

Political neglect

Moral foundation of war crumbling

Along the Turkish and Iranian borders, 2 million Kurds sit in freezing mud, waiting for a place to live, and even more important right now, something to eat.

And when the food does come, it drops from the skies at high speeds, crushing starving civilians; a picture that more than any other exemplifies the age-old U.S. problem of helping the oppressed of the world to death.

Ad nauseam we heard that the Persian Gulf war was a moral one. Saddam Hussein had gassed his own people — the Kurds — and had invaded and subjugated a weak neighbor. There was nothing about power vacuums or oil. It was simply good versus evil.

When victory came as defined by U.N. resolutions, it seemed America had lost its Vietnam complex and had regained its moral and political stance in front of the world.

But the moral foundation of this war built by George Bush has begun to crumble under the weight of his own neglect. While Kurds lay in mud recovering from new wounds, Bush sat in his fishing boat, saying that just because he had asked for a rebellion didn't mean he would militarily support it. Even the humanitarian aid for those who fought the tyrant was slow in coming. It took world condemnation before aid packages began to fall.

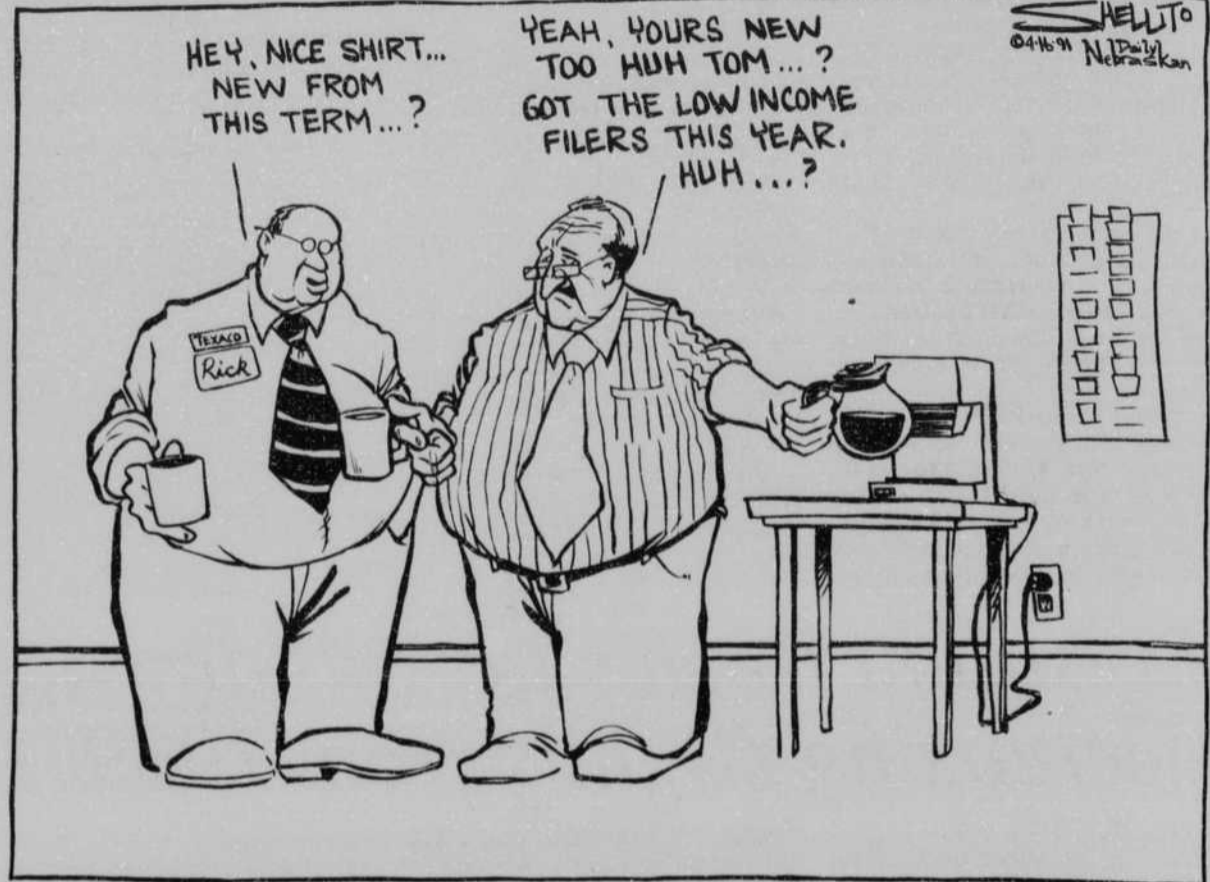
But behind the president's resting habits, the neglect he has shown toward the Iraqi people is good politics for two reasons. U.S. intervention in Iraq's civil war could have spawned the prolonged commitment that no one wanted.

The U.N. resolutions called only for the liberation of Kuwait, not for the overthrow of Saddam. Also, without Saddam and some semblance of an army, Iraq is a void to be filled in the power structure of the Middle East. Waiting in the wings are Syria and Iran, both of which have no love for the West.

To save its moral stance in the Persian Gulf, the United States must quickly step up massive humanitarian aid to the Kurds. Also, borders must be opened, including that of the United States, and the issue of the phantom Kurdistan addressed.

Bush's promise of a new world order more and more is looking like old Realpolitik. Maybe promises to those oppressed by Saddam can't be kept. The least we can do, however, is not kill with aid those we promised to save.

— B.N.



8 a.m., APRIL 16th IN THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE.

ERIC PFANNER

Shibboleths merit a closer look

Dinesh D'Souza must like the word "shibboleth." It means "password" or "custom" but has a traditional, intellectual sound.

D'Souza uses the word often in his recently published book. And all of a sudden, perhaps because of his big words, he is a controversial figure on college campuses.

Because D'Souza uses big words like shibboleth, he must be logocentric. Logocentrism, he says in an article for The Washington Post, means white society's use of big words. Because he is logocentric, he must also be Eurocentric, which means he must be a racist.

D'Souza's family is from India, so he is an unlikely candidate in white America for that label.

But since graduating about a dozen years ago from Dartmouth College, where he was editor of the conservative Dartmouth Review, D'Souza steadily as edged closer to being called a racist. He has worked for the conservative Heritage Foundation and as a policy analyst for the Reagan administration. Several weeks ago, he spoke at the University of Nebraska in support of his book, "Illiberal Education; The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus."

I, unlike D'Souza, am of German and English descent.

But in past columns, I also have used big words, such as Weltanschauung and Schadenfreude. Both are German words, although they appear in Webster's Dictionary, if you care what they mean.

Because I used those words in a column, I am also logocentric. Because I am logocentric, and especially, because I was logocentric using German words, I must be Eurocentric. Because I am Eurocentric, I am racist. Because I am a racist of half-German descent, I must be a Nazi. In truth, Hitler was only a mild bigot compared to me.

It is that kind of knee-jerk, chain-reaction labeling that D'Souza argues against; and that is why he has been called a racist, repressive defender of white male America.

To be honest, I don't agree with some of D'Souza's arguments any more than I agree with his opponents. He is a strong critic of Affirmative Action and his background is not rooted in sensitivity to other cultures. He's probably also responsible for torching the Brazilian rainforest.

But his critique, if not his sugges-

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tions for change, is on target. D'Souza accurately points out that many colleges have created a "social etiquette" that prevents criticism of any non-Western idea or minority. More than 200 colleges have now adopted some sort of harassment or "fighting words" policy, according to a Chronicle of Higher Education tally.

D'Souza doesn't urge that minority students and faculty members be criticized; merely that criticism of minorities not automatically be considered racist without regard for its content.

"University leaders have created a sham community where serious and honest discussion is frequently drowned out by a combination of sloganeering, posturing and intimidation," he wrote to the Post.

When D'Souza came to the University of Nebraska College of Law, he was subjected to exactly such behavior, as protesters snorted and squawked while he tried to speak. How clever. The implication was that D'Souza was a pig. Fill in racist, sexist or any other prefix that fits.

The cacophony over D'Souza's sow-like character hides a deeper debate, one that has been going on longer than the recent politically correct movement.

D'Souza writes that U.S. colleges have gotten lost in lip-service to buzzwords such as multiculturalism and cultural diversity, a movement that has made a casualty of the sound, traditional curriculum.

That argument is not very different from that of some other recent education critics, although D'Souza distances himself from Allan Bloom, one of the most prominent.

Another critic, E.D. Hirsch Jr., argued in a 1987 book, "Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs

To Know," that schools need to teach more basic, traditional knowledge.

Like D'Souza's book, "Cultural Literacy" was endorsed by former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett. That, for the politically correct, is the kiss of death.

Hirsch's point is not that we all need to know the meaning of "shibboleth" in order to be productive citizens. But a certain amount of shared information — Hirsch includes an appendix, "What Literate Americans Know" — is necessary for basic communication.

The current decline in such knowledge, if projected to an extreme, means that this column would be unreadable by anyone without doctor's degrees in history and geography. I would have to explain, in lowest common denominator terms, that Germany is a country in north-central Europe and that the Nazis were bad people. Hitler was their leader, the swastika their shibboleth.

Hirsch, like D'Souza, should not be honked off the podium for his views. The decline in cultural literacy can be seen in the decrease in newspaper readership and the poor quality of American cars.

It also contributes to the lack of communication between generations and between racial and ethnic groups on campus.

The lack of knowledge, in turn, leads to confusion over terms such as "ethnic pride."

Campus unions for minorities and minority student governments are one legitimate and much-needed implementation of this pride.

But without cultural literacy — a deep understanding of the culture one lives in and how it is different — that pride becomes merely superficial segregation on the basis of skin color. And that is racism.

The demand for fighting words policies indicates that relations between the races on campus have not deepened or improved because of politically correct curriculums.

To D'Souza, that is a dangerous sign:

"If the university model is replicated in society at large, far from bringing ethnic harmony, it will reproduce and magnify in the broader culture the lurid bigotry, intolerance and balkanization of campus life."

Let's hope his vision is not a shibboleth for the future.

Pfanner is a senior news-editorial major and editor in chief of the Daily Nebraskan.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Allow homosexuals in military

Frankly, I agree that homosexuals should be allowed into the military services and in ROTC. Women make up a substantial proportion of our forces. And although there are strict rules regarding "fraternization" between male and female soldiers, it is a constant discipline problem in "coed" units.

The presence of homosexuals in military units should not present any greater problem. To be fair to homosexuals, they should be allowed to join.

I do not trust, however, all those

former draft dodgers, flag burners and "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" chanters in the UNL faculty to have our national security or even homosexuals' rights at heart.

Let us see the efforts of these 1960s retreads for what they are. They are bitter, they are vengeful; in spite of their desperate efforts, we crushed a brutal tyrant's war machine.

The rights of homosexuals are definitely the last thing on their minds.

Stanford L. Sipple
Lincoln

Journalist's ethics questioned

The front-page story April 12 by Dionne Searcey concerning the "protest" of the University of Nebraska College Rodeo was the pinnacle of journalistic irresponsibility.

Whether the "protest" itself was newsworthy is questionable. The fact that Ms. Searcey saw fit to write the article with comments and opinions from only one side is at odds with any notion of journalistic integrity. Had she seen fit to talk to me, to one of the members of the University of Nebraska Rodeo Associations, or to our rodeo's veterinarian, perhaps she might have written a more balanced and factual article.

She might even have learned that rodeo animals are not brutalized, abused, drugged or mutilated as the

protesters allege. In fact, had she seen fit to attend the rodeo and observe the treatment of the animals, she might have seen for herself how well the animals are treated.

Perhaps journalistic integrity and a spirit of fairness is too much to ask from a student newspaper, but I believe that Ms. Searcey and the Daily Nebraskan owes the University of Nebraska Rodeo Association an apology for such one-sided and irresponsible reporting. Perhaps a course in journalistic ethics might be an appropriate course selection for next semester, Ms. Searcey.

George H. Pfeiffer
associate professor
U.N.R.A. faculty advisor

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space availability. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit letters.

Letters should be typewritten and less than 500 words.

Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, address, phone number, year in school and group affiliation, if any.

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