

# COMMENTARY

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## Editorial

### University must speak on looming war in Iraq

At Wednesday's University Senate meeting, faculty representatives decided that debating or voting on a resolution opposing the possibility of war in Iraq did not fall under their authority.

How could this be? The question at hand isn't a policy issue — it's simply a statement of opinion about an issue that is of the gravest importance to every American, including University community members, and would affect students and their possibilities for education greatly.

Some of the arguments made by those opposed to hearing the resolution said that it could threaten the legitimacy of the senate and that they wanted to keep intact the power that the senate does have.

These points seem to us red herrings. Surely University members, as a community of people who traffic in education and critical thinking, have the right to express their collective opinion about an issue as important as war. In fact, if they take their duty as intellectuals seriously, they have an obligation to share their knowledge and analysis with the larger community.

Another concern, to us more powerful, was expressed most eloquently by political science Dean Priscilla Southwell. The problem with the University Senate voting on this resolution, she said, was that no one knew the faculty senators' political leanings when they voted for them, so there's no way to know if the senators would adequately represent everyone's opinions.

For this reason, we have to agree with the senate's decision. In times of looming war, everyone should have the chance to speak their mind, and a vote of only a few is not adequate. (We might add that this was a problem when the U.S. Senate voted to authorize war, as well.)

While we agree with Southwell, we do have a question. Other speakers opposed to hearing the resolution said the senate should constrain itself to issues that more directly affect the University — such as higher education funding and class sizes. But those issues are also explicitly political, so why do faculty members trust senators to represent them on those issues?

Our misgivings on that point aside, Southwell was right. But she also spoke of pure democracy, of everyone having a vote and a voice. To that, we say: Bring it on.

The University Assembly must take up this issue. The feeling in the room at the senate meeting — and a more general feeling on campus — is that the community is opposed to using military force in Iraq. There is no rational reason, then, except for moral cowardice or frightening complicity, for the community not to tell the world what it thinks about the possibility of war.

This resolution needs to be presented to the University Assembly for debate and a vote, and the same resolution must be put to students in a special election.

Once the entire community has had a chance to speak, think and decide, it should declare its opinion to the world. The issue is much too important for the University to be frightened of speaking. If we don't, who will?

#### Editorial policy

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

## UNITE against sweatshop goods

All right, I admit it — I am a "Gap girl." I like shopping at the mall, I like buying clothes and I like dressing "cute." As I look down at what I am wearing right now, I realize that from head to toe I am covered in articles of clothing from Gap to Old Navy, and Vans to Victoria's Secret.

So sue me. I love the way the clothing looks with my college-student budget, and I can buy decent-quality clothing without having to take out another loan.

With Christmas right around the corner, my wish list is packed with scarves and sweaters from the store to add to my name-brand wardrobe.

But I might need to rethink my list.

This holiday season, garment workers from Indonesia are calling consumers here in the United States to boycott Gap Inc. products.

The reason: The work conditions in these third-world sweatshops are inhumane, according to workers. And I don't doubt it. In a recent study by the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees, also known as UNITE, it has been concluded that the current work conditions in Gap factories are lacking. UNITE states that currently there are poor health and safety conditions in these factories in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

These factories are often dirty and unsafe, and the workers are



Steve Baggs Emerald

treated poorly, either by being beaten for mistakes or even going without pay as punishment. In fact, according to one Lesotho garment worker, the factories are so dusty that they cannot avoid breathing in the fibers.

In addition, Ginny Coughlin, UNITE's Global Justice for Garment Workers Campaign Director states that although the company does pay its workers in these countries the declared minimum wage, it is often hard for the workers to make ends meet.

Higher pay is not the issue here. Wages may be low but they are provided with work that they might not otherwise have. Also, if the pay was as much as workers in the United States, it would be too much. Their economy is not as stable, and it would send them into flux.

They are, in fact, receiving their minimum wage set up by their government. Here in the United States, it is the same: People working for minimum wage cannot always make ends meet, either. According to the Community Action Directors in Oregon, a two-bedroom apartment goes for, on average, \$664 a month, meaning that an individual working for the minimum wage would need to work overtime to be able to afford rent and living expenses.

The real issue here is the safety of the workers. The employees in these sweatshops have the right to a safe work environment, and the current conditions are far from that. Things need to change.

While I cannot just throw out all of my clothes, I can at least make an effort by boycotting fur-

ther purchases, at least this holiday season.

If only for a short time, the holiday rush, this boycott can hit them hard and hit them where it hurts. I can only hope that this will make a difference.

Think this doesn't affect you because you don't shop at Gap? Think again. Gap Inc. heads up not only Gap stores worldwide, but also Old Navy and Banana Republic, among others. And even if these brands aren't the ones you would choose, many other brands are made in sweatshops as well, some of which have the same types of working conditions.

Fallen into the "Gap"? Maybe it's time to crawl back out.

Contact the columnist at sarahspellman@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Sarah Spellman  
Spin cycle

## Letters to the editor

### Emerald needs rational opinions

I pray that columnist Meghann Farnsworth is a freshman. If not, there is no hope for her life and she can be written off from the list of productive members of society. Her column "Blindly following the political flock" was so poorly reasoned and simultaneously arrogant that one can only assume such a perspective is born from a lack of life experience.

The first troubling point is Farnsworth's assumption that democracy is only expressed when socialists, deviants and the unemployed flock to the EMU. Then she makes the assertion that College Republicans, who "loom their ugly heads" by making a political statement of their own, must be uninformed and blindly following Republican policy because they disagree with her. This point is completely indefensible and betrays Farnsworth's use of the same stereotyping technique she accuses her ideological superiors of employing. The idea that free speech is only exer-

cised when dissidents speak up misses the fact that apathy is a human right, as is the decision to calmly and rationally support American foreign policy.

When it comes to the debate about a potential war, the Emerald should make an attempt to have rational individuals voice opinions. Simply letting the dregs of Eugene have a platform is in no way representative of the ultimate decision-making political process. I am positive, and even delighted, that the Emerald has chosen to hire the intellectually disadvantaged as part of its equal opportunity employment effort so that every so often the comics will run instead of an educated opinion.

Bret Jacobson  
publisher  
Oregon Commentator

### No grounds for war

I believe history major Zachary White's letter (ODE, "Bush shows heroism in stand against Iraq," Nov. 19) revealed that his studies are still in an early stage.

Firstly, there was indeed a politically active "Bush-like character" in the 1930s. He was a rather

prominent one indeed who, were it not for our Russian friends, would have conquered Europe with relatively little resistance.

Secondly, White states that Iraq is in violation of a treaty signed by Hussein, which justifies U.S. intervention. A look at very recent history reveals that in 1998, the inspection team was withdrawn by the U.N. Chief of Weapons Inspections because the U.S. was sending spies in place of weapons inspectors — in direct violation of the U.N. mandate that allowed them access to inspect for weapons.

Iraq's hesitancy to allow inspectors back, which it has, seems to me rather understandable. Moreover, this hesitancy is hardly the ground for war our "heroic leader" would have the American public believe it to be.

William Moglia  
junior  
German

### Supporting Bush for a reason

Meghan Farnsworth takes issue with conservative students showing support for the Bush administration at an anti-war rally, implying that conservatives are

blindly following the president. As a conservative, I support the president because I have thought out the issues and I agree with his stance on national security. I am glad that fellow conservative students had the time to show that there is support for President Bush on this campus.

Farnsworth admonishes us not to let our political affiliation affect our stance on war in Iraq; then hypocritically takes a shot at the "corporate-run white-male government," which sounds political to me.

But probably the most blatant and shocking insult in the entire article is directed toward black people when she insinuates that blacks who are bravely serving our country in the armed forces were totally unaware when they enlisted that they might be called on to protect the United States.

The women and men defending this country are a courageous group of individuals who all deserve our thanks and respect, not the insulting and condescending assumption that they were not smart enough to avoid being tricked into joining the military.

Brian Stubbs  
second-year graduate  
physics