

Editor O'Donnell Ousted

By Toddy Watkins

It took a series of student government meetings last week before the final outcome of the controversy over Sagebrush editorial and news policy was finally decided.

Main discussion of a publications board meeting Tuesday, Senate Wednesday, and the determining publications meeting Thursday centered around this controversy—the result was the ousting of Sagebrush Editor Don O'Donnell, who was judged incompetent to continue in his position.

After deliberating nearly two hours Thursday, the ten-member publication board, with chairman Al Pagni and O'Donnell without a vote, fired the ex-editor by a seven to one decision.

Only member voting to leave O'Donnell in his editorial position was Nancy Horning, Sagebrush business manager.

The 21-year-old journalism major from San Francisco had held his position as editor of the student newspaper all year until his removal.

Overruling a decision made by publications board to strip Sagebrush Editor Don O'Donnell of his right to make editorial comment, Senators Wednesday night by a majority vote passed a recommendation to the board that he be removed from his position.

Their action established a precedent that an editor might be removed but his rights of freedom of the press would not be removed while he is allowed to remain as

editor. Senators passed the removal recommendation by a vote of 13 for, 10 against, and five abstentions.

O'Donnell went before a special publications board meeting March 21 on charges of his incompetency as editor, and the board unanimously voted to remove his editorial rights. He appealed his case to Senate the following night and the decision was unanimously overruled and the recommendation made.

The charges against O'Donnell made at the publications meeting and later brought out again in Senate were in the areas of his "lack of cooperation with and respect for the Board" and "inaccuracy of editorial material.

Specifics in the second area of

general criticism, O'Donnell's editorial policy, were inaccuracies in the Alpha Tau Omega "tree-topping" story in the Jan. 13 issue, and the March 10 editorial on traditions with regard to attacks made on Dean of Men Jerry Wulk.

O'Donnell sent a letter to both the ATO's and publications board stating certain material in the story was in error and expressing his regret.


The editor printed a retraction of certain phases in his "A Correction" editorial of March 17 concerning Dean Wulk. The day before, O'Donnell met with the administration and was requested to print the retraction or face possible libel action or expulsion.

Dr. Don W. Driggs, publications board faculty advisor, reported to

the board March 21 that the administration was satisfied with the retraction. He read a letter from Dr. Kenneth Young, who called the March 23 meeting, in which he spoke for the administration and their belief in a free University press based on fair comment and criticism backed up by facts.

ASUN First Vice President Al Pagni explained to Senate that he had called a special publications meeting for March 14 to discuss O'Donnell's "Traditions" editorial but for lack of a full board it was cancelled until the following Tuesday. Meanwhile the administration held its own meeting with O'Donnell, members of publications board, others in student government, and Prof. A. L. Higginbotham, chairman of the journalism department.

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA



SAGEBRUSH

EXTRA

Nevada's Greatest Weekly

VOLUME XXXVI, No. 25 RENO, NEVADA 5 Tuesday, March 28, 1961

Publications Board, Ex-Editor Give Statements

Publications Board To Pick New Editor

A new editor for the Sagebrush will be chosen by the Publications board within the next two weeks.

Don O'Donnell, former editor, was ousted by board following meetings of Publications board and the student Senate last week.

Editor of the blank edition published Friday and today's edition is Marybeth Hockel who was serving as managing editor at the time O'Donnell was fired. Publications board notified Miss Hockel that she would be editor of Friday's edition following a board meeting held on Thursday afternoon. O'Donnell was fired on grounds of incompetence, the only grounds for firing a Sagebrush editor specified in the Publications board policy.

"We felt O'Donnell failed to cooperate, and that he has a responsibility to ascertain the facts before he editorializes on any subject," the board said. "In this incident he was critical of the University administration, not the student government."

Board members explained that the Publications board is responsible for the Sagebrush operation in the same sense that a publisher is responsible for any newspaper.

The first decision of the board was to forbid O'Donnell to print any more editorials as long as he was editor of the Sagebrush, but quickly realized that this was a mistake, so he was discharged on these specific charges:

- 1) Lack of cooperation and respect for the Publications board and lack of cooperation in printing official ASUN news and announcements.
 - 2) Handling of finances without authorization and approval by the board.
 - 3) Inaccuracy of editorial material.
- Board members explained to the press that O'Donnell took a trip

to the coast to cover a meeting without authorization by the board and that he sent telegrams to 15 California and Nevada newspapers, Gov. Grant Sawyer, Assembly Speaker Chester Christensen, and Washoe County Senator Peter Echeverria seeking support in his fight with the board, at student expense.

The board said further that an editorial critical of Dean of Men Dr. Jerry Wulk, which was the root of the controversy, was not based on facts and that a retraction published by O'Donnell was not considered satisfactory to the board.

In another instance in which a Sagebrush article about Alpha Tau Omega and "Tree-topping" was considered inaccurate. O'Donnell wrote a private letter of apology to the ATO's instead of an article in the newspaper.

"We aren't attempting to censor editorials in the Sagebrush, but we do intend to establish responsibility to editors," board members said. "Editors must be responsible for the accuracy of what they write."

Letter to The Editor

Editor, the Sagebrush:

In concluding the O'Donnell case, I feel editors will realize that they are responsible for what they write, and the Publications board will realize that decisions they give must not impair press freedom. The conclusion being both parties make mistakes and both parties should benefit from these mistakes.

As a member of the Publications board, I have no intentions of acting against the persons responsible

(Continued on Page 2)

Case Decided On Emotional Actions --90% Columnist

By RICHARD MORRIS

I think that it is safe to say that agreement will never be reached on the question of whether or not the removal of D. A. O'Donnell was justified. It can, however, safely be said that the case provoked a great deal of hysterical behavior, and was decided on an emotional basis rather than on the facts.

The Publications board originally voted to place an editorial ban on the Sagebrush editor because its members lacked the courage to remove O'Donnell for fear that violent protest would result from people who believe that the administration was behind the action. One of the board members commented, during the meeting at which the ban was invoked, that outright removal would result in rioting and burning of effigies.

The evidence which was brought against O'Donnell was not limited to criticism of inaccurate statements in the editorial against Dean Wulk. Of the other evidence, some may have had a basis in fact, but others were ridiculous, trumped-up charges resulting from a desire to charge the editor with as many things as possible.

HYSTERIA REACHES HEIGHT

When criticism was invoked against the Publications board's abortion of a decision, its members again became frightened, and recommended to the ASUN Senate the following night that their decision be overruled. It was at this Senate meeting that the hysteria reached its height. The hearing was not conducted in an orderly manner, as it should have been, as a "circus."

In place of an orderly presentation of the evidence, charges and

(Continued on Page 2)

Lerude Defends Freedom of Press

Editor, the Sagebrush:

In the controversy over removal of D. A. O'Donnell as Sagebrush editor, I took a firm stand. Now that that controversy is seemingly ended I would like to state why I did so.

At no time was I defending O'Donnell on the charge that his editorial on Dr. Wulk was inaccurate. I defended from beginning to end press freedom and the rights of O'Donnell, not O'Donnell himself or his editorial.

When a Sagebrush editor is fired the issue of press freedom must arise. It is entirely too easy for the

Voting April 5 For Constitution, Senate Re-Run

Women students on campus will vote on a revised AWS constitution when the student body at large votes in the senatorial re-run election Wednesday, April 15.

Main change in the AWS constitution would include membership representing the unaffiliated, off-campus women.

A second change calls for the AWS president having the power to fill vacancies left in the council during the year. She would also have the power to call special elections.

Another change in the revised constitution would provide for an AWS secretary on the AWS judiciary board who would keep records of that body's meetings.

Copies of the complete draft of the revised constitution, including these and other changes, are available in the office of AWS President Diana Isola.

publications board to silence an editor under the guise of incompetence because he has given stern criticism to student government. The right to criticize must stand—although many in student government would not have it for any other than themselves.

The publications board mandate that the editor of the newspaper not be allowed to write editorials was deeply wrong—a deep violation of the American principle of fair comment and criticism in newspapers. While an editor may be indicted, the Sagebrush editorial columns' right to exist must never be. The solution is this: When an editor can be proven to be incompetent he should be fired. Editorial freedom of the newspaper as an institution must never be banned.

Jim Meguire realized this and explained to the Senate that the recommendation to ban comment and criticize should be withdrawn. The Senate realized this and set the issue to either fire the editor or give him freedom to comment and criticize.

The reason there was so much public uproar over this issue was that the editorial freedom of the newspaper had been breached by a government body—this is contrary to the deal of freedom of expression of ideas held in our society.

The matter now to be realized is this: Is this issue—ban of idea circulation through the Sagebrush—to be repeated. Here's why it came up in the first place:

The publications board generally has only one person on it who is familiar with press principles. That person is the editor of the Sagebrush. When an editor is being taken to task his opinions will not likely be considered as worth much

(Continued on Page 2)

Editorial Page

University of Nevada Sagebrush



... and the truth
shall make
you free.

A Blank Edition

THE LAST EDITION of the ASUN Sagebrush was blank. It was the only blank edition in 68 years. Publications board in a coup engineered by Benny Echeverria, ASUN president, tossed an editor to the winds—adding charges as to his alleged guilt as it went on its follysome way. The board stripped the newspaper of its power to write editorials and then, realizinz its folly, restored that right.

THE ONLY TROUBLE with the way in which they "restored" the right gave the appearances of a branding iron which stamped "Government approved" on the editorials and on the Sagebrush.

JOURNALISM IS A unique profession because it is guided by the U.S. Constitution which grants Freedom of the Press. This freedom is necessary to our country because it keeps the public free to comment on and criticize government. We must maintain this freedom. It is a freedom from having government control newspapers.

THE EDITOR-APPOINTEE which Publications board named was a woman student. Women are known to be conservative and usually eager to do a job correctly without hurting people. If an unthinking woman had stepped into this job, being told to publish a paper, she could go ahead and do it. However, newspapermen backed the underclass journalism major as a member of their profession. The taint of "government" branded on the Sagebrush became evident.

WHAT WAS THERE to do in this situation? Four choices were evident, and the decision rested on the comparatively unexperienced newspaperwoman.

THE FIRST CHOICE was to go ahead and print the paper as instructed. By doing this she would endanger her future as a newspaper woman by "going along with" student government.

ANOTHER CHOICE WAS to take a stand, publish a screaming objection to the unjust ousting of her editor, and demand repentance from student government.

THE THIRD CHOICE was to refuse completely to be railroaded by a government agency and to not publish a paper at all. However, there were two responsibilities—the advertisers had contracted for the issue and publications board, which is advisory to the Sagebrush, had requested a paper reminding her that the policy states that a paper must be published every week.

THE FINAL ALTERNATIVE was the chosen one—to publish the paper, but not to allow a dangerous precedent—one of governmental control—to threaten the newspaper, by leaving the reportorial and editorial spaces blank. It spotlighted the advertisers.

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT leaders received a deserved slap in the face and the subscribers still have coveted freedom of the press and their rights protected.

THE BLANK NEWSPAPER was published to affirm to the readers of the newspaper that it would never give up its right as a free agent in protecting the students by standing up for their rights and criticizing those who would take basic rights away.

THE STUDENTS SHOULD now know that though publications board may again use its power to strip the newspaper—the newspaper will never tolerate being a tool of student government. The newspaper will publish nothing before it will publish the dictates of student government.

Why Not?

By BILL ADAMS

I am sorry to say to my loyal readers and glad to say to those not so loyal that I will no longer be connected with the Sagebrush. Due to the situation at hand I feel I owe some sort of loyalty to my editor D. A. O'Donnell. It was he that asked me to write this column in September and now that he is fired—it is only right that I too resign.

As stated in the Reno Evening Gazette, last Friday was to be my last column, however, there was no printed edition. I must say that writing "WHY NOT?" has been a tremendous experience on my part. It has certainly opened my eyes to many falacies of our campus.

Maybe Don was wrong in his editorial concerning Dr. Jerry Wulk. But I am certainly against the way the Publications board handled the whole affair. The board meeting that took place last Tuesday was wrong in its decision to ban editorials. It was a plain case of personality conflicts versus good judgment.

The senate meeting in which Don was conducting his appeal was a complete farce. It

was a disgrace and an insult to the democratic concepts of trial and appeal. I feel that the board and the senate should have realized that there was error on both sides, and worked out some sort of compromise.

Don was asked at the board meeting Thursday if he would be willing to (if allowed to stay on as editor) work with the group. Don made his comment and then was told by a senator "I don't feel your attitude would change—I do not feel you would have any more respect for the board." As you know the "lack of respect" was one of the charges against him. (After watching the board operate I don't blame him).

Space does not permit me to tell the whole story now. However, I would like to tell you (possibly in a letter to the editor) about the system that is used in selecting the Judicial Council Justices.

Once again, thank you for your indulgence in past articles. I hope I did some good for someone. It was fun for me and I will miss WHY NOT?

... 90%

(Continued from Page 1)

counter-charges were flung back and forth. ASUN President Ben Echeverria commented on the illegibility of O'Donnell's handwriting; the advisor to the Publications board, a supposedly responsible faculty member, stood up to blast O'Donnell on the grounds that a story on the case which appeared in the Nevada State Journal, which O'Donnell had not written, contained inaccurate facts; senators tried to present evidence which was not part of the original charges.

Neither can it be said that the Sagebrush editor was completely calm during the affair; D. A. O'Donnell did not show any lack of antagonism toward the people who were attempting to remove him. If any one reason had to be stated for the Senate's action in voting to remove O'Donnell, it would be that he was guilty of overacting. In fact the entire Senate meeting consisted of nothing but a series of emotional outbursts from both sides.

The next day, the Publications board, in a closed meeting, voted to remove the Sagebrush editor.

HIGH LEVEL CONFAB

An hour later, a high level conference was taking place at the Little Wal. It was during this meeting that it was decided that the next issue of the Sagebrush due to come out the next morning would be blank. This was to be an act of protest, an action which would insure "freedom of the press." After all, the nasty student leaders were going to take over control of the Sagebrush, and put in their "puppet editor."

The blank Sagebrush was not only a breach of the responsibility which every newspaper has to print the facts, but it encouraged rumor and misinformation.

... Lerude

(Continued from Page 1)

in the eyes of his taskmasters—the other members of the board.

But, if journalism itself is on trial by this board then a person with knowledge of journalism must be there to give sound opinion and facts on press principle. At the present there is no such person on the board.

For this reason—I recommend that a journalism professor be installed as an advisor to the board so that in the future when press principles are on trial sound opinion and factual evidence may be introduced by a person qualified to talk on the subject. It is still my opinion that O'Donnell was railroaded out on a personal issue.

—WARREN LERUDE

Are They Hypocrites?

THE PUBLICATIONS BOARD ruled this newspaper could not offer editorial opinion during the recent controversy over the firing of Donald O'Donnell as editor. The publications board, on public disapproval, realized that it had acted wrongly and limited freedom of expression in this newspaper.

ONCE THE BOARD realized this, it reversed itself and called for the firing of the editor.

IF THE EDITOR of the ASUN Sagebrush is incompetent, ruled the board, finally, and rightly so, the editor should be fired. But, we add, only after proper proof of guilt.

THE PUBLICATIONS BOARD is right in thinking that incompetent persons should not hold offices of trust in fields in which they are incompetent.

THEY ADMITTED in the public press that their decision was wrong—showing their incompetence in this area of judgment. IF THE PUBLICATIONS board members are to show their true colors and not give in to hypocrisy they will realize that they have, themselves, indicted each and every board member who voted for bannishment of opinion to be an incompetent board member. And, following their own ruling to fire O'Donnell for incompetence, they will have to either brand themselves hypocrites by not firing themselves, or stand up to what they said was right—incompetence does not deserve position—and fire themselves.

AND, THERE'S NOT much in an argument that they made a mistake and admitted it so they should be allowed to stay in their positions. Because O'Donnell made a mistake and admitted it in an editorial retraction and the board members voted to throw him out anyway. Well, let's see if they throw themselves out.

Scrubbrush--No Link

EDITOR'S NOTE: Saturday morning, the day after the publication of the blank edition of the Sagebrush, an unsigned sheet called the Scrubbrush appeared around campus and in living groups.

Motto of the mimeographed sheet was "And the Truth Shall Make You Free" taken from the Sagebrush motto, and the one article was entitled "What a Mess."

Contents of the article was based on "A plea for the resolution of a public issue in a sensible democratic manner by the proper authorities," referring to the references to Dr. Jerry Wulk in the March 10 Sagebrush. This issue has been considered water under the bridge in the more recent Sagebrush controversy.

The Scrubbrush ended with the statement "Everything is 90%, Li Po." Following is a letter from Dick Morris, writer of the column "Everything Is 90%":

Dear Editor:

Since my column title was used at the end of the Scrubbrush, I would like to make the following statement:

It seems that the perpetrators of the "Scrubbrush" lacking the courage to admit responsibility for their sheet, wish to link me with its publication.

The "Scrubbrush" in its babbling about "Truth" manages to sound

good without making any concrete statements. It, in effect, says nothing while making insidious allusions with respect to Dr. Wulk. I strongly protest against the making of such implications which are in no way backed up with statements of fact.

The "Scrubbrush" is nothing more than an attempt to libel Dr. Wulk by use of allusion and implication.

—RICHARD MORRIS

... Letter

(Continued from Page 1)

for the blank Sagebrush Friday.

This, they contend, is their right under press freedom. I would like to point out, however, that the students who paid for the paper and were, no doubt, interested in reading some kind of student coverage of the O'Donnell proceedings were not considered in the decision to print the blank issue.

Another point of interest is that this blank paper has the possibility of costing the ASUN up to \$500 in printing cost and possible lost advertising revenue. Obviously finances were not considered in this decision.

Regardless of the past, and looking to the future, this controversy should lead to more mature decisions in the realm of both Sagebrush and Publications board.

—JIM MEGQUIRE,