

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Pro or con, you should attend the Assembly

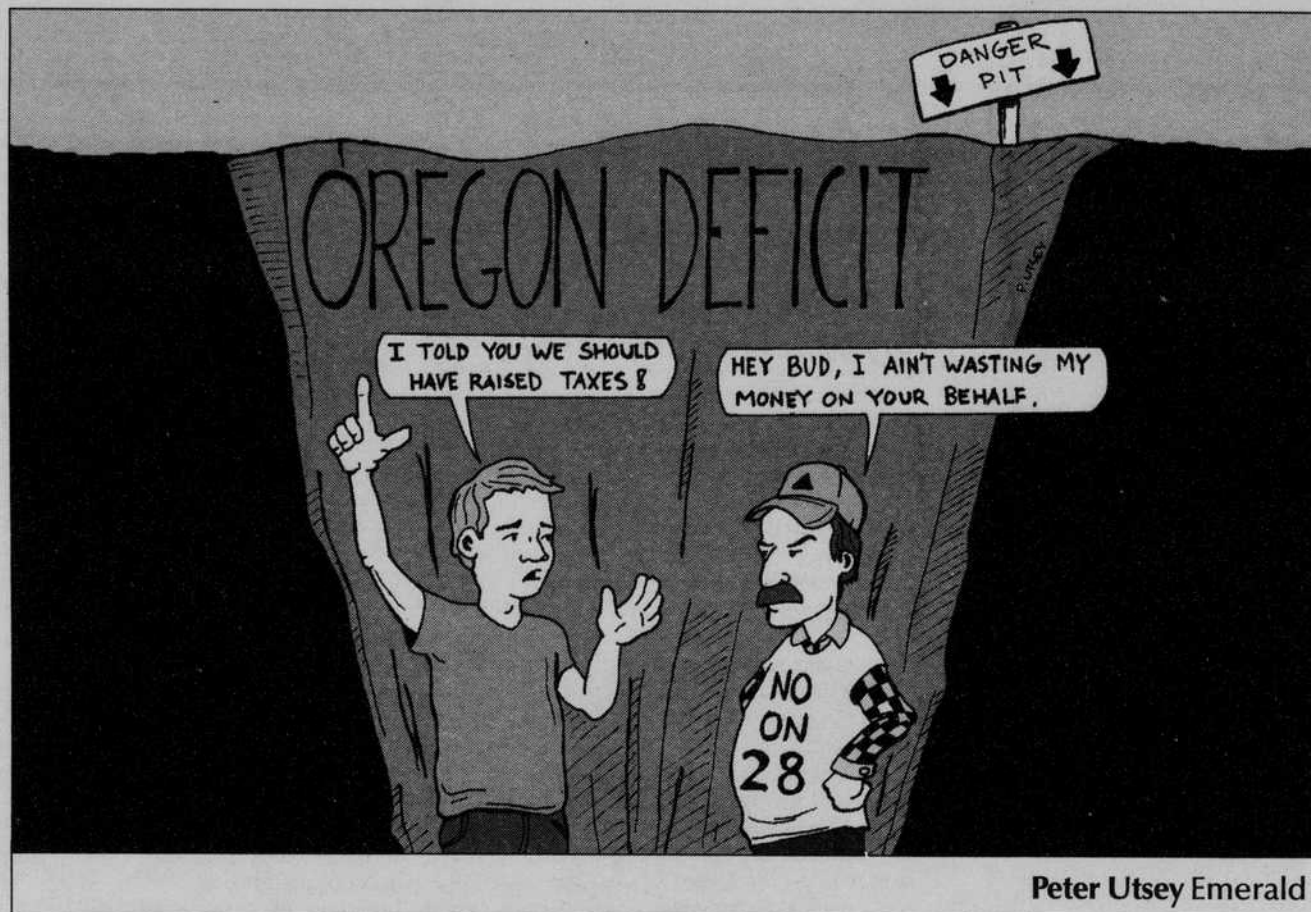
At 3 p.m. today, the University Assembly will meet in the Student Recreation Center to possibly vote on a resolution that "opposes the U.S. engagement in war in Iraq at this time." If you've read this paper in the past few months, you might have seen just how heated the debate has become.

The controversy has elicited strong reactions from some community members, lobbying actively for or against the assembly resolution on the streets and in the Emerald, but it has elicited almost as strong apathy from others. This last position worries us.

No matter your position on the resolution, attend the assembly meeting. Let there be quorum and a discussion. Students are invited — they still have a voice. If you believe that the resolution is a done deal and your voice will neither help nor harm its chances, do we really need to remind you that important decisions in world history have sometimes hinged on a single vote?

We urge you to make your viewpoint heard by the campus community this afternoon.

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



Peter Utsey Emerald

The wills of the majorities

Letters to the editor

Universities don't dismiss opposition

Steve Baggs' political cartoon of Feb. 26 rang a bell with me. It shows a panel labeled "University Assembly" patronizing a peanut gallery which they judge "way too stupid" to have an informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy.

But in fact, the cartoon panel reminds me more of the Bush administration than of the assembly. To judge by official responses to peace protests, Bush, Cheney, Powell, Rice and Rumsfeld think that those who disagree with them are ignorant, stupid, evil, cowardly, or wrong — either not understanding the threat that Saddam Hussein poses, or supporting it.

Universities aren't in the business of making such simplistic dismissals. We argue, question, subject hypotheses to experiment, disagree and advance knowledge through debate. The resolution opposing the war has been under discussion for three months now; those sponsoring it assume that people do have an informed opinion, and are ready to express it in a vote.

A vote on the resolution is not an order to everyone on campus to agree with what the resolution states, or get out or shut up. As in any election, no matter which side wins, the other side still has its own opinions and positions.

How ironic, though, that we who oppose a war pressed upon us by an administration elected by a minority, should be construed as arrogantly imposing our views when we disagree with the party in power.

Gina Psaki
 professor
 romance languages

Is America a republic or an empire?

The pending resolution against an invasion of Iraq will not silence the voice of "pro-war" students, faculty or staff on the University campus because the resolution does not take one side of a two-sided debate. Rather, the resolution opposes an invasion of Iraq "at this time."

The Bush administration has not made the case for war, and until it does, it is the responsibility of the citizenry, including public institutions, to hold our commander in chief accountable to the people. President George W. Bush told Americans in his State of the Union address that the war was brought to us on Sept. 11, 2001, but he has been unable as of yet to connect Saddam Hussein to the attacks.

None of the hijackers came from Iraq, and Saddam and Osama Bin Laden are ideological enemies. However, because Bush seems to have no "smoking gun" that would put this debate to rest, and has replaced evidence and logic with fear and misinformation, the University has the obligation to sound the alarm and reveal that the emperor has no clothes.

The American public must ask itself — are we a republic or an empire? Are we willing to let one man lead us into a pre-emptive war that could further endanger Americans and irrevocably tarnish America's image abroad because he "thinks" Hussein "might" someday pose a threat to the United States?

At 3 p.m. today, the University Assembly will have the

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And we're back to 1970. Back then, as the Vietnam War — a war we genuinely had no business being in — was gearing up to its explosive anticlimax, thousands of students, faculty and administrators packed McArthur Court to hear the University Assembly vote on and pass a resolution condemning the war. At 3 p.m. today, the assembly meets again to vote on a resolution condemning "the U.S. engagement in war in Iraq at this time."

I've said before that I support a war against Saddam Hussein, but I do not relish it. Having said that, neither side has totally swayed me to believing that no war is necessary or that this immediate moment is the right time. I have also, ashamedly, felt the cold grip of apathy claw at me more and more. Every time I see philippics like "Bush = Hitler" or watch as the president seems more and more set on making a war a fait accompli immediately, I feel more and more enervated.

Rational debate is being crowded out by the shouting of handy anti-war slogans and

an increasing chorus of, "Bomb him now, bomb him now." This is one reason why the assembly's meeting gives me some hope that something of a reasoned discussion can be had, if only for an afternoon.

I have to admit though, in a way, I resent the idea of the resolution. I've watched a group of well-meaning faculty go from one campus body to another and be rebuffed, only to keep pressing through with it. On the one hand, it looks like they are hellbent on getting this resolution passed, no matter what. To me, it does seem quite a lot like this group of professors and anti-war students are trying to press their view of how the world should run on everyone else.

And, since these are the same professors we deal with in class, I could reason: What if, given the horror stories passed around about professors trying to push their own political views on their students, they try to use the resolution as "carte blanche" to punish pro-war students who speak out?

But then, I just have to stop and remind myself that every four years, someone gets a viewpoint rammed down his or her throat by the majority. That's how this country works. For eight years, the Democrats were doing the ramming. Now, it's the Republicans' turn. It doesn't mean that those who are in the minority have to

suddenly come into harmony with the majority's ideas — hell, if that were true, there probably wouldn't be a resolution before the assembly.

And I'm fine with this. I may not agree with either party's viewpoint in its entirety, but the party in power usually has the backing of the majority. I feel the same about the resolution. I don't agree with the University having a stance on a war that hasn't even started, and I'm not sure that a resolution is all that useful — President George W. Bush isn't going to stop the war just because the University Assembly says it's against it — but I will respect the decision. I do believe the assembly has the right to take on any subject it wishes.

However, if the resolution passes today, I hope the assembly recognizes it for what it is: the will of the University's largest legislative body. It is assuredly not the will of the University as a whole. Should the resolution pass, remember that there are still some of us who are not opposed to war with Iraq, and respect those voices.

To paraphrase assembly members themselves: This should be the beginning of a discussion, not its end.

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

Justification for Iraq war specious

Guest commentary

Professor Daniel Pope and Bo Adan expressed concern (ODE, Feb. 24) that war is "the enemy of the constitutional freedoms of speech, assembly and association." It's true that war has traditionally jeopardized these rights — temporarily. They tend to be put back in place after our conflicts have ended. However, this fact does not mean that war should never be an option. A threat to the security of the United States and its people presents a much greater enemy to our Constitution than any war we've ever fought, let alone started.

That being said, I am against this war. I do not feel that Iraq is a threat to the

United States. Even long-time enemy and next-door neighbor Iran feels that U.N. inspections are all that is necessary. With inspections teams on the ground in Iraq, I find it hard to believe that Saddam Hussein can continue to manufacture his weapons of mass destruction. No other country on Earth is currently under a finer microscope. Additionally, no one seems to be able to come up with proof that Saddam's regime has connections with al-Qaida. The White House tried to convince us differently a few weeks ago when the newest tape from Osama bin Laden was released. However, nowhere in the transcripts of the tape did bin Laden claim to be working with Saddam. In fact, the irony is that the people he claims al-Qaida should sup-

port are the Muslim masses of Iraq, the very same masses we claim to support in our invasion rationale.

Lastly, I would say to the University Assembly: Do not vote in favor of this resolution. Do not vote in favor of any resolution regarding the war — whether for or against — as it is not your place. It is not the place of a University to make a stand for or against national policy. This University is supposed to be a place for the free exchange of ideas, but when the institution itself takes political sides, that exchange is stifled.

It is simply wrong for the University itself to take sides in this debate.

Andrew McQuade is a graduate student in the business school.