

Poor pay for summit circus

While 13 million children under 5 years old die each year of starvation and curable diseases, the United Nations finds nothing better to do than spend \$30 million to organize a world summit to discuss the problems of the Third World.

Last week Copenhagen, Denmark, was the stage upon which unfolded yet another farce directed by the masterminds of the United Nations. The leaders from 184 countries gathered in the Danish capital to participate in a useless and wasteful display of demagoguery and neglect. In doing so, they spent millions of that precious cash that the United Nations claims it needs to feed the starving children, to feed and pamper the corrupt leaders of those same countries.

Make no mistake about it, even well before the summit, both sides knew that no useful policy would come out of this circus. The representatives of the industrialized countries had specific directives to not concede any discount on the \$1.4 trillion debt that plagues the "poor" countries.

If we believe in numbers, Washington's 20 percent cut in aid and the European Community's equal restrictions would have given clear policy indications well before the summit. What is even more ironic, or disconcerting, is that the poor countries will end up paying for the Danish feast.

The starving of the world can rest assured, knowing that their money is well spent to give their beloved leaders a mind-clearing vacation. But the mind is not the only concern of the delegates; in



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fact, the numerous strip bars in Copenhagen are gearing up for an expected sellout by hiring extra help and extending their hours.

So, like a big, happy family, the delegates agreed on the need to make the world a better place, end misery and live in peace. Words are beautiful, and too often we get blinded by their shine, but more than two millennia ago, Cicero warned us about empty speeches.

"Verba volant, scripta manent," he said. Roughly translated, that means, "Words fly if they are not written." Of course the rich delegates knew that very well and accurately avoided signing any compromise. The half-hearted attempt of the delegates from the developing countries to convince the industrialized countries to cancel the debt was demeaning and pathetic, given the air of neglect that surrounded the summit. The absences of Bill Clinton, John Major and Boris Yeltsin, leaders of three of the five permanent member nations in the U.N. Security Council, plunged this summit in the sea of oblivion well before its inauguration.

This summit proved once more the inefficiency, if not incompetency, of a bureaucratic mastodon called the United Nations. This black hole of the international community devours billions in its futile attempts to gain credibility. It is nothing more than a useless institution where charity mixes with monetary interests, a sort of magnified version of ASUN, to create an example closer to home.

Forgive my criticism, but for many years we have heard the same rhetoric from the same people while the poor countries are actually becoming poorer.

The nice words of U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will not alleviate the hunger pains of a starving individual, but the money spent for his share of the inaugural banquet would have fed an entire family for a month.

Since we are on the theme of useless spending, some delegates apparently got off at the wrong airport. They apparently misunderstood the theme of the gathering and took advantage of the occasion to show their opulence and bad taste. For example, the president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheik Zayed ben Sultan Al-Nahyan, rented a villa for about \$36,000 and spent \$180,000 to redecorate it to his own tastes. Or the son of Kuwait's Sheik Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who rented a 100-room castle for his sojourn.

So much for understanding the plight of the poor.

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Clinton complicates Irish issue further

President Clinton has overruled the advice of most of his foreign policy advisers and allowed Gerry Adams to return to the United States this week and to conduct fund-raising activities for his terrorist Sinn Fein organization, which has been responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians in Britain and Northern Ireland.

The White House says it has been promised that money raised by Adams will be used for "peaceful purposes" and not for weapons or further terrorist acts. How would an American president have reacted if Britain had welcomed anti-war radicals for fund-raising events in the 1960s?

Talks among the British government, IRA and Sinn Fein (the IRA's political arm) are still in the initial stages. While the IRA has pledged to halt terrorist activity — and mostly lived up to that pledge so far — it maintains a large stockpile of weapons and explosives. It continues to conduct practice runs for terrorist acts, and it engages in "punishment beatings" on residents of Catholic neighborhoods in Northern Ireland.

The invitation to Adams along with a luncheon on his "honor" on Capitol Hill to mark St. Patrick's Day can only be regarded as a crass appeal for Irish votes in the United States. In Britain and in Northern Ireland — where the face of the IRA does not wear a smile — there are grave (pun intended) reservations about Adams' objectives and the impact his U.S. welcome will have on negotiations to end the conflict between Britain and Northern Ireland's Protestant majority, which wishes to remain British, and the nation's Catholic minority, which seeks to unite with the Irish Republic.

As in the Middle East, the prospects for peace in Northern Ireland are anything but certain. Since the cease-fire, British Prime Minister John Major has repeatedly said that the IRA would have to destroy a large part of its arms stockpile — especially in Semtex explosives — before it could directly join talks to discuss the future of Northern Ireland. The decommissioning-of-arms issue is now the main sticking point in moving the talks forward between the British government, Sinn Fein and the IRA. While government ministers are prepared to meet representatives of Sinn Fein before any weapons are destroyed, the government claims its demands remain



Cal Thomas

unchanged. Those include the acceptance of the principle of progressive disarmament and an agreement on verification procedures, independent supervision and methods of destruction that the government wants to film.

The minister of Northern Ireland, Michael Amcrum, has said, "Nobody else is going to sit around the table with Sinn Fein until they are convinced they are committed to exclusively peaceful methods and they have decommissioned their arms in order to achieve that."

One of Sinn Fein's negotiators, Martin McGuinness, told the London Daily Telegraph there should be no preconditions to his party taking part in talks. He added, "We accept that at some stage in the future, arms will have to be decommissioned — that will be all the arms, loyalists arms, unionist arms, British army arms and IRA arms." That is an exercise in moral equivalency. The terrorism began with the IRA, and only the IRA and its political wing can put a halt to it.

While talks at the ministerial level could begin before the complete decommissioning of arms by the IRA, the process of decommissioning should start before the talking does. As for Gerry Adams, it is one thing to allow him to visit this country. That is in our tradition of free speech. It is quite another to "honor" him at a luncheon attended by the president and the speaker of the House. And it borders on outrage that we would allow him to raise money for an organization that has not committed itself to peace.

The president is playing a dangerous game. If Adams and Sinn Fein get rid of their arms, he could be seen as facilitating the peace process. But if terrorism begins again in Britain and Northern Ireland, Adams' trip and the President's decision to allow him to raise money while he's here will be seen as subsidizing a continuing war against innocent people and the British government, our supposed close ally.

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Jokes hide fear of unknown

A mind is a terrible thing to joke about.

But I've noticed it's easier for us to joke about the things in life we can't understand.

For example, the brain is the least understood organ in the body. It can be compared to our universe in the sense that so much of it is undiscovered, and what is discovered can sometimes be overwhelmingly confusing.

But what does this confusion mean? Is it that we aren't capable of understanding the immensity of this obscure sort of knowledge, or is it that it's simply easier for us to accept what is rational and disdain the more bizarre, ungraspable aspects of life?

One of the mind's most studied and least understood illnesses is schizophrenia. My brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia last fall, and I have since been pondering the way people react to these inconceivable aspects of life.

Every attempt I make at unraveling its mysteries are curbed with the disorder's natural barriers. I can't even spell the term correctly without using a dictionary. It's as if there can be nothing simple about the word.

People call the illness crazy, psychotic and insane. And it is, but not in the way this slang negatively implies. These words affect people in a way cancer, blindness or any physical handicap does not affect people. It's not that one illness is more contagious or more curable than the other. It's the way people fear the unknown — the mind.

We can recall the history of witch hunts, how thousands of young women were killed for acting in bizarre and supposedly satanic ways. Any freak occurrence was attributed to the devil's intervention in these women's lives. People were on a rampage to rid the world of these evils. Later, we discovered it wasn't the devil at all; these were normal women, some with illnesses, some just unfairly accused.



Lara Duda

Yet, I know that some of my elderly relatives with their big old hearts and their big old Bibles are even now praying for God to forgive my brother and to take those nasty demons out of his head.

Nearly a million people are treated for schizophrenia each year, and two million will warrant a diagnosis of the mental disorder at some point in their lives.

That's an awful lot of demons. But you don't hear about the enormity of the illness, because people don't want to know.

We hear about the rates of schizophrenia being much higher in lower socioeconomic levels. But the patterns vary so much in different populations that sometimes we don't see the rates in our own socioeconomic levels.

We attribute these characteristics to the poor because the poor are separate from us. They are already at a comfortable distance. It is easier for us to make fun of the strange behaviors of people wandering the streets of every major city in our nation than it is for us to realize how many people in our same social class have similar disorders but may be taking medication to hide the symptoms.

Overall, it's a lot more conceivable for people to accept the cause of cancer and blindness than to understand why a person has sporadic hallucinations or delusions.

The fear of the unknown makes us uncomfortable, but the problem exists in the fallacy of conceptions

people make of the unexplainable. I see this all the time in everyday conversation, in books and on television.

"Duda, you are such a psycho," someone told me yesterday.

It's distressing to hear people so concerned about following political correctness for the handicapped and minorities and so sympathetic toward people with various illnesses, only to turn around and joke about mental disorders.

This person said I was acting like a psycho because I was slightly temperamental one day, not because I really am psychotic. I knew what he meant, and he knew what he meant. But how is it any different from calling me deaf because I might not hear something someone says to me?

We've begun to stop calling people deaf because those with hearing disabilities haven't been afraid of defending themselves. The mentally ill can't always defend themselves, and people aren't willing to accept their illnesses as normal.

The complexity of mental disorders varies, but schizophrenia has continued to bear the brunt of jokes and misconceptions about mental illnesses.

Schizophrenia's simplest definition is a break from reality or a tendency to have thought disorder. It does not mean that a person has a split personality or that he or she has more than one personality. There is a multi-personality disorder, but it is very different from schizophrenia.

Nevertheless, the fact is that society is uninformed and happier this way. Mental illnesses are hard to grasp and much harder to accept as being common.

Rising above the jokes and fear of the unknown may ultimately provide the acceptance, or at least the respect, these very real people with mental disorders deserve.

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