

Thursday, July 31, 2003

EDITORIAL

Keep religion, wedlock apart

In the weeks since the Supreme Court's ruling on Texas' sodomy law, many groups have been abuzz about the potentials or pitfalls of gay marriage, depending on which side of the issue they stand.

President Bush chimed in Wednesday, offering his most honest take to date.

"I believe a marriage is between a man and a woman," he said. "And I think we ought to codify that one way or the other. And we've got lawyers looking at the best way to do that."

What the issue will ultimately come down to is settling on a definition of marriage; then someone or some institution — likely the Supreme Court — will have to decide who qualifies for legally sanctioned marital partnerships.

No matter how the issue pans out, though, the debate itself illuminates a compelling need to have a clear definition of marriage.

Whether marriage is a state of mind, a verbal agreement, a written agreement, a state-recognized contract or a commitment to love, a definition needs to be accepted by government.

And in doing so, it must put aside conventional Christian wisdom.

In America, the argument that marriage should be only between a man and a woman stems mostly from Christianity, a theology that says sex is partly for procreation, something that two homosexual partners are unable to do between themselves.

The United States, however, was founded on more than just conventional wisdom — Christian or otherwise.

It is in fact the government's duty to uphold certain principles, such as the First Amendment, which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

While the masses can certainly consider religion when deciding their views on homosexuality or homosexual marriage, the government should not weigh in, at least not if it intends to use an argument grounded in religion.

President Bush is also entitled to his opinion, and his position can be based on whatever he sees fit, religion included. Members of Congress, too, have this freedom. But as elected representatives working to preserve democratic principles, these individuals need to consider more than just their own beliefs when creating legislation.

The bottom line is that an appropriate institution needs to make a formalized description of what marriage is and which couples are eligible for it. Whatever the verdict, it will allow Americans to get on with their lives.

Base marriage on the premise of the act of sex, the emotional tie between two individuals, the necessity of the possibility of procreation, or anything else that may be relevant. Found marriage on the belief that anyone can marry anyone, save family; use moral legislation as a backbone, and create limitations.

Codify away. Just remember the principles on which this nation was founded, and leave religious rationale out of it.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

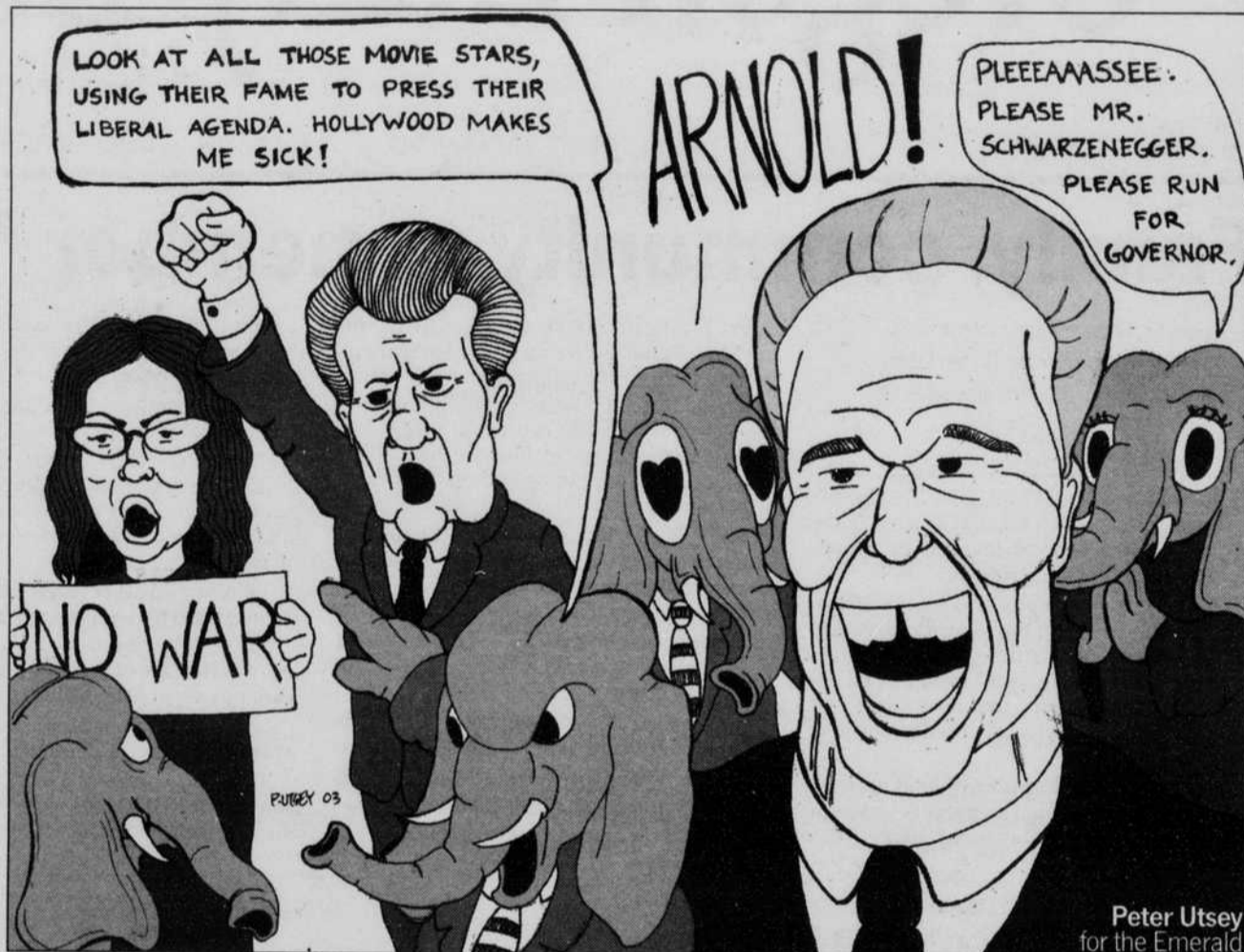
CORRECTIONS

In the July 29 editorial, "Council's DPS ruling violates common sense," and the Page One story "Council votes to expand DPS responsibilities," the Emerald mistakenly referred to Ward 4 City Councilor George Poling as a former Eugene Police Department officer.

Poling retired from the Lane County Sheriff's Office in November 2001, after 25 years of service. He spent his last four years with the office as a sergeant.

Also, the caption for the photograph accompanying the story "Sweat for success" misidentified center Dan Weaver.

The Emerald regrets the errors.



Peter Utsey
for the Emerald

OUS must treat classified staff better

University President Dave Frohnmayer and Vice President for Administration Dan Williams:

You may be aware that contract talks between the Oregon University System and Service Employees International Union Local 503, Oregon Public Employees Union are not going well.

The message that your classified personnel wish to make clear to you,

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leaders of the University, is that we insist on being treated fairly and with respect. This is not happening in the negotiations!

The chancellors and other OUS representatives at the contract talks have inserted what they may presume to be "bargaining chips" into their proposals — which would take away the tuition discount and bus pass, and would cause unacceptable erosion of union and

other layoff rights, among other infamous takebacks.

When I explained the above mentioned details of the contract discussions to a friend — not a union member — in another city, his immediate response was: "That sounds downright hateful!"

Why is it that ever since legislation was approved that separated OUS classified workers from our fellows in other state agencies — Department of Administrative Services — higher education workers have consistently been treated differently and unfairly compared to our colleagues? When the legislation was proposed, the Chancellor's office insisted that university workers would fare much better under the measure. The "promise" of fairer treatment is a cruel joke on university system classified workers.

Can you please tell me why this type of treatment is happening to classified workers, as if we are sacrificial lambs?

Rest assured that higher education classified workers will not only insist on economic proposals that are on par with the tentative agreement on which DAS workers will soon vote, we also insist that OUS withdraw the mean-spirited, non-economic takebacks being proposed. In the words of our admirable table representative Star Holmberg: "The tentative agreement reached by DAS did not include a bunch of takebacks that they had to settle for in order to get the pay (or) insurance package they ended up with."

I for one am certainly ready to go out on strike the first week of classes in September as long as classified workers are treated with the unfairness and disrespect we've been confronted with by OUS at the bargaining table thus far!

James Jacobson is a member of the University classified staff and a former bargaining table representative.

Israel conflict should be presented fairly

A recent campus happening gives local awareness to a situation that threatens free expression, not only at the University, but throughout U.S. society. It should be of particular concern to Jewish citizens, whose long history of supporting free expression is threatened by a minority of Israeli activists known as Zionists.

Sensitivity to the happening was strengthened by recalling a related event — the anti-Semitic label wrongly placed on a University faculty member, Douglas Card, some months ago by a leading figure in Zionist misinformation campaigns, New York Post columnist Daniel Pipes.

The more recent incident came at a meeting of the Pacifica Forum at the Wesley Center. A group had just seen a video, "Jenin," from Palestinian distributors. It graphically showed recent destruction in the Palestinian town by Israeli military.

At the end, two visitors representing the Israeli point of view distributed pamphlets

calling the video propaganda. The video showed havoc from the Palestinian perspective, not the Israeli one. What it revealed was from an angle our society rarely has a chance to see.

Propaganda was a fair term, as this is a time when public relations goals dominate much of what we find in the mass media, whatever the source. But there is irony in the two visitors nitpicking about this one isolated look we got of a Palestinian view, when the U.S. public has been flooded with Israeli propaganda in all media for the past 40 years. Israeli propagandists have made a monopoly of misleading our country about the Middle East.

The conflict is not new to me. I have spent much time pointing out how Christianity must expurgate from its scriptures references that demonize Jews, because they made possible horrors of the Holocaust, and perpetuate them. That does not mean we must shut our eyes to how Zionists — extremists amongst otherwise innocent Jews — orchestrate our government's Middle East policies.

Another of their techniques is to instruct

their dupes around the nation to publicly label as anti-Semitic anyone who criticizes policies of Israel. Card of our faculty was a target. His innocence earned him supportive statements from University President Dave Frohnmayer and in editorials in The Register-Guard and The Oregonian. Last September, an article by former news editor Brook Reinhard ("Professor battles racism charge," ODE, Sept. 30) did the same.

But Pipes continues undeterred in libeling Americans who know there are two sides to the tragic issue of Palestine.

Efforts to keep Palestine's voice silent come from those who — like all aggressors — fear a fair dialogue. Until U.S. citizens get a balanced account of what is happening in the Middle East, they will continue to accept faulty policies that result in our country fully funding and supporting illegal actions of Israel in Palestine.

In behalf of peace-loving Jews, as well as tyrannized Palestinians, we must make our society more aware of this information disparity.

George Beres, a former University sports information director, lives in Eugene.