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Anniversary of war in Iraq polarizes citizens' opinions

While war supporters and protesters' politics conflict, both largely support troops

By Jared Paben
 Senior News Reporter

March 20 marked the one-year anniversary of the war in Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, but for many people it was a time for protest rather than celebration.

Millions of protesters took to the streets throughout the United States and the rest of the world to denounce the war and President George W. Bush's administration. In Portland, thousands of protesters marched through downtown, calling for the end of the Bush administration in the upcoming election.

The Eugene-based Justice Not War Coalition decided against organizing a protest on the anniversary, instead going door-to-door registering people to vote and talking to them about the Bush administration and the situation in Iraq.

Even though more than a year has passed since the start of U.S. military action in Iraq, people still disagree about whether the war was a success and the United States' best course of action in the Middle East.



Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

A pro-war protester stands on the steps of San Francisco City Hall last year.

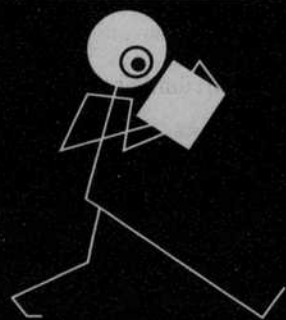
Michael Carrigan, an organizer for the Justice Not War Coalition, criticized U.S. involvement in Iraq and said it is an "occupying power."

"(The United States) should pull out of Iraq and turn control over to the United Nations, but of course in a way that doesn't result in more turmoil and unnecessary suffering for the Iraqi people," he said. "We never

should have been there in the first place. Now that we're there, we're having problems. It seems to be that Americans are dying almost every day. If we had been working with the U.N. all along... we probably wouldn't be having the same problems."

Kevin Ressel, 2nd Lieutenant at the Oregon National Guard's 2nd Turn to **OPINIONS**, page 14

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KUCINICH

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strengthening and mending America's relationship with the international community and stressed the need to turn current operations in Iraq over to the United Nations.

"We must understand that the Iraqi people are not going to settle for a second-class citizenship," he said, adding that along with relinquishing control of the country, America owes reparations to Iraq.

"We have to pay for what we destroyed in Iraq," he said. "We have an obligation."

Eugene City Council candidate for Ward 7, Andrea Ortiz, also spoke at the meeting about her own campaign, which emphasizes the need for underrepresented voices to be heard in the political process.

"We need to make sure when we make these policies and changes all voices are heard," she said.

Oregon Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, also spoke both in support of Kucinich and to inform the crowd of



Lauren Wimer Photographer

Democratic presidential hopeful Dennis Kucinich speaks at Lane Community College Sunday afternoon. During his speech, the candidate addressed universal health care and other issues.

his own re-election campaign.

Holvey focused on the importance of increased health care, fair wages and financial support for education.

"I have seen the rights of working families chipped away," he said. "I remember when health insurance was a right, not a privilege. Now as state representative, I'm seeing the rights of all working people further eroded."

He said recent budget cuts to higher education are detrimental to the development of Oregon's workforce and will ultimately hurt the economy, adding that schools need more revenue support from the state.

"Educational institutions must be able to increase and maintain enrollment in order to provide the opportunity for all families to improve their skills and quality of life," he said.

Holvey concluded by praising Kucinich's presidential campaign.

"I admire those who bring progressive ideas to the presidential race and ask hard questions of the current administration," he said.

After Kucinich's initial speech, the crowd was offered the chance to ask questions, which ranged from gay marriage to international trade agreements.

Kucinich said he has reviewed Oregon's constitution and believes it guarantees marriage rights to all couples.

"Equal protection of the law ought to be afforded to all Americans," he said.

Josh Kennedy, a first-year law student at the University, said after the speech that he planned to change his party affiliation from Independent to Democrat in order to vote for Kucinich in the primary election.

"He didn't say anything that I disagreed with, which is unusual," he said.

He added that he agreed Oregon has the chance to influence the Democratic Party even if Kucinich has little chance of being elected.

"We can at least make a statement for what we believe in," he said.

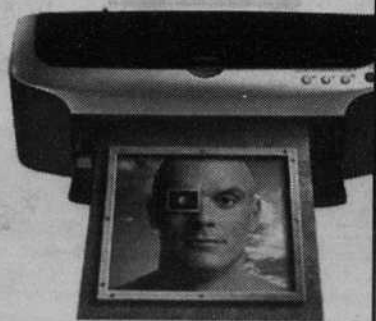
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