

■ In my opinion

PRAISE for Parliament

After approximately 20 years of schooling, it's rare that college students are exposed to a piece of information that is completely new — something that has been around for ages, but that the student just never quite got around to learning about. For me, that tidbit of knowledge is called parliament. Since learning exactly what the parliamentary system is, I have been hard-pressed to find any reason why the United States is not attempting to change itself into such a government.

In a parliament (seen in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom), everyone gets a piece of the pie. Each member of parliament is a representative of a certain section of the nation. This means that the "Ralph Nader Syndrome" of recent presidential elections could be eliminated, because there is no motive for a member of a third party to vote for anyone other than exactly who they want acting as their personal representative.

For instance, in the 2003 Scottish Parliament election, the Labour Party got the largest number of votes, followed by the Scottish National Party. In America, results such as those (i.e. two parties taking first and second place) would dictate a governmental organization made up of only those two points of view. The Scottish Parliament, however, may be composed of mostly Labour and SNP representatives, but will also include members from Socialist, Green and other parties. This method is especially salient



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

when looking at a pie chart of the Scottish Parliament: Although the Labour party is by far the largest group, Conservatives, SNPs and Liberal Democrats all received about the same number of votes. Luckily for those Scottish citizens, their world views do not have to be compromised in order to fit within a two-party system.

Another positive aspect of parliament is the fact that the Prime minister is chosen by debating and voting amongst the members of parliament. Rather than an election boiling down to Republican candidate versus Democratic candidate, all members and parties of parliament must work together to find a compromise. It is very encouraging to think that sharply partisan voting could be replaced with a system based on fairness, compromise and finding a leader who is truly acceptable to all members of a nation.

Just imagine what a system of parliament could do for the United States. Both Republican and Democratic party members continually

lament the fact that their parties are so divided, but perhaps that sort of divisiveness is exactly what this country needs. Third party members are always faced with an unfair choice: Vote for who you want to represent yourself and your nation (and prepare to be silenced by the two-party system); or vote within the two main parties for the lesser evil, and know that you are decreasing the likelihood that the Republican/Democrat system will ever change.

In a democracy, you would think that choices like that should not exist.

Unfortunately, for the third parties of America, having their voices heard is still just a sham. Citizens who vote for Ralph Nader or Pat Buchanan do so knowing that their vote literally does not count; the same goes for every other election of Governors, State Representatives, etc. It is interesting to consider how many members of the two main parties would switch to a lesser known third party if, on a national level, votes besides Republican and Democrat actually mattered.

In electing a parliament, every vote goes toward creating a national government that is diverse in its beliefs; just like the country that the group of politicians has been hired to represent. It is time for the United States to work toward the positive change embodied in a parliament.

aileeslater@dailyemerald.com

■ Editorial

Investigation required to prevent any recurrences

At the end of June, a fatal shooting occurred just outside of Eugene. It wasn't a robbery, it wasn't a drive-by shooting, and it wasn't an accidental firing. Fifteen-year-old Jason Michael Porter was shot by a Springfield police officer.

According to police accounts, the officer (whose name is still being withheld) followed Porter's vehicle with lights and sirens, until the car eventually pulled over. When the police officer approached Porter's window (with his weapon already drawn), he believed that the driver was drawing a weapon, and therefore fired one round through the car window. Porter was hit in the jaw and later pronounced dead at the scene. Porter did not have a weapon.

As always, there are two sides to any story. Oregon State Police are conducting an investigation into the shooting. Lane County District Attorney Doug Harclerod has said that the shooting was probably justified. Porter was in possession of a stolen truck, which is why the officer pulled him over in the first place. Porter tried to evade the police, so it is logical that the officer had reason to be edgy.

However, unfortunate though it may be, police officers cannot always be granted the same employee leeway that other people experience. As armed enforcers of the law, police officers must exercise impeccable judgment in order to keep the innocent safe. Although Porter may have been a criminal, there is no doubt that he was still a young adult who did not deserve to die.

Our nation's history of police brutality also sets up a scary precedent, recalled by many when examining a situation such as this one. Though it appears that the officer in question acted with reasonable intentions, the potential for police to take the law into their own hands is still a threat that rests in the mind of anyone wondering why a 15-year-old died for stealing a car.

Even if this particular officer was acting in what he thought to be the best interest for himself and his fellow officers on the scene, police miscalculation can often be the slippery slope into police brutality. It is an important responsibility of the job to make quick, informed choices; if this officer lacks the capability to evaluate potentially dangerous situations, then perhaps he should be removed from his current position.

It may be that the officer thought it necessary to fire a shot at Porter, but it was the wrong decision. Most frightening is a recent statement by a 26-year-old Springfield man who witnessed the shooting, and claims that Porter was trying to surrender at the time that the shot was fired. Dustin Allen Reinke's testimony has been seriously questioned, but he was the only person present at the scene of the crime who is neither involved in the police force nor dead. If nothing else, this situation should be used as a starting place for local police programs to develop more in-depth training to avoid similar occurrences.

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.

■ Guest commentary

Freedom of college newspapers deserves more protection, not less

Suppose the Oregon Daily Emerald, the University of Oregon's student newspaper, is in trouble financially and thus depends on funding from the University administration.

Although its editorial decision-making remains the responsibility of student editors, the paper is no longer a public forum. But its editors resolve to publish their paper as the "independent" campus newspaper.

When the Emerald publishes news stories and letters to the editor that are critical of the University faculty and administration, the University president tries unsuccessfully to publish his replies.

He now considers barring publication of any stories and letters to the editor in the Emerald unless the dean of the University School of Journalism and Communication reviews and approves them in advance.

Is this so far-fetched a hypothetical scenario as to be dismissed as ivory-tower gibberish on First Amendment law? Probably not.

When it comes to their ever-shrinking freedom, college newspapers are less different from high school newspapers now than ever.

As the full panel of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals stated last week, college newspapers, if subsidized and not a public forum, may be regulated the way school-sponsored expressive activities are at elementary and secondary schools.

The federal appeals court held that "there is no sharp difference between high school and college papers." Yet Judge Frank H. Easterbrook's opinion for the court is devoid of thought. Easterbrook claims that the maturity of college students, if factored here, should be no big deal because high school seniors are older than some college freshmen.

Easterbrook also notes schools' desire to ensure that the student speech that is disseminated under their auspices is of high quality and that they don't want to be associated with political controversies other than in a neutral way.

His reasoning is tellingly strained when he makes a convoluted argument: Regulation of school newspapers is a matter of academic freedom for the university administrators, which deserves judicial deference, because freedom of the campus press is subsumed into the institutional autonomy of the university.

The 7th Circuit Court ruling, which is clearly the most constrictive decision for the college press rights, counters the widely accepted view among state and federal courts that a university may not censor its student newspaper like a high school does.

And the significant but little-noticed opinion of Judge Easterbrook highlights the continuing retrenchment in the freedom of the students' speech and press since the late 1980s.

In 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* that school officials can censor school-sponsored student expression, including student newspapers, if it relates to a legitimate educational objective.

Yet the federal appeals court's cavalier expansion of the *Hazelwood* doctrine to the college press will tempt some authoritarian college administrators to resort to their new-found weapon to control a wide range of school-funded speech activities.

Thus far, six states have passed laws to curb the *Hazelwood* ruling, and two other states protect student expression through their administrative codes. But Oregon is not one of those states. Anti-*Hazelwood* legislation in Oregon has

failed four times.

Now it is time to reinvigorate the anti-*Hazelwood* campaign in Oregon with more urgency and with a directed focus on the collegiate as well as the high school press.

Oregon will not be alone if it launches another round of legislative efforts to seek shelter for the school press. Recently, anti-*Hazelwood* bills have been introduced in Indiana, Michigan and Vermont. Those bills would prevent school administrators from reviewing articles before publication.

Meanwhile, introduction of anti-*Hazelwood* legislation will likely continue to be a political issue. Some Oregon state legislators will persist in viewing reversal of *Hazelwood* as an ideological proposition by journalists.

Nonetheless, those legislators should be disabused of their often misguided tendency to pigeonhole press freedom as a banal agenda for the media organizations only, not for the general public.

Legislating anti-*Hazelwood* would be an effective option for student journalists and their supporters. Oregon courts by and large have followed federal case precedent on student speech rather than applying the freedom of expression guarantee under the Constitution of Oregon.

So, we Oregonians should not let the kind of politically charged anti-*Hazelwood* debates that we have seen in the past drag on. The broad protection of freedom of speech under our Constitution mandates state legislators to act on anti-*Hazelwood* bills promptly if and when they're introduced.

Kyu Ho Youm holds the Jonathan Marshall First Amendment Chair at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication.

NEWS STAFF

(541) 346-5511

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KATY GAGNON

KERI SPANGLER

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING ASSOCIATES

PRODUCTION

(541) 346-4381

MICHELE ROSS

PRODUCTION MANAGER

KIRA PARK

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

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