

Activist discusses U.S. influence on Israel conflict



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Phyllis Bennis, senior analyst at the Institute for Policy Studies and anti-war activist speaks in the Walnut Room of the EMU.

Phyllis Bennis shared her opinions on American support and 'special interest' in warfare tactics

BY KATY GAGNON
NEWS REPORTER

The United States is partially responsible for the conflict between Israel and Palestine because it ignores international law and supports Israel's military occupation of neighboring regions, author and political activist Phyllis Bennis told a crowd of about 20 students, educators, and community members Tuesday.

"The U.S. does say they want a Palestinian state, but everything they're doing is having the effect of undermining their capacity of a true state," said Bennis, who is a senior analyst at the Institute for Policy Studies and has written about United Nations and Middle East issues

for almost 20 years.

Israeli occupation in Palestine and U.S. occupation in Iraq are linked and are set within the U.S. strategy, she said.

Bennis said the United States has shared a strategic alliance and "special relationship" with Israel, granting economic and political support since the 1967 war, when Israel seized large tracts of land from neighboring countries. In April 2002, Israel violated international law when it relaunched a military assault on a refugee camp in Jenin and killed 29 civilians, Bennis said.

Following the Jenin invasion, the United States provided political support to Israel and used the invasion as a model for urban warfare,

she said.

Throughout the war in Iraq, especially during the seizure of Fallujah, the U.S. military used tactics Israelis used in Jenin, Bennis said.

In August 2005, the Israeli government ordered Israeli Jews to leave settlements in the Gaza Strip. After the disengagement, Bennis said, there was a moment of celebration and people were grateful the occupants were gone, but Palestinians are still not granted any real independence.

"There's no money. There's no economy. There's no way to export goods," she said. "There's supposed to be negotiations underway, but there's no indication, given the disparity in power, that anything new is going to change."

Bennis said education and action are key to changing conditions in

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Torrey: Candidate forced to drop out of college because of tuition costs

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the past. One such endeavor was the City of Eugene's Growth Management Study, which Weeks said was a very broad and deep process utilizing public participation. Torrey was the principle sponsor and architect of the study, which set the tone for planning and development in Eugene over the next nine years, Weeks said.

"It shows to me an impressive degree of respect for citizens," he said.

Torrey said he spent a great deal of time working with smaller communities in Oregon when he was mayor and used the University to reach out to them in an attempt to find ways to make the cities economically stable and viable.

"One of the best awards I received was being recognized by the PPPM school as being Oregon's Outstanding Volunteer," Torrey said. "I can't tell you the number of times that I've been in meetings with Dave Frohnmayer where I have to say to people that aren't from Eugene 'remember, it's not the University of Oregon in Eugene; it's the University of Oregon.' That's important."

Torrey is more concerned with elementary school than he is with higher education. He said that if no

more revenue is generated, the best thing that could be done with the money Oregon already has is extend public schooling to 3- and 4-year-olds and make kindergarten full-day.

"We're entering into a new world where the competitors for my 5-year-old granddaughter — the job she's going to want when she's 25 — won't just be surrounding this state, they'll be in Asia, they'll be in other places in the world, and what is it that we have to do to compete? We must start our children earlier," he said.

Torrey said one of the main problems is the number of non-English speaking children in the classrooms.

"In the United States we have the responsibility of educating every child, whether that child is in our country legally or illegally," he said.

When some of the foreign children enter the first grade without much interaction with other kids and basic knowledge before-hand, he said, "it forces us to lower the common denominator for education of all of our children... it's just a fact of life. It takes an awful lot of time for some of these non-English speaking students to be cared for by the teachers in their classroom, and when they're being cared for by these teachers, they are

taking away from the other students in the classroom who could be moving faster."

He believes that if the children start school earlier, they will do better when introduced to an English-speaking first grade classroom.

Torrey said it will cost a lot of money to start every Oregon child's education earlier, but "it will be a tremendous success and it will get a tremendous return on that investment."

He said it's the most reasonable and fair approach to economic development, and if Oregon has the best workforce, then large companies will want to bring jobs, and people who already live in the state will be able to take advantage of that workforce to create new products.

"If Oregon is a great place for kids, it will be a great place for everyone," Torrey said.

Good jobs generate tax revenue, children will have safe places to be and even senior citizens will benefit because they won't have to dig deeper into their wallets to pay for additional property taxes, he said.

"First thing I plan to do is hopefully serve as a change agent. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again with the same results.

That's what we've been doing in Salem for session after session after session," Torrey said. "What I believe the major problem is that there are really well meaning people on both sides of the isle — both Republicans and Democrats — and my objective is going to be to find people who are willing to set aside their partisan differences and focus on certain key issues."

He said the first issues that should be focused on are education and increasing the number of quality jobs in the state.

"They really go hand in hand," he said.

When Torrey started running for public office 12 years ago, he said he wanted to have the community be the kind of place his grandchildren would want and be able to live in. Now he wants to bring that same objective to the state senate.

He said that rather than give incentives like tax breaks to big companies in order to bring them to Oregon, he would rather take that money and put it into schools which will create a stronger workforce, and that in itself will attract new businesses.

"I'm a proponent of a quality environment; there will be times that I won't always agree with the most

green of the greens, but the city of Eugene is a perfect example of a community that has these opposing points of view, very strong environmental stance and in many instances a very strong pro-business stance," he said. "The fact is these two groups always end up keeping Eugene a place where people want to live."

According to the Eugene Weekly, Torrey faced criticism from environmentalists and other city planners for his support of the West Eugene Parkway project, which proposes to build a route through the endangered wetlands west of Eugene.

Torrey said Eugene needs the road and he has told people for a long time that if they show him another responsible solution to the problem, he would consider it, but as of today, no one has showed him an alternative.

Torrey has been a coach for Kid-sports for 37 years and is currently volunteering as the organization's executive director. He fathered four children and has five grandchildren, one of whom he took on a recent trip to India to observe the country's school system.

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RRC: ASUO Executive Vice President Kyla Coy to serve as tie-breaker vote

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Goward has not yet submitted documentation to the Court.

The four new RRC members, Stephanie Carriere, Mike Filippelli, Kristin Kato and Scott Lu, asked a multitude of questions at the first meeting on Monday, one of which was how they will reassure

programs leaders of the RRC's objectivity while reviewing groups.

Lu, programs representative for the PFC, said he is worried that if bylaws are not created soon, program leaders may be skeptical of the new committee.

"One of my main concerns is that it's a way that groups can really feel

like this is a structured organization or committee with bylaws," Lu said.

Goward announced at the meeting that ASUO Vice President Kyla Coy will serve as an ex-officio member on the RRC, voting only to break ties.

Former Senator Khanh Le, the only non-RRC member in atten-

dance, expressed concerns over why Coy will be voting.

"My worry is that I didn't know Kyla was voting," he said. "I just thought the five members were voting."

Le asked how a tie would be broken if Goward and Coy, who are members of the ASUO Executive,

refrained from voting at the Executive's hearing to avoid a conflict of interest.

"I don't know what will happen," Goward said.

Contact the campus and federal politics reporter at nwilbur@dailyemerald.com

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