher of the Oregon Commentator.