

COMMENTARY

Monday, February 24, 2003

Three cheers for cheerleaders

I never thought I'd be defending cheerleaders. My history with cheerleaders is a bit precolonial. In high school, I wrote a little column about how I thought our cheerleaders were hardly pepping up our apathetic, Kurt Cobain-mourning crowd.

As a result, I got a curt letter from a cheerleader's mom and an anonymous letter from a girl who said I was "obviously jealous of someone prettier or more popular" than I was.

It was signed "Pissed with Pom-Poms." No kidding.

But when I got a forwarded e-mail petition last week from Lezlie Frye asking me to sign my name in order to end "repeated hip gyrations and pelvic thrusts" by University cheerleaders, I felt a little "De-fense!" was in order.

In the e-mail, Frye said she wanted to organize a group of women to approach the coach and the cheer team to beg them to "replace the strip tease style movements" with more suitable choreography.

I had to wonder which vague strip tease movements the petition was specifically targeting. Certainly anyone strolling down the street probably has "repeated hip gyrations," just from the act of walking. And "pelvic thrusts," in some circles, such as modern or hip-hop dance, are part of choreography — a form of art.

However, the point of the petition is to specif-



Julie Lauderbaugh
 Judge Julie

ically get women's basketball cheerleaders to stop acting like strippers (read: prostitutes) because their movements are negatively influencing little girls. Well, duh. But influencing them to do what exactly? I can think of worse things kids can do than aspire to be cheerleaders — say drug addicts or murderers?

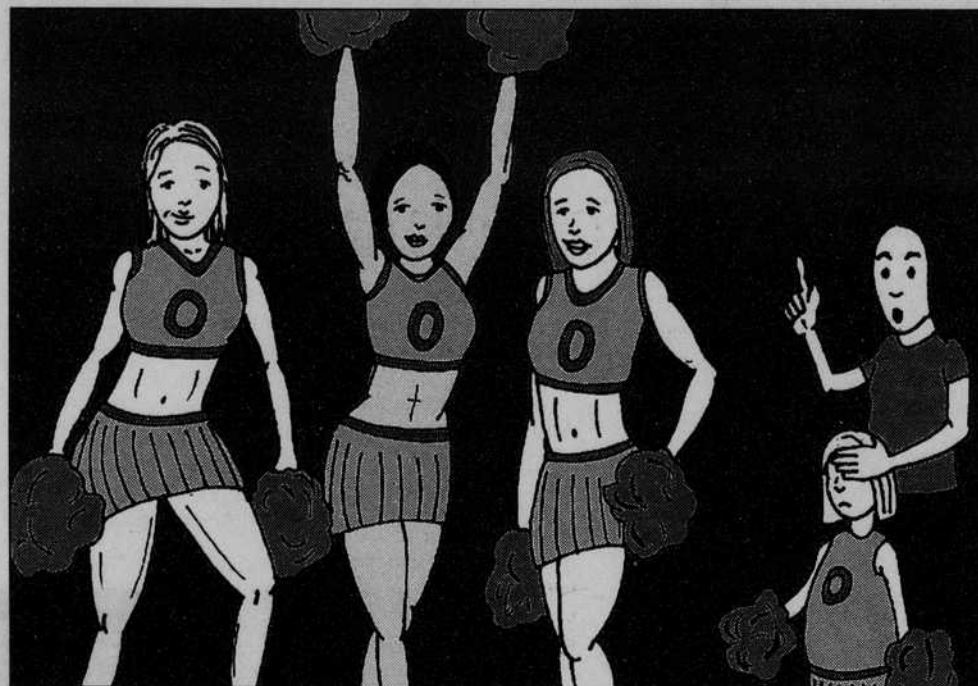
The very idea is so vague that it's just plain silly. Where's the petition to get the Oregon Marching Band to stop playing the "stick it in, stick it in — ugh!" jingle at football games? Where's the petition to stop signature collection for other petitions? I don't have a minute for Greenpeace, I don't want to save the Uzbekistan Geoduck and I'm not interested in asking the Radical Cheerleaders to use six-inch voices during rallies.

But where do I sign to stop our athletic coaches from rewarding convicted felons with football stardom? I'd say this instance is more pressing than cheerleaders grinding up a dose of "Elvis Pelvis."

I don't want to discount the athleticism of nude dancers; moving up and down that pole probably takes some strength training and endurance. And I'd beg to argue that some of the characteristics the e-mail praises female basketball stars for possessing can also be found in the stripping profession: "athleticism, speed, skills and a willingness to face any challenge."

That being said, I'd hardly group cheerleaders in the same category as strippers. After all, cheerleaders don't take their clothes off, they aren't taking money from eager onlookers and they're participating in an actual sport.

If Frye and her supporters were so concerned



Peter Utsey Emerald

with the impressionable minds of youngsters watching the halftime show, perhaps they would fare better talking to little girls about how they think the cheerleaders are objectifying their bodies and why that's bad.

Tell them when they grow up, they don't have to bump and grind to get attention. Besides, if kids don't see booty shaking at bas-

ketball games, they'll find it on MTV, VH1 or Fox. Opening the dialogue will do more for young girls than sheltering them from the subject altogether.

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

Editor's note: The following is the text of the resolution prepared for Friday's University Assembly meeting.

A Resolution Against Invasion of Iraq

Whereas the United States (US) government has made clear preparation to take military action against Iraq;

Whereas through such a war University of Oregon (UO) faculty, staff and students will have their careers, work and education interrupted and lives put in jeopardy;

Whereas innocent Iraqi civilians, who have suffered enormously under the rule of Saddam Hussein and UN sanctions, will be injured and killed;

Whereas the high cost of this war may further deepen the US economic crisis which continues to damage the UO's fiscal condition;

Whereas a war with Iraq would threaten to further destabilize the Middle East, possibly leading to wider regional war and increased support for groups dedicated to terrorism, endangering the citizens of the US including members of the UO community as they perform their work both within and outside the US;

Whereas Iraq has not been proven, through disclosed documents, to have committed acts of aggression against the US that might justify a response of war;

Whereas the US government has presented no credible evidence that Iraq has intentions of harming the citizens of this country or that Iraq presents a threat to the US;

Whereas diplomatic solutions do not appear to have been exhausted, and therefore the fundamental intellectual responsibility of the US leadership to provide justification of war showing proof that all other means have failed has not been satisfied;

Whereas the vast majority of the international community has not lent its support for war against Iraq;

Whereas the United Nations (UN) Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1441 enforcing the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq where it asserts that the Security Council alone has the authority to determine what action to take regarding current or future Iraqi violations of their resolutions (Article 14);

Whereas the UN Charter declares unequivocally in Articles 41 and 42 that the UN Security Council alone has the power to authorize the use of military force against any nation in noncompliance of its resolutions;

Whereas a preemptive war waged by our government without UN authorization would be in clear violation of the UN Charter;

Whereas the UN Charter was entered into as a treaty with necessary congressional approval with the U.N. Participation Act of 1945;

Whereas Article VI of the US Constitution states that "all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land", so that any act that violates the UN Charter will also be in direct violation of the Constitution of the United States of America;

Be it resolved that the University of Oregon opposes the US engagement in war in Iraq at this time.

Frohnmayer should not veto resolution

Guest commentary

Twin commentaries last week, both unsolicited, set the stage for the Emerald's generous offer of space for others to react to this week's University Assembly to deal with preemptive war on Iraq. They were valuable because they were at odds with each other.

One, by a student, Todd Pittman, suggested why so many faculty members believe a failure to publicly oppose the war indicates general support for what he feels is an immoral venture. The other, by an off-campus reader (like myself), Scott Austin, claims the Pittman approach reflects an "inherently evil and untrustworthy" aspect of democracy.

However Austin might describe it, that democracy is based on the will of the people, even when that will chooses actions that may be immoral or unjust. If there were a national referendum on the Iraq war issue, I suspect the vote today still might favor it, although by a smaller and smaller margin each day. As a citizen, I'd have to accept that decision, no matter how much I oppose it. That does not mean I'd have to accept it quietly. It also does not mean

our faculty must be restricted to silence.

At the heart of democracy is the opportunity for dialogue. Discussions within the University Assembly represent that opportunity, even if the University president chooses to veto its decision, as University President Dave Frohnmayer has indicated he may feel impelled to do.

The president's interpretation of state guidelines parallels a growing inhibition of dialogue in broader society. It comes from a system of news reporting that increasingly reflects the views of but a tiny segment of the nation: owners of the press and of radio and TV stations. Like Austin's occasional "untrustworthy" aspect of democracy, freedom of the press must be protected, even though it can be freedom for only the owners of the press to push their sometimes extremist views. As for radio and TV — licensed and regulated by the federal government in the public interest — the number of owners becomes smaller and wealthier as the Federal Communications Commission trashes its mandate, destroying regulations that once prevented monolithic broadcast operations.

So public dialogue is hurting in a nation once dedicated to open exchange of ideas. The only element preventing a complete takeover

has been growing use of the Internet. Computer-generated exchanges by citizens have built a worldwide constituency for the idea of freedom of expression. Its most visible achievement was the motivating by e-mail of a global response by many millions who demonstrated against the war on Feb. 15.

Were the demonstrators right, or were they wrong? That's for the public to decide. But they did have the chance to express themselves on an issue that, universally, strikes deeper than any since the Vietnam War.

That's what the University and its assembly deserve to have. If the vote is in behalf of a resolution against war, it will be an expression — not of the University — but of a majority of the voting faculty. That is meaningful, veto or not. A university president who is former state attorney general and one-time dean of the law school should be respected for his ability to interpret state regulations. He should not have the power to silence the voice of the majority.

George Beres is a former University sports information director, editor of Inside Oregon and manager of the University Speakers Bureau. He is retired and is a writer.

War threatens University's truth-seeking mission

Guest commentary

The University Assembly, composed of more than 2,000 officers of instruction, officers of administration and librarians, will meet at 3 p.m. on Friday to debate and vote on a resolution opposing the war in Iraq.

University President Dave Frohnmayer called this meeting because a petition circulated by Concerned Faculty for Peace and Justice was signed by more than 540 members of the University Voting Faculty. The large number of signatories qualified to call for the meeting (more than 33 percent of the Voting Faculty) endows this Assembly with authority to enact legislation, distinguishing it from the Assembly that met on Jan. 31, 2003, which was limited to discussion.

In order that that any actions taken at the meeting represent the views of the University's

most democratic legislative body, it is important that all members of the Assembly attend.

This historic and unprecedented meeting of the Assembly is open to all members of the University community and the public. Concerned Faculty expects an attendance in keeping with the extreme importance of the war issue to the University, to the people of Eugene and to the nation.

The resolution, which was supported by petitioners' signatures, is almost identical to the one adopted by the Faculty Senate of Oregon State University on Jan. 10. If events overtake some aspects of the resolution, it may be appropriately amended at the Assembly meeting.

Concerned Faculty for Peace and Justice recognize that the mission of the University of Oregon is likely to be dangerously compromised by the war — war is the enemy of the constitutional freedoms of speech, assembly and association, without which the University's truth-seeking

mission cannot be fulfilled.

Moreover, the increase in military spending resulting from the war will reduce the resources available to our civil society, with further devastating effects on the ability of the University and other educational institutions to function.

These truths have been recognized not only by Oregon State University but also by the University of Montana, University of Wisconsin and numerous city councils and professional organizations throughout America. The signatures collected by Concerned Faculty for Peace and Justice give the University of Oregon an opportunity to add its voice to the ever-growing chorus.

Let the University speak and be heard!

This guest commentary was submitted by Associate Professor Daniel Pope and Project Coordinator Bo Adan on behalf of Concerned Faculty for Peace and Justice.