

OPINION PAGES

GUEST VIEW

Metric move Measure for measure, U.S. is far behind

From the Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, Calif.

Looking ahead to the European Community's year 2000 ban on importing nonmetric products, the U.S. government has gotten metric fever once again. As several previously unsuccessful efforts to move Americans from miles to kilometers have proved, implementing the change won't be an easy process.

The United States joined other nations as early as 1821 in calling for a coordinated worldwide system of weights and measures; in 1866, Congress legalized the use of metric measures in all contracts and court dealings.

That may have made metrics legal, but they have never been popular. In 1975, Congress passed the Metric Conversion Act, a voluntary law that attracted few converts. In 1988, the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act again declared the metric system the preferred form of measurement — again to little effect.

This time, the federal Department of Commerce is hoping to use a new promotion campaign to sell the country on the power of 10. Arguing that competitiveness on the world market makes conversion essential, the campaign will be pitched in terms of economic stimulation and increased jobs.

Many American manufacturers already recognize the world's metric standard, especially in export products. The pharmaceutical, computer, automotive and photographic industries are among America's metric pioneers.

Even in America, nobody thinks about running to the drugstore for a roll of 1.38-inch film; 35 millimeter works just fine. Runners are comfortable with 5-K and 10-K runs, and we watch Olympic hopefuls run 100 meters where once we cheered 100 yards. Still, we're a long way from asking McDonald's for a 113.4-gram burger or looking for a cowboy in a 37.85-liter hat.

Eventually, the tide seems certain to sweep away America's lingering attachment to the hodgepodge of idiosyncratic measures we still cherish. Until then, we can just hunker down and resist — along with Myanmar and Liberia, the only two other countries that have failed to convert.

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CARTOONIST'S VIEW



LETTERS

PARTY RIGHTS?

It is obvious why there is a difference between faculty and students when comparing the writings of columnist Nick Wiltgen in the Nov. 26 DN and Dr. David Moshman in his guest column printed on the same day. Moshman writes well on a serious threat to academic freedom which can and will affect both faculty and students at all institutions of higher learning.

Wiltgen writes well on a subject that also may affect us all: legislated morality. It is his immature choice of arguments against legislated morality that I find fault with. I read a number of university-sponsored newspapers around the country, and one thread remains unbroken: the whining about the threat to the college students' right to get high or drunk.

There was another recent article on this same subject in this newspaper and Wiltgen's is the straw that broke the camel's back. I wish today's student would quit trying to manufacture protests. The '60s are gone. You missed them!

Wiltgen won't be able to write for the Times based upon columns like his. Instead of a real treatise on legislated morality, he wants to give he and his buddies the right to destroy brain cells. I have more faith in the American student to believe that the first and foremost thing on their mind is whether or not they have the right to vomit and get headaches.

Having been there, it's not all it's cracked up to be. Ask Farley if it was worth \$6-7 million for his next day's headache!

Jim Evans
journalism teacher
Pittsburg, Kan.

MUTANT MESSAGE

I was absolutely horrified to read Ron Sapp's opinion of our football team as "mutant sociopaths ferreted from inner-city ghettos" in the DN on



JASON GILDOW/DN

Nov. 25, and I'm not even a football fan. His remarks seem to me nothing more than thinly-veiled racism levied at an easy target.

In reading an update on the university's Campaign Nebraska, I noticed a \$20,000 scholarship created by a former UNO athlete from New Jersey, Jimmy Jones, who wanted to give others from the East Coast an opportunity for a unique Midwestern educational experience.

To those from the inner cities, I say welcome. To Ron Sapp (who doesn't even live here), I say look for mutants in your own backyard and spare the rest of us.

Victoria Kovar
Lincoln

CRUDDY CRITIQUE

I am sick and tired of the blatant lack of knowledge used when reviewing concerts. The best example of this would be the review of the Descendents' concert that ran Nov. 26.

First is the issue of trashing the Swingin' Utters. They are one of the fastest rising punk bands today and they played an excellent set. Just because it's not on the radio doesn't

mean they played too long. Of all the people I have talked to who are part of the "punk" scene — it's a lifestyle, not music — think that the Swingin' Utters were the best part of the show.

Next, you have the issue of the Suicide Machines. Some people like ska-punk, and that's OK with me. What I have a problem with is the fact the you attributed the injuries that resulted from the concert to them. The reason the injuries occurred was because people in the mosh pit were trying to prove how many they were and not trying to dance. Going to shows at the Ranch Bowl is like playing football for kids. Dance aggressively if you like, but if you intentionally punch me, don't expect me not to punch you back. Dig?

Last, but not least, we arrive at the review of the Descendents' set. At one point in the review, it is said that "Aukerman, who has obviously been spending too much time in the biology lab at the University of Wisconsin..." The authors follow this statement by saying he "treated the crowd with the favorite, All-O-Gistics." Sorry, but I don't see where playing that song has anything to do with his time working up north.

Finally, the band was praised for breaking the laws of common sense. No one can dance for an hour and a half without collapsing! Don't encourage bands to play longer sets, because the audience will resent them for it!

I guess that, overall, I was just annoyed with the ignorance that the reviewers use to describe the show. If you don't know enough about a musical genre/culture to make informed statements, don't review it! By the way, I think the guy who dropped his pants was the gutsiest guy there, considering the number of jocks at the show. I saw him being targeted for fights because of it, but he still did what he wanted to. Now that's punk.

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