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■ In my opinion

Ethics for sale



DAVID JAGERNAUTH
CRITICAL MASS

When a Democrat turns conservative, it isn't a pretty transformation. Case in point: Sen. Zell Miller, the keynote preacher — I mean speaker — at the Republican National Convention, who all but challenged Chris Matthews to a duel on "Hardball." Acting like a mental patient off of his meds turned out to be a good career move for Zell, as he was recently hired as a FOX News contributor.

The wall between journalists and politicians has all but disappeared, another quaint relic of the journalistic past, like the wall once separating advertising and editorial departments. Everything is now an infomercial, either for the latest, hottest product or the newest piece of legislation. Quid pro quo is the status quo, and a lack of disclosure is now the norm.

Case in point: Another government payola scheme with a conservative columnist was exposed this week, this time involving the unbearable Maggie Gallagher. Turns out she had a \$21,500 contract with the Department of Health and Human Services to produce materials promoting President Bush's marriage initiative while her syndicated columns praising the president's proposal were running in newspapers around the country. She never once disclosed the federal contract to her readers.

Gallagher does not appear to understand the seriousness of her actions. "Did I violate journalistic ethics by not disclosing it? I don't know. You tell me," Gallagher told The Washington Post.

Okay, Gallagher, we'll tell you. Not disclosing a substantial conflict of interest, especially involving the exchange of money, is one of the most obvious and egregious violations of journalistic ethics, a fact that even students at high school newspapers would know. How could a syndicated columnist be so naive? The answer is she couldn't. Gallagher is stupid, no doubt, but she is not that stupid. Feigning ignorance in

this matter is just plain despicable.

Other examples of undisclosed conflicts of interest have surfaced in recent days. Conservative columnists Charles Krauthammer and William Kristol both were consulted on President Bush's inauguration speech and then praised the speech on television without disclosing their contributing roles, according to the liberal group Media Matters for America. And FOX News host Sean Hannity admitted he should have disclosed that he sits on the advisory board of frequent guest the Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson's Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny.

All of this began less than a month ago when conservative columnist Armstrong Williams was busted for an even more serious and expensive payola scheme. Williams found it within himself to admit fault and apologize, something the government failed to do. But this time around, the administration is singing a different tune.

President Bush publicly called for an end to using taxpayer money to pay columnists to advance the administration's position. "All our Cabinet secretaries must realize that we will not be paying commentators to advance our agenda. Our agenda ought to be able to stand on its own two feet," Bush said.

Exactly. His agenda ought to, but it doesn't.

That is why the Bush administration spent record amounts of taxpayer money on public relations in 2004, according to a report released yesterday by the House Committee on Government

Reform. The report, which was prepared by Democrats, claims that the White House spent \$88 million of taxpayer money on "government-funded public relations contracts," a 128 percent increase from 2000.

One has to wonder, if it costs this much money to persuade the American people to agree with Bush's agenda, just how sensible is it?

Not only that, but the administration has been found guilty of "covert propaganda" by the Government Accountability Office. It illegally used taxpayer money to produce fake news segments that sang the praises of its Medicare prescription drug plan.

It just goes to show that the Bush administration has so little credibility left after its torrent of lies about the war in Iraq and WMDs (this list could go on for the length of this column) that the White House must cloak its opinions and agenda in the garb of journalism. And, tragically, journalists from all media are capitulating.

Case in point: FOX News' Carl Cameron was recently promoted to chief White House correspondent, despite the fact that (or maybe because) he fabricated quotes from Sen. John Kerry in a story on the FOX News Web site. During his first press conference, President Bush gave Cameron a warm response. "Carl, welcome to the beat. Is everybody thrilled Carl is here? Please express a little more enthusiasm for him."

Cameron then proceeded to change the wording of his question on Social Security reform, at first saying "private accounts," but then correcting himself by using the term preferred by the president: "personal accounts."

This small incident is symbolic of the state of journalism today. Politicians slap a logo on their legislative goods, and journalists play the role of Tony the Tiger: Personal accounts are grrrrreat!

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INBOX

Student speaks out against ASUO funding decisions

I am angry the ASUO cut funding for two of the only programs that I support funding with my student fees. In all honesty, I am ignorant in large part of ASUO and its workings, and so I depend on the three main campus papers to cover it. For it to seriously slash the Emerald's funding and completely cut the Commentator's budget is a serious misuse of power. I do not recall any community demand or vote for either and feel grossly misrepresented by a largely unrepresentative student government. I believe that an informed reader is one who has several options of news coverage. To limit my choices through these budget decisions demonstrates a large disconnect between the student senate and its constituents.

On a related note, when a news outlet becomes a part of a story itself, questions of bias inevitably arise. How can I depend that the non-editorial coverage of the ASUO is accurate as clearly the Emerald was involved in a conflict for funding with the PFC? Doesn't this relationship of patron/client necessarily underlie Emerald's perspective on

the ASUO? While the response to this will likely be that the Emerald is only partially funded by the ASUO and that it is an independent newspaper that believes in factual reporting rather than sensationalized opinions, I still question this conflict of interest. It also further proves my point about the necessity in funding multiple news publications on campus as now I am even further hindered from reading factually based coverage and must make do with partial and biased editorials.

Susan Goodwin
Junior

LTD general manager abuses tax-payer money

What's going on with Lane Transit District? Why are the employees preparing to strike? Why have 200 of the employees signed a petition of no confidence in the general manager's ability to run Lane Transit? Why aren't the citizens of Eugene and surrounding areas up in arms over the excessive capital expenditures by the current general manager?

Everyone who has an employee or is self-employed in the area serviced by

Lane Transit District pays the employment tax. Do they realize that their money is being spent on grandiose projects and not to support service for the riders? The current general manager, Ken Hamm, started with a capital expenditure budget of \$2 million when he came on board four years ago, and the budget is now \$27 million for 2005. He has done this while cutting the number of routes served and the hours of service, resulting in a 24 percent cut in service in the last three years.

Ken Hamm and his board of directors has also now requested an increase in the payroll tax. If this is the way you run your business — buying new buildings, remodeling, repainting and buying new vehicles while cutting your services and service hours and raising your rates — then support Ken Hamm. However, if you see this as a way to business ruin and, in this case, a gross abuse of the way your taxes are being spent, contact Rep. Peter Defazio, your LTD Board representative, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and don't forget to write letters to the editor. Please, help save Lane Transit District.

Melinda Raven
Springfield

■ Out loud

"Not being able to smoke on public sidewalks is just political correctness run amok," — Eugene resident **Steven Leppanen** at Mayor Kitty Piercy's first one-on-one public session on Monday.

"It's just an all-out rave party in the park. The pot smoke is so thick you can smell it in the houses across the street." — Eugene resident **Eric Gran**, at the same public meeting, discussing the ongoing prostitution and drug use in Monroe Park.

"Yeah, it's cheap, but maybe we won't use it all," — PFC Vice Chair **Mason Quiroz** on Monday comparing the LTD bus pass fee with buying a large jar of mayonnaise at Costco and saving money, but having some of the mayonnaise go bad before it is used.

"Our people were tired of corruptive government," — Visiting law professor **Svitlana Kravchenko** in an on-campus lecture Monday, explaining the situation surrounding the Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" and its impact on Europe and North America.

"(Sex and gender) are crucial to understanding the continuing Iraq crisis and the war on terrorism," — International law expert and the 24th holder of the Wayne Morse Chair of Law and Politics **Hilary Charlesworth** who spoke in the Knight Law Center lecture hall on Wednesday night on the absence of women in discussions of war and conflict.

"The silent part of the University of Oregon's campaign is no longer silent. We are at \$300 million and counting higher by the minute," — University President **Dave Frohnmayer** in a press conference Monday, announcing that the University's seven-year fundraising campaign, Campaign Oregon, reached the halfway mark on the most ambitious fundraising goal in state history.

"I think it's ridiculous they're asking us to pay for it. If Frohnmayer is putting together a \$600 million capital campaign; that's a good place for them to look," — EMU Board of Directors member **Gabe Shaughnessy** at an emergency Student Senate meeting Tuesday arguing that students shouldn't foot the bill for extended library hours next year.

"One of the greatest obstacles for students speaking toward the public interest is the staggering amount of debt that they carry when they leave here. Many students are forced to make career decisions based on their student loans and not on their passion to serve the public," — Public Interest Public Service Co-chairman **Josh Reed** replying to Governor Ted Kulongoski's call to public service during a meeting with more than 100 law students Jan. 21.

"We're just pumped to bring some tents and just hang out with the kids if nothing else," — Undergraduate **Ethan Holub** on Friday, a member of a group of University students and community members preparing to travel to southern Asia and help tsunami victims.

"I feel betrayed by this," — Development Director **Joseph Glig** at the University Theatre's budget hearing Saturday after the PFC granted half his requested amount.

"We brought T.O. here for a reason. If T.O. is out there, he's going to catch some balls," — **Donovan McNabb**, Eagles' quarterback, on signing Terrell Owens to the team.

"International law has a gender, and that gender is male," Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Law School **Margie Paris** at the annual Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics lecture Wednesday.

— From Daily Emerald reports

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

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