

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

EDITORIAL

ASUO funding disclosures are symbolic of attitudes

After what has proven to be a successful and organized end to the 2004 elections funding disclosures, we commend those student leaders who — unlike those of years past — haven't shown utter contempt for the process' system of accountability.

Last year, the situation post-election was surprisingly more gloomy. One pair of candidates — Christa Shively and Greg Bae, who lost the election — snubbed the process altogether and failed to release a complete record of their campaign's finances. Or did they?

"We turned the sheet in," Shively told the Emerald in May 2003. "(The ASUO) must have misplaced it."

The other pair — Maddy Melton and Eddy Morales, who won — failed to properly account for funds after the election, and financial records show a sizable discrepancy: According to last year's expenditure forms, Melton and Morales raised \$1,768.87 but spent only \$965.69, leaving \$803.18 in unaccounted funds. Melton told the Emerald in May 2003 that \$529.87 of that discrepancy could be attributed to a failure to record donated campaign supplies as an expenditure. She also said ASUO double-accounted for a \$100 donation.

However, even after these errors were accounted for, a \$173.31 discrepancy existed.

Melton told the Emerald last year that she was "90 percent sure it's a missing receipt," but like many other relevant issues in the ASUO, it simply slipped through the cracks into obscurity. Their constituents are still waiting for a full disclosure of what happened.

Adrian Gilmore — whom the Editorial Board endorsed as the best person for the 2004-05 Executive — echoed the unfortunate argument that losing candidates don't have an obligation for full disclosure. Gilmore, who only spent \$50 and came in third in the primary election, should have set an example and followed the rules.

But many others undoubtedly question the necessity of such disclosures; after all, these are just students, right? Why should they be forced to undergo any sort of watch for something so small as funding an ASUO campaign?

Well, if these student-government elects are going to prepare themselves for the political arena after college, they might as well get used to public and media scrutiny regarding their campaign finances. It's called open democracy, and damn if it isn't a great watchdog.

Let's face it: Proper accounting during a campaign can be a great indicator of how student-government officials will approach funding throughout their tenure. Those who decided that a hundred bucks here and there is no big deal will probably feel the same about student money — your money.

We could venture to suggest that the Executive's failure to properly disclose their campaign funds was indeed indicative of how they felt about student funds this year, but nobody outside the campaign has a clear idea of what happened. Was it, as Melton suggests, simply an honest error? Or was it apathy about the students' right to know?

One thing is for sure: The ASUO Executive's support for wasting student money was blatantly apparent this year, whether this policy is a result of wasteful campaign spending or not. At this year's ASUO Programs Finance Committee hearings, the Executive lobbied — and succeeded — in increasing OSPIRG's budget by 14.6 percent, despite grave concerns about the group's questionable accounting practices (a gross lack of transparency and the concern of sending student money off campus, to be precise).

Both Melton and Morales also lobbied heavily to fund the United States Student Association, despite even more concerns that giving student money to an off-campus non-partisan political association would be a misuse of incidental fees. Melton, who is a member of the group and subsequently participated on student-funded trips to Washington, D.C., argued that USSA lobbying efforts were the reason government officials at the federal level decided to spend more money on higher education.

So what's the moral of the story? Sure, disclosing campaign finances may not seem like such a big deal at the college level. But often students can glean a lot of meaning from how candidates control their money. And just because certain candidates end up getting elected doesn't mean they can shirk the system and feel autonomous from the realm of scrutiny throughout their incumbency.



Eric Layton Illustration

TOO MUCH SHOCK

In 1896, Guglielmo Marconi invented radio. On Wednesday, another Marconi destroyed it.

On Wednesday morning, Portland disk jockey "Marconi" played the audio track from the most gruesome video on the market, that of the beheading of Nick Berg in Iraq. If you thought that video was the worst thing in the world, Marconi's replay was even worse. By 1,000 percent.

Marconi, KNRK's resident "shock jock," didn't just play the audio track of the video. He set music to it and cracked jokes with co-host "Tiny" and producer Nik J. Miles. Thankfully, all three were fired and the show was yanked off the air. The station refused to release the real names of the two DJs to The Associated Press.

I'm not so sure that canceling the show is enough. Marconi deserves much worse. He should be sent to Afghanistan to root out terrorist cells with a water gun. He should be forced to read bedtime stories to Saddam Hussein in jail.

Berg is the ultimate victim in this situation. He was a 26-year-old from suburban Philadelphia who reportedly went to Iraq to find business for his small communications company. His murder was brutal, a message and seen by thousands. His memorial service was closed to outsiders but still attended by 500 people.

And the worst of it is, some people in

the world think that Berg's beheading was fair retaliation for American soldiers' abuse of Iraqi prisoners. According to a Chicago Tribune story which ran in the Emerald on Thursday, one Gaza mother even said Berg "deserved it."



Peter Hockaday
 Today is Hockaday

So this thing is serious. Everything relating to war in a time of war is serious. That's what makes Marconi's act even more deplorable.

But Marconi isn't the only one suffering at the hands of the Nick Berg video. In Villa Park, Calif., an English teacher was placed on leave because he let his students access the video on a classroom computer. The teacher, Steven Arcudi, said he didn't give out the address of the video but several students say he did.

The Associated Press reported that at least two other California teachers have

been placed on leave in similar situations. Seriously, why do you need to show the video? Are you not getting enough violence off "NYPD Blue" and "The Shield?"

But back to Marconi, who is hardly a teacher. The teachers' actions are somewhat justified by the fact that they presented the video in an educational setting, even if they didn't show it for educational reasons. Marconi didn't present a sliver of news value when he played the clip. He laughed as a man's head was cut off.

Marconi offered a sincere vocal apology on his Web site. He said he already put himself through more punishment than anybody else ever could. But as sincere as that sounded, I don't think personal punishment is enough for Marconi.

Let's shock the "shock jock." Let's tape a radio to his head and replay his shocking segment over and over. Let's make him man the KNRK phones, which have been ringing solid since Wednesday. And I can guarantee that not many people are calling to congratulate Marconi on his journalistic integrity.

Whatever we do, it won't be enough punishment for one of the most despicable acts I've ever heard of.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Liberal use of 'hero' detracts from its meaning

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, America became, to itself, a nation of heroes. We bestowed the word amongst ourselves freely, as if the smallest of gestures, displaying patriotic placards and vehicular flags, were heroic. It was as if we imagined that a nation full of heroes would somehow be safer, more secure.

And yet our democratization of the word "hero" has amounted to a theft of its once lofty status and has reduced it to but a shadow of its former self. In the wake of the death of former NFL football player Pat Tillman in Afghanistan, we would be wise to restore the word's true meaning, and remind ourselves that most heroic endeavors are those unscripted

and quietly performed.

In the days following Sept. 11, rather than succumb to collective glorification and patriotic triumphalism, this man chose to forsake monetary riches in order to defend his country in the way he felt he best could. Whether or not you agree with what he saw as his duty, at least acknowledge the heroism in following his own clarion call to it.

As is daily displayed on these very editorial pages, our generation appears hopeless to resolve the timeless dilemma of whether freedom is best defended through force or through fellowship. I submit that those among us quietly defending it by whichever means they feel is right, be they activists or diplomats or soldiers, as the true heroes of our times.

Todd Huffman
 Eugene

Don't condone "The Chief" by playing Illinois

I grew up in Ukiah, in Northern California, with the Pomo Indian reservation in my community. I can only imagine how hard it was to live in Ukiah as a marginalized person.

What would a Pomo Indian feel watching a white student with face paint come dancing onto a football field or basketball court?

The answer is that there are hardly any Native Americans here to comment — the Illini are no more.

Please do not condone "The Chief" by passively assenting to play us.

Marsha Woodbury
 professor
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