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Activists urge regents to take stand

By Matthew Waite
Senior Reporter

Environmental activists, armed with a 35-foot, inflatable chain saw, told the regents Saturday that the company contracted to provide video screens for Memorial Stadium was an environmental rapist.

NU REGENTS

Mitsubishi Corp. was contracted by the NU Board of Regents to install two video screens, valued at \$3.5 million, in Memorial Stadium for replays during Nebraska football

games. Protesters from Nebraska Earth First!, the Rain Forest Action Network and Ecology Now said the regents should take their business elsewhere.

The group asked the board to break the contract with Mitsubishi to send a message to the company that its environmental practices would not be tolerated. Mitsubishi has extensive logging interests around the world.

Rob Klein, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln sophomore and Ecology Now member, told the regents he had visited the rain forests in Belize, South America, through a UNL program. While there, he said he learned

about the beauty and importance of the rain forest.

"I find it extremely disturbing ... that I return to find the same university was supporting (Mitsubishi)," Klein said.

The university has instituted recycling programs and other environmentally friendly policies on campus, Klein said.

"The university needs to ... practice what it preaches," he said. "UNL should show that it is an institution that can stand up for what it believes in."

Klein said the protest was not meant to bring the university down, but to encourage administrators to send Mitsubishi a message.

Matt Rossell, a recent University of Nebraska at Kearney graduate and Ecology Now member, said Mitsubishi was destroying forests in Malaysia, Brazil, Chile and Canada and is moving into Siberia. And, he said, the destruction is not reserved just to trees.

"This company is not just destroying forests, it's destroying (cultures)," Rossell said. "Mitsubishi's operation is truly an example of cultural genocide."

Rossell said although the contract had been signed, he encouraged the regents to break it for the sake of the forests.

"Trees do not grow on money," Rossell said. "Once the forests are

“UNL should show that it is an institution that can stand up for what it believes in.”

— Klein
UNL sophomore and Ecology Now member

“gone ... no amount of money can bring them back.”

Richard Wood, NU general counsel, said the regents' hands were tied in this matter. If the regents break the contract, he said, they would be subject to breach of contract lawsuits.

The environmental groups asked Wood to investigate ways to avoid legal liability, but he said he knew of none.

If the contract can't be broken, Lisa Williams of Lincoln said the regents should do something to tell Mitsubishi they disagreed with the corporation's environmental practices.

The regents could send Mitsubishi a letter outlining the problems, she said.

Regent Chairman Charles Wilson of Lincoln said the board would have to discuss the issue of sending a letter at its next meeting.

Regents raise parking concerns to Spanier

From Staff Reports

UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier didn't plan to discuss the proposed parking garage Saturday, but he ended up answering regents' concerns anyway.

NU REGENTS
M Spanier took the item off the regents' agenda for Saturday's meeting, but Regent Nancy Hoch of Nebraska City asked him to talk on the issue.

Hoch said members and alumni of Alpha Phi Sorority wrote 195 letters to regents about a proposed parking garage next to their house at 1531 S St.

Spanier said the idea was not sprung on anyone, and an open forum was held on the issue. When no members of the sorority attended the forum, Spanier said he called the Alpha Phi president.

Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha said the idea of building a parking garage was confusing. Parking garages were being planned as other parking areas were being torn up for green space, she said.

A park, or greenspace, will be built north of the Nebraska Union this summer.

"It's kind of incongruous to rip up existing parking for grass and then go down the street and build a garage," she said.

Skrupa also asked Spanier how the parking garage would be financed. She said if the garage could not subsidize itself, it should not be built.

Spanier said because financial plans for the garage had not been finalized, he had pulled the item from the agenda.

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