

COMMENTARY

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Blindly following the political flock

Activism on campus is not dead. While Eugene has recently gone through a relative drought of political activism, the rally on Wednesday (Nov. 20) revived my faith in democracy and freedom of speech.

On a day entitled the "Nationwide Youth and Student Day of Solidarity Against the War, Racism and Oppression," students in Eugene and around the country united around the common cause of bringing the looming, preemptive war against Iraq to an end. People from all types of backgrounds spoke or tabled in an effort to bring awareness and solidarity to an issue that has largely been politicized and misinterpreted.



Meghann Farnsworth
 Just think about it

It seems ironic to me that on a day when a diversity of people are uniting against oppression, racism and war that the College Republicans should loom their ugly heads — waving commercially made signs saying "Bush/Cheney," and a poorly made sign contending that "UO Students Support America," this small band made their way to the back of the EMU where they proceeded to camp out. The only reason I give this group any column space at all is to undermine their attempt at stealing away the demonstration, and to illuminate the fallacies in their stance.

While I am not against their presence, I take serious offense when it is implied that I am unpatriotic, or un-American, simply because I am against the current administration's foreign policy. By blindly holding up signs that do not depict any stance on the war at all, only that they support Bush and Cheney, implies that these conservatives will follow their leaders blindly, and with little debate. How can someone "support" America when our actions overseas have caused thousands, if not millions, of people to despise us? I am proud to be an American, but I do not

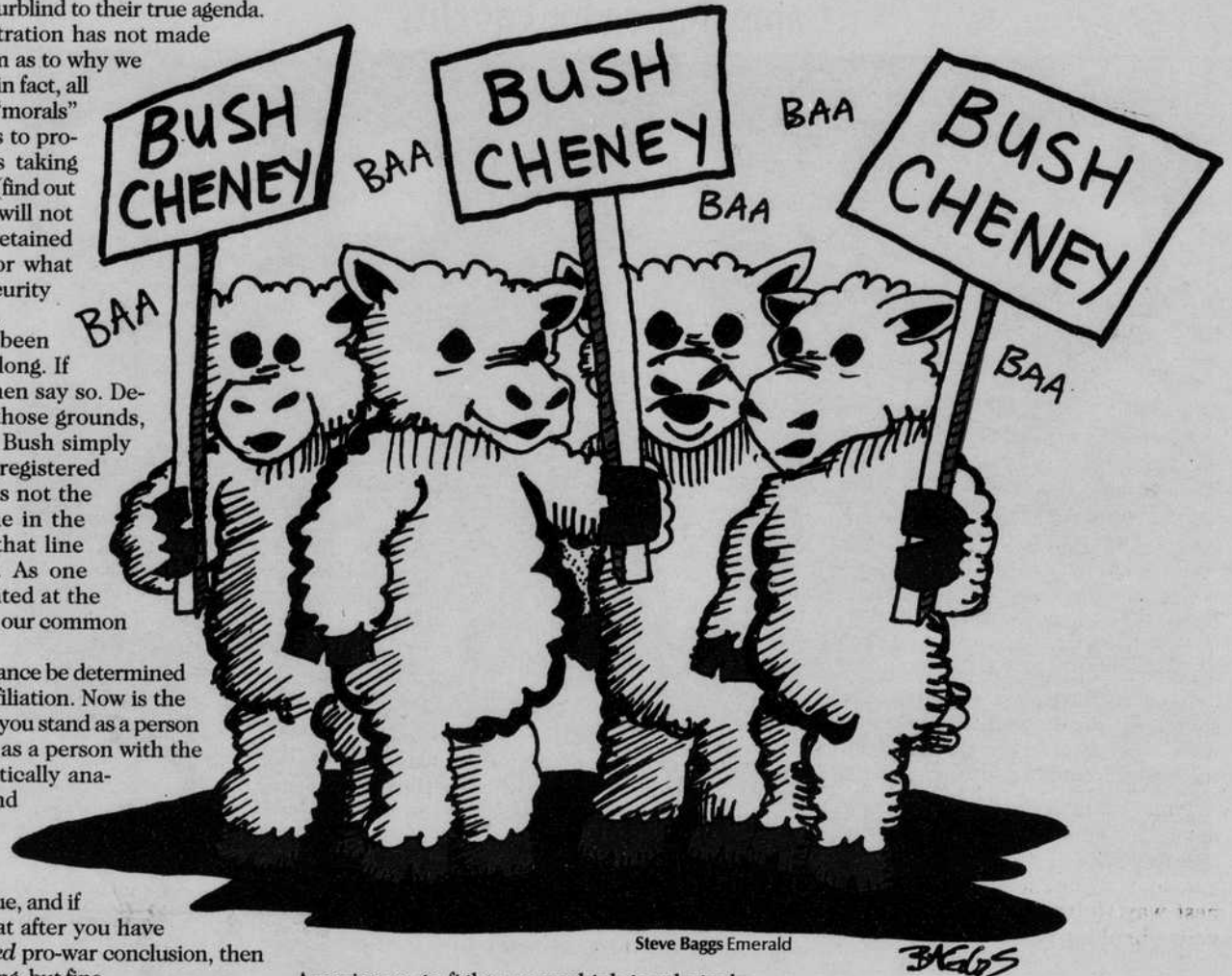
follow my leaders purblind to their true agenda.

The Bush administration has not made one legitimate claim as to why we should attack Iraq; in fact, all of the "rights" and "morals" he claims he wants to promote abroad he is taking away here at home (find out why Bush says he will not release names of detained Muslim suspects, or what the Homeland Security bill will actually do).

This war has been politicized for too long. If you are pro-war, then say so. Debate the issue on those grounds, not by supporting Bush simply because you are a registered Republican. This is not the time to draw a line in the sand, and across that line you cannot cross. As one sign poignantly stated at the rally, "The future is our common ground."

Do not let your stance be determined by your political affiliation. Now is the time to show where you stand as a person of conscience, and as a person with the ability to learn, critically analyze a situation and change your mind when confronted with different ideas. Study the issue, and if you can tell me that after you have come to an unbiased pro-war conclusion, then fine. You're still wrong, but fine.

There is not enough space to speak of all the issues surrounding this war. However, on a final note I would just like to point out the injustice that a corporate-run white male government should demand that the military, which is the largest and most successful affirmative action institution in the country for African



Steve Baggs Emerald

Americans, go fight a war which is relatively against their interests. People of color, as well as Caucasians, should be outraged that our administration wants them to fight the oil war for them, and yet take away educational money in poor urban areas. I did not see any students of color in the College Republicans "demonstration," and I am not surprised.

"Not in our name, not by our hands, not with our lives."

Contact the columnist
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 Her views do not necessarily represent
 those of the Emerald.

Education, not patrols, can bring party safety

Guest commentary

Recently, I was introduced to a fine Oregon tradition: speaking at an outdoor forum at the EMU Amphitheater. I had corresponded with ASUO on the subject of students' rights in regard to partying off-campus, and they graciously invited me to speak. I shared the dais with members of the Eugene Police Department and the Department of Public Safety, as well as legal advisers from the University. It was a positive experience for me and most of the students who attended.

As I spoke, I looked at the faces of the participants. In the students' faces I saw a desire to learn more of the constitutional protections that we all share, and on the faces of my brothers and sisters in the law enforcement community, I saw looks of boredom at having to be there and looks of disdain for me that I would take the students' side in this conflict with the law. After the presentation, I spoke with leaders of ASUO, who are as determined as I to ease the conflict. I think ASUO agrees with me on the need to inform, but I may be standing alone by insisting that empowerment goes along with knowledge.

With a solid grasp of both concepts, the students could then begin to exer-

cise their duty as citizens, observing and reporting the actions of law enforcement to their city and University leaders. Such observations are the necessary prelude to change. Public safety is a two-way street. The citizenry can't be safe if their police don't follow the rules as set down by the city and by the courts, and the police can't do their jobs in the face of noncooperation by the citizens.

In the present atmosphere of us versus them, all students and all citizens of Eugene are getting poor protection. Resources are expended on preventative patrols that haven't changed the behavior of either the students or the more dangerous anarchists one whit. The rest of the city has to get by with little or no police service while these harassing patrols are in use.

I think that if the students and residents of the West University neighborhood organize and learn what their rights are and what powers they have, they will clearly see their duty to cease putting their part of the city at risk, and they will be able to effectively give EPD and DPS the constructive criticism they badly need. By that time, the EPD and DPS leadership will have shown themselves either amenable to policy change, or in need of personnel change.

George Schneider works in law enforcement and lives in Portland.

Letters to the editor

Make a smarter statement

The sub-heading from your Nov. 12 cover article, "Students provide educated opinions about possibility of U.S. war in Iraq" was unconvincing. Not because of the copy that followed, but rather the picture that accompanied the article. The photo captured a student (supposedly) holding a makeshift sign stating "WAR IS STUPID."

Now, I'm not in full agreement with the move to go to war with Iraq, but this over simplified statement on a rudimentary sign does absolutely nothing to suggest that Oregon students are actually providing educated opinions on the matter.

To the protesters: Bring a more substantial vocabulary to the table if you want someone to take serious notice.

Gene Willis
 first year graduate
 general business

Letter lies about Bush

For a history major, Zachary White's letter to the editor (ODE, "Bush shows heroism in stand against Iraq," Nov. 19) is a series of historical falsehoods.

First, White claims that President George W. Bush puts the safety and security of the American people in high priority. If this were true, Bush would be waging a war on al-Qaida, not Iraq. Investigations by the FBI, the CIA and Czech Intelligence have found no substance to rumors of an Iraq-al-Qaida connection. Furthermore, the CIA made a statement that Americans are more vulnerable to terrorist attacks now than they were prior to Sept. 11, yet Bush continues to push for war in Iraq.

White also plays upon the tiresome comparison of Saddam Hussein to Hitler. No one denies that Hussein is a brutal dictator, but that did not stop the U.S. government from supplying Hussein with weapons during the Iraq-Iran war. It also didn't stop Vice President Dick Cheney, when he was CEO of Halliburton, from making a \$23.8-million deal with Hussein so that he could afford to build weapons of mass destruction.

All this going on while humanitarian aid to Iraq

— food and medical supplies that the people of Iraq desperately needed — were withheld because they may have a dual purpose.

As far as historical accuracy goes, the comparison made by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's government carries more validity than the one made by White.

Levi Strom
 senior
 sociology, political science
 co-founder, Students For Peace

Make it legal and tax it

In response to the column, "Smoke-filled Logic," (ODE, Nov. 11), I find the argument hard to swallow. The author says that Ballot Measure 20 "assumes that smokers can and should be penalized for choosing to do something that society looks down on." Isn't that the way our entire legislative system works? Society deems some act unfavorable and then creates laws to limit it.

True, there are other behaviors in addition to smoking that raise general health care costs. His comparison of smoking to overeating is valid, and I would be in strong support of a McDonald's tax as well. What he fails to address, however, is that smoking is not only harmful to the smoker, but to whoever happens to be nearby. Tobacco smoke is a pollutant that is offensive to the general public, and some people are allergic to it.

I don't smoke cigarettes, though I do enjoy cigars and recently bought a tobacco pipe; I love good beer, I think marijuana should be legal, etc.

While I strongly oppose any absolute prohibition of these substances, I strongly support keeping them in their respective places (e.g., alcohol out of cars and tobacco out of enclosed spaces) and taxing the hell out of them to pay for health plans, hospitals, schools or whatever else the budget is failing to maintain. Buying cigarettes at the old price is not a "basic right," as he claims. No one is born a smoker. If they don't like the tax, they can quit and do everyone a favor.

Harvey Rogers
 senior
 environmental science