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In my opinion

Focus on the gay

SpongeBob SquarePants and Wesley Snipes are having a long conversation about gender roles, and the male youth of this country are watching intently.

Focus on the Family, a Christian organization designed to "preserve traditional values and the institution of the family," has recently come out in protest against a video being produced for children in schools featuring a number of animated characters, including SpongeBob.

According to the Focus on the Family Web site, SpongeBob's best (male) friend, Patrick, is pink. The two characters have also been spotted holding hands. A founder and chairman of Focus on the Family then goes on to say that a video promoting homosexuality should not be shown in schools. To his credit, Dr. Dobson claims to applaud the idea of increasing diversity (well, some diversity); the issue for him is that children will think teachers are endorsing a homosexual lifestyle because the term "sexual identity" is used when listing issues that deserve tolerance.

However, the division of church and state would surely mandate that the educational system has no reason to listen to the requests of this group. As a public institution, schools are doing their job by promoting diversity, period. Imagine instead an extremist group who didn't believe in racial diversity because of their religion or culture, and therefore claimed that Martin Luther King Jr. Day should not



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

be recognized or discussed in an educational setting. Schools would not even consider such a request, and Focus on the Family has a lot of nerve to deny the need for diversity tolerance in relation to sexuality or gender.

And then there's Blade. The furor surrounding a chatty sea sponge became scarier after my late night viewing of Blade: Third Times The Ah Hell Let's Just Kill Everything. This film provided an unfortunate example of what the current masculine gender identity has spawned into: He has really big muscles, a sword and about five lines of dialogue.

Is this what culture wants the boys of our nation to become? A positive role model of male-to-male bonding that doesn't involve an elaborate vampire plot should be lauded, not made into headlines for being immoral. If boys grow up believing that to be feminine is to be gay, and to be gay is wrong, male aggression results. The idea that two men holding hands is an automatic signal for homosexuality signifies so much of what is problematic about rigid notions of gender. Fear is instilled into young men of becoming gentle, sympathetic

people who develop platonic yet intimate relationships; surely our world has realized by now that machismo only leads to men committing nine times more murders than women.

Statistics such as these are not given any significance. It is expected that normal men commit aggressive acts; the nation utters a communal "boys will be boys." There has been no large-scale effort to uncover the reason why men commit so many acts of violence and, until there is, this aggression will surely continue. Disgracing a feminine icon for male children only entrenches the message further that men who hold hands with friends are going to Hell, so go load up that AK-47 and we'll shoot ourselves some loose women for dinner. If men committing murder is acceptable, but holding hands with your best male friend isn't, groups such as Focus on the Family need to evaluate this fallacy.

The Christian right (or wrong) has surely realized the frailty of its own belief system if it fears that an animated yellow sponge has the power to brainwash children. Will kids see a sea sponge holding hands with a (pink) starfish and think, "Yeah, sleeping with people of the same gender is a good idea!" That's almost as ridiculous as claiming that some laws set down by god-knows-who over 2,000 years ago could still hold true today.

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Editorial

PFC attacks students by censoring publications

Attention University students, faculty and staff:

Your student leaders are currently abusing their authority over incidental fees in order to settle personal scores with campus journalists — and dismantle your freedom of speech — by simultaneously trying to de-fund the two most visible student publications on campus: the Oregon Commentator and the Oregon Daily Emerald.

It is no coincidence that both of these publications serve as student government watchdogs and have a history of exposing the illegal, unethical and just plain stupid behavior of University elected officials.

As principled journalists, it is sometimes unfortunately our responsibility to bite the hand that feeds us. The Emerald did just that by aggressively covering the recent Sunriver boondoggle and the ASUO's laughably incomplete self-punishment process. Rather than adequately punish themselves by returning the \$3,000 in misused incidental fees, they are engaging in a misguided and pathetic attempt to punish us for reporting on them.

The Emerald is an independent publication — unlike many university newspapers — so we are impervious to direct censorship from the ASUO, the University or anybody else for that matter. Instead the ASUO and PFC resorted to backdoor censorship by attacking our budget, using a mountain of flimsy rationales, inaccurate information, fuzzy math and faulty logic to justify their actions.

The Emerald escaped total de-funding by a single vote: 3-4-0. In the end, the PFC voted to approve the Executive recommendation of a \$8,415 decrease; this is not only the greatest decrease the PFC has handed out so far this year, but it is greater than all other decreases combined.

The Emerald provides students and campus groups with the opportunity to have their accomplishments recognized and their opinions heard by the majority of their campus peers. Furthermore, the Emerald provides a substantial reduction in advertising cost to University organizations. These groups might have their advertising budget explode, coverage of their group slashed and campus participation in their events dramatically decreased if the Emerald is not funded. An attack on campus publications is really an attack on all students.

In light of these disturbing developments, the Emerald editorial board has decided to publish a week-long series of editorials outlining why the Emerald and the Commentator deserve to be fully funded, the history of censorship at the University and the unprecedented lack of professionalism demonstrated by this year's student leaders.

Now is the time for the student body to fight for their First Amendment rights here in Eugene. The first step is to write the Emerald a letter to the editor. Do you agree with the PFC decision to decrease our funds? Or are you concerned about the PFC's decision? Please send us your opinion and make your voice heard.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.

INBOX

LTD contract used for revenge against employees

About four and a half years ago the management and the union workers at Lane Transit District negotiated a

contract. Ken Hamm was the general manager at that time. Both parties agreed to and accepted the contract. Then about halfway throughout that contract Ken Hamm changed it by making the employees pay part of their health insurance. In the contract, health insurance was paid for by the employer.

The employees took LTD to court and Ken Hamm lost the decision. Now the contract is up and Ken Hamm wants to punish the employees for standing up for their rights. Revenge is no way to run a public transit district.

Vernon Bell
Springfield

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