

# Film documents 1970s-era group of extremists

The Weathermen, a group of extreme leftists, are the subject of a documentary showing at the Bijou

By Ryan Nyburg  
Senior Pulse Reporter

Political views seem to work circularly, and it is amazing how frequently the extremes of each sides will start to look like each other. This might explain why the Weathermen, who are the subject of the new documentary "The Weather Underground," often remind me of fascists.

It's not a pleasant comparison, but

the viewpoints of the extreme left and the extreme right are often difficult to tell apart, and the Weathermen were about as extreme left as it gets. Coming out of the student protest groups of the 1960s, the group was responsible for a number of bombings across America throughout the 1970s in protest of just about everything worth protesting during that politically charged time period. While the group took precautions to ensure no innocent lives were risked, the idea that society can be molded to a particular viewpoint through the violent actions of a militant group is not far off from brown suits and red arm bands.

With this in mind it is refreshing to see that the documentary doesn't hold the members of the group up as heroes or martyrs. But the filmmakers' evenhandedness with the subject is rather exasperating, and it seems that in the attempt to remain unbiased they have created a

film with no point of view whatsoever. Composed of interviews with former group members and others involved in the politics of the era — along with liberal amounts of stock footage — the documentary attempts to get a handle on the Weathermen's effectiveness while placing it in context with the then-turbulent society. How successful the documentarians were is a matter of debate.

During the film, it often occurred to me that some of the political movements the group was involved with would have made more interesting subjects for a documentary. I would rather have seen something on the prisoners' rights movement in the early 1970s, or a better yet, a full documentary on the more compelling and effective Black Panther Party. Yet the film merely skims over these groups, provoking some interest before quickly moving on. It

sometimes feels like the filmmakers knew their subject wasn't all that compelling and tried to supplement it with more interesting material.

It is odd being able to call a group that successfully bombed the U.S. Capitol and broke Timothy Leary out of prison "uninteresting." But that is what the group is. On the whole, they were no more effective than the wide range of forgotten organizations that formed around that time; the only difference was their high profile. The film's sole purpose then seems to be the presentation of a case study: how a radical organization like this can form, function and then fall apart.

So the film does have some value, but the simple fact is, the Weathermen do not make for the best viewing. Even the interviews hold little of interest, as so few of the former members have

any discernible personality. One of the few in the group who does make a compelling figure is former member Brian Flanagan. He actually seems to regret his involvement with the group, and then made an interesting comparison between the bombings he and the Weathermen were involved in and the terrorist actions of Sept. 11.

It is true that the Weathermen were working for a good cause, and that the system they were fighting was corrupt. But their tactics were so misguided that it is difficult to elicit any sympathy for them or their causes. Bombing for peace doesn't work, no matter who is setting off the bombs.

"The Weather Underground" will open tomorrow at the Bijou Art Cinemas at 492 E. 13th Avenue.

Contact the senior pulse reporter at [ryannyburg@dailymerald.com](mailto:ryannyburg@dailymerald.com).

# Student groups go trick-or-treating to benefit food bank

Alpha Phi Omega and OSPIRG will aid a local food bank by taking to the streets to gather donations

By Lisa Catto  
Freelance Reporter

Many University students feel too old to dress up and go trick-or-treating on Halloween, and some just

don't have a good reason to go.

But this year, two student groups are giving all students the chance to dress up for Halloween and help the community.

Tonight Alpha Phi Omega, a campus-based service organization, and OSPIRG will be collecting canned food, which will be donated to FOOD For Lane County, the second largest food bank in Oregon. The groups will be knocking on doors in neighborhoods

surrounding the campus.

Alpha Phi Omega is meeting at 6 p.m. in the visitor's parking lot at the corner of East 13th Avenue and Agate Street, while the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group will meet at 5:30 p.m. by their office on the EMU's ground floor.

Alpha Phi Omega Media Relations Chairman Cory Portnuff said the two organizations are not working as a team, but they have split up the neighborhoods they are going to cover to reach as many people as possible.

Portnuff said his group has done this project for the last three years.

"In the past we have had up to 40 volunteers and collected up to 800 pounds," he said. "This year we are aiming for more."

Portnuff said this project is good for students to give back to the community that supports them.

Marie Tallant, the coordinator for

OSPIRG's Hunger and Homeless campaign, said the first stage of its campaign, which includes the Halloween project, is meant to create awareness about hunger and homelessness.

"This program is a fun way to help people and get involved in hunger issues," Tallant said.

OSPIRG is trying to get its name out in the neighborhoods, Tallant said.

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