



Another Culture War?

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The so-called "culture war" fought in the 2004 election is rearing its ugly head. Recent policies and conservative strategies based on the infusion of morality into politics, have taken an incredibly dangerous form and should alarm anyone concerned with individual rights and civil liberties. The make up of America has been envisioned as divided into two opposing camps: the evangelical right who believe in moral values, and the left, categorized as godless and valueless, reflective of the White House rhetoric and recent alarming events.

The majority leader Bill Frist has recently called for a senate vote to eliminate the use of the filibuster. This action stems from the judicial nominations in which judges are being questioned for their political views including their beliefs on the use of abortions. Frist has eased his threats for voting on the filibuster which has become increasingly controversial; instead the majority leader has taken new tactics in support of moral values.

According to the New York Times, just this past weekend, Frist sent a videotaped message to churches in which he responded to accusations that he was a radical Republican for participating in

the telecast, which seeks to build Conservative Christian support for the elimination of the filibuster. This new appeal of support raises several important questions. First, are these actions a reflection of what we want? Those living in a democratic society should be able to question the actions of those in power; the use of a filibuster insures that an adequate opposition to any policy is recognized. Minority rights are meant to ensure the civil liberties of not just some people, but all people.

Frist entered new territory as he followed the weekly routine of everyday Americans. This action signifies not just a growing surge of religion into politics, the line between politics and religion has blurred completely. No longer is the debate on justices about the judicial record but instead is a bitter partisan battle to the end. By trying to involve the Christian right, the Republicans in power are asserting that they are the party of God, and that their religious

duty entails the allegiance to one party. Whatever happened to religious freedom?

Further, the imposition of religious views into the health care arena is increasingly worrisome. According to Planned Parenthood, pharmacists across the country are refusing to prescribe birth control pills to some patients because they are morally opposed to their use. Instead of providing health care choices to patients, some pharmacists are choosing instead to impose their moral values on those under their care. Although someone that argues plenty of pharmacists are prescribing birth control, the declaration that some pharmacists will not really make a difference is sincerely missing the point. The infusion of moral values is seeping through in ways that should cause tremendous alarm as individual rights are left on the wayside. If pharmacists can refuse to care for patients in all ways, to what length can others go in imposing their own values? Further, how far can someone go in imposing their own values at the expense of individual rights?

The moral debate in politics has transformed into a measurement of values to an imposition of a set of beliefs. The debate over the use of the filibuster and the restriction of birth control represent a dangerous shift in our country of separation to religious discrimination.



Sen. Bill Frist

Let Them Eat Pie

MEGHAN LEONARD
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In last week's Concordiensis, in this section, an article spoke to the contradictory nature of the Republican Party and the President. The culture of life has become a favorite target for liberals who wish to point out the flaws of the party in power. How could one be so concerned about the children being killed by abortions, yet simultaneously support killing Iraqis? Why was it not okay to kill Terri Schiavo, but okay for sixteen year olds to be subject to the death penalty? To speak to the moral equivalence regarding these issues would be preachy, time consuming and pointless as we all have our own morality. So, I provide my own recent examples of contradiction and confusion, on the part of the American left. Though these are far more superficial than the culture of life and healthcare examples, they are less complicated and more entertaining. Thus, to quote one of the great political philosophers of the 20th Century, Sting (and sometimes his police),



President Bill Clinton

'there is no monopoly of common sense on either side of the political fence.' And for that matter, I hope the liberals love their children too.

In the past few weeks the Democrats and their friends in low places have been politically and morally confused, just as many would contend the Administration is. For starters, the party of Clinton has attempted to give the entire country a lesson in ethics. The media overkill of Tom DeLay's ethical misgivings is hardly necessary and heavily biased. Sure there was heavy coverage of the Clinton scandal, or at least the one that was entertaining enough, but not of all the others. Maybe DeLay can be added to a long list of conservatives attacked by Dems and their friends in the media, including Robert Bork, Justice Clarence Thomas, Bill Bennett and Ollie North or maybe his ethics are questionable. Though, one could argue, there are few in Washington from either party that would not be considered ethically challenged. For example, currently in the Senate there is one man who drove off a bridge then watched the passenger drown and another who was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. And that's just two of the most

well respected members of the Democrat party. But who is keeping track?

Here is a minimally related and still contradictory story. Many of those who support



Rep. Tom Delay

the party of ethics also tend to judge themselves as the political philosophy of tolerance. The younger generation of leftists has eroded this toleration recently with calorie filled attacks against some of the more prominent members of the vast right wing conspiracy. Bill Kristol, editor for the Weekly Standard, a conservative magazine, had a

pie thrown at him while he was giving a speech at a college in Indiana. Pat Buchanan, former presidential candidate and well know conservative, was hit with salad dressing while speaking at Western Michigan University and Ann Coulter was also the victim of projectile pie while at the University of Arizona. Hardly useful in helping to feed the hungry, the throwing of food is not the most effective or responsible form of communication either. Though I would typically support the theory of a preemptive strike, is conservative or free speech really a threat? As members of this impolite generation, should not we ask, is it really necessary to resort to throwing pies? Can't we eat them?

News From The Front

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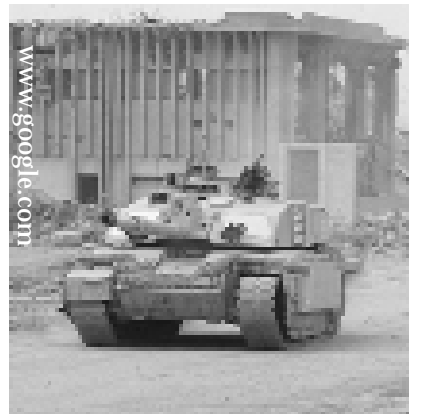
The following numbers are as of April 25, 2005 as published by CNN:
1,745: Number of U.S. Coalition troops killed in Iraq.
1,570: Number of American

troops killed in Iraq.

12,202: Number of American troops wounded in Iraq.

And those wounds aren't paper cuts.

Sometimes when I'm busy at Union, isolation becomes a dull blade chipping at awareness. Fine. But I'm writing this to remind anyone who forgot what it means to have our country at war right now. It's OK if you did. It's not like Fox News would tell you. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news. Lots of people are bearing bad news. Like the guy who had to tell the Robbins family of Schenectady, NY that they lost their son, Thomas, to rocket-propelled grenades in Sinjar last February. You can read more about him and see his photo on the CNN website.



US Tanks in Baghdad

War is sporadic and terrible. War is striking close to home. There are a lot of people we know collectively as a student body who are putting their lives on the line every day over there. This is real. This is now. This is not a test.

I'm not going to use this as soapbox. Today the politics behind the war will remain behind the curtain. Today I'm just stunned by the numbers. Today roughly half as many American troops have died in the Iraq war as in the War of 1812, and roughly a quarter as many in Iraq as in the American Revolution. This is serious business. Is it worth it? Think about that.

Prison Nation Part One: An Introduction

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The United States is growing. That seems to be the most controversial message you hear these days depending on whom you talk to and what you mean by "growth." Regardless of the controversy, the nation is growing, be it technologically, politically, democratically, or even financially. We are a nation that keeps getting bigger, and an empire that keeps growing stronger. But for a nation that prides itself on democracy, freedom, and progress, we are a nation of many names. The United States is a "democratic nation," a "progressive nation," and a "free nation," but we are additionally a "fast food Nation," and a "materialist nation." We are also continuing our legacy as a "prison nation."

With the release of the Department of Justice's recent figures on the American prison system last Sunday we have again asserted that the US Prison Nation will continue to grow in 2005 as it steadily grew in 2004. As crime rates across the nation fluctuate yearly, the number of Americans behind bars for criminal offenses has continued to rise. This simple fact that crime rates decline and rise while the prison population continually rises should cause any American to scratch their head. The statistics should startle anti-authoritarian and Republican alike. Currently, the United States incarcerates 726 per 100,000 people, which (although the US has a sizeable population) is seven to ten more times as many people in jail and prison as most other democratic and industrialized nations. It's not just general statistics that call for outrage, but

when we look at those statistics closer shades of racism and classism show through. These charges should be taken seriously, especially in a nation where 12.6 percent of black males in their twenties are behind bars while 3.6 percent of Hispanic males join them with only 1.7 percent of the white male population in the penal system.



An annual increase since 1995 of 3.6 percent in the prison population, regardless of crime rates, shows the problem to not just be one dependent on stopping crime. Even the assumption that prison is a deterrent to violence and violent crime is controversial in itself. Meanwhile, politicians across the land rise to power on stump speeches of being "tough on crime" which seems to translate into locking people up and throwing away the key. As the prison population rises, the prison industry's profits grow, and more and more prisons are built in response to being tough on crime. But what does that even mean? Instead of simply being tough on crime, politicians and the nation might benefit from seeking to understand crime, criminals, and why the law is broken. Before we hail the great achievements of the American civilization we must understand our prison system and those it houses. "The degree of civilization in a society is revealed by entering its prisons," if Dostoyevsky is right, then we've got a long way to come.

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