

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:
Jeremy Lang
Editorial Editor:
Julie Lauderbaugh
Assistant Editorial Editor:
Jacquelyn Lewis

Tuesday, May 14, 2002

Editorial

Sexuality should be addressed in housing

For some students, getting along with an assigned roommate in the residence halls is difficult. The situation can be made worse when the roommates have opposing views on religion, music or sexuality. And for residents who are not comfortable with their roommate's lifestyle, a year-long housing contract could be a negative experience for both parties.

Pairing roommates who have opposing views on each other's sexuality is especially disastrous. One possible solution would be for University Housing to place a "queer-friendly" option on its roommate questionnaire form asking potential residents if they are more comfortable living with a homosexual or heterosexual roommate.

Currently, the roommate questionnaire asks other important lifestyle questions so it can properly match future roommates. Residents are asked to check boxes indicating sleeping hours, sound levels, music and smoking preferences and their approaches to cleanliness to help make sure roommates are compatible. Adding an additional option concerning the level of comfort with homosexuality would just be one more box to check.

For students who would be most affected, this could have the benefit of creating a safer environment for residents. Gay students shouldn't be paired with roommates who are uncomfortable sharing a room with homosexuals, and vice versa. Placing individuals in living situations where both parties aren't comfortable is counter-productive and only encourages intolerance.

One way to open minds is to expose new students to different cultures and lifestyles through the residence hall experience. But the University needs to recognize that there are ways to improve their roommate-pairing survey. Placing a "queer-friendly" option on the questionnaire is a simple step toward creating a safer, more comfortable living environment for hall residents.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@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.

Welcome to the 'Stale Ideology Amateur Hour'

Sometimes, when I interview or a speech, I think to myself: "What the hell have I gotten myself into?" Attending Holly Swanson's speech at Prince Lucien Campbell Hall last week was one of those. Swanson's stated premise was that the environmental movement had been taken over by the Green Party, which she labeled as "a communist organization."

Politics here in Eugene can be described as "FUBAR" at best. Given the incendiary subject that Swanson (who is the head of "Operation Greenout" — a group dedicated to exposing the hidden agenda of the Green Party — and author of "Set Up and Sold Out") addressed, it's little wonder that plainclothes Department of Public Safety officers showed up to keep people from demonstrating — physically — their disdain for Swanson's position.

Her main premise (outside of the communist allegations, which I still find dubious) resonated quite a bit with me. She alleged that, in many ways, the Greens have become rather manipulative in their practices. This is a no-brainer. The Greens do keep dangling out the specter of total ecological collapse, and do not use this to bring attention to real ecological problems. Instead, they use it to milk votes and memberships out of people in the same way that Pat Robertson uses the shadow of Satan to wring money out of those dumb enough to listen to him.

That being said, it was still an evening that left me with a view of some of the worst sides of both extremes, left and right. Swanson, although she definitely had an interesting premise that I somewhat agree with, came across as someone who had gotten so lost in her own ideology that she just lost focus. There were things that may have sounded completely logical to her, but were to me just slightly above "I have here in my hand a list of 59 names of members of the State Department." By the same token, the large retinue of hecklers came off as being not only closed-minded and provincial, but also so assured of their own moral superiority that anyone who didn't agree with them was automatically a horrid Earth-raper who was personally keeping the entire population of Guatemala penniless.



Pat Payne
Columnist



Steve Baggs Emerald

There were quite a few points in the evening in which both the audience and Swanson lost me with major logical disconnects, proving historian Henry Adams' observation that "practical politics consists in ignoring facts." Hank should have replaced "facts" with "logic." One of the audience members who actually came prepared for rational discussion instead of flame-sliding, mentioned a passage in her book in which she linked the Nazi-era "green police" of occupied Holland (if you've read or seen "The Diary of Anne Frank," you've heard of them) and the Green Party. When he asked Swanson to elaborate, her response in a nutshell was: They both used the color green. This was such a blindingly bizarre statement that it defies belief that anyone could utter it. To basically say that the Green Party is linked with the Nazis because they both use the color green to me was offensive. I

have no love for the Greens, but to resort to innuendo like this, with no mitigating facts linking the two in any rational fashion, is very much the same kind of crass manipulation for which she rightfully criticizes the Greens. Of course, the best her opponents could muster was to say that she had "blood on her hands" merely because she was wearing a gold necklace implying that she supported some sort of "blood jewelry" market like the diamond trafficking in Sierra Leone, which in of itself is equally manipulative.

What fun. The debate was like listening to a mostly pathetic battle of wits between Sen. Joe McCarthy and Abbie Hoffman. I, for one, am just glad I survived the "Stale Ideology Amateur Hour."

E-mail columnist Pat Payne at patpayne@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Anti-abortion insert offers false data

GUEST COMMENTARY

Rachel Pilliod

Opening up last week's eight-page advertisement in the Emerald served as a wake-up call to those of us who have yet to realize how endangered a woman's right to control her own body is.

The advertising supplement, "Life is full of surprises," was paid for by Human Life Alliance, based in Minnesota. I found it peculiar that this anti-choice organization found it had such a strong handle on the social setting in Eugene that it needed to provide us with inaccurate information. Perhaps the authors of this insert don't feel the need to educate themselves with more than hearsay and rumors, but I believe the people of Eugene have a greater understanding of what informed choice is.

A woman's right to choose is not only a personal and private decision, it is also protected by the law. Contrary to what the anti-abortion movement would have us believe, *Wade v. Roe* does not give women an unlimited right to abortion throughout pregnancy, and most states have laws that ban abortion except for health reasons after fetal viability.

Despite the emotionally-charged rhetoric of the anti-abortion insert, abortion is a very safe medical procedure that has not been

linked by any reliable studies to causing breast cancer or long-lasting emotional damage. Abortion, as in all surgery, provides some possibility for physical complications. However, major complications, such as a hemorrhage, serious pelvic infection or tear in the uterus are very rare.

As for the breast cancer allegations, the most scientifically reliable studies on the subject found either no link between abortion and breast cancer or only a questionable link to abortion after 18 weeks. Furthermore, recent reviews of multiple studies on the subject, including reviews in the journal published by the American Cancer Society, dismiss claims that abortion is a significant risk factor for breast cancer.

Another accusation made in the insert is the suggestion that long-term depression will come about as a result of abortion. Unfortunately, the insert failed to mention that there is no evidence that women who have abor-

tions commonly develop long-term serious psychological problems. Additionally, after reviewing the many studies on this subject, former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D., concluded that the emotional problems following abortion are "minuscule from a public health perspective."

When provided with such a barrage of facts and studies based on scientific evidence, the far-reaching claims of the anti-choice insert hardly seem credible. I sincerely hope that if the insert served any purpose, it was to startle all of us nestled in our open community, with plenty of services at our disposal.

Given the amenities that we have, it is often difficult to see the peril our comforts are in. I urge everyone to educate themselves and their peers and to remind them of how quickly the values we revere can be taken away or smeared by colorful ads and emotionally charged words and phrases.

The challenge to protect our bodies and our choices is most certainly upon us — the time to act is now.

Rachel Pilliod is a sophomore political science and general science major and the ASUO President-elect.