

CARLETON OBSERVER

"TRUTH IS THE MOST SACRED VIRTUE OF THE HUMAN HEART" - SENECA THE YOUNGER

FOR WHAT END IS VIOLENCE?

BY PETER FRITZ

I have always somewhat scoffed at those people who attributed tragedies like the Columbine High School massacre to violent video games, immoral music, etc. Sure, they wouldn't help, but there needs to be a conjunction of other factors, like a lack of parental involvement, for such influences to be a real problem. I know many people who play the most violent of video games, first person shooters, with great regularity and I hardly see that vice as making them more likely to seek out an automatic weapon and dispatch me or any other human. I have, however, come to appreciate certain philosophically troubling aspects with first person shooters in particular.

Observing several acquaintances ensconced in a multiplayer game of Halo 2, the first person shooter de jour for males of my age, I noticed a rather disturbing transformation. Perhaps because I was removed from the immediate chaos of the game I was allowed a certain perspective. The normal manner of the persons involved is not one of extreme grace and certainly at least one springs to mind whom you would not want in your presence if upon the occasion of meeting some esteemed dignitary, but the people in question are not, on the whole, barbarians. That is to say, when not busily destroying their fellows with all manner of futuristic weaponry. The transformation was remarkable insofar as once the game began so did immediately all manner of coarseness usually associated with the sailors of older times. A rather inordinate sense of aggression and hostility could also be felt.

Is this a problem? Well an argument can be mounted, one that I would concur with, that particularly in males there is a sense of aggression which must find some outlet. It is indeed, in my estimation, healthy and necessary for such a sense of aggression to exist, otherwise we humans are left with no extra spark, no passion in the most difficult of situations. So it is not a question of these aggressive tendencies being worthy of maintenance or fit objects for destruction, but rather what outlet is most desirable and most conducive to the formation of an individual who benefits society.

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RALLY ROUND THE QUOTE:

NON-VIOLENCE LEADS TO THE HIGHEST ETHICS, WHICH IS THE GOAL OF ALL EVOLUTION.

UNTIL WE STOP HARMING ALL OTHER LIVING BEINGS, WE ARE STILL SAVAGES.

--THOMAS A. EDISON



VIOLENCE FROM PAGE 1

Let us examine the options. Sports certainly provide such an outlet, as do martial arts, military service, and many other things. What are the objects of each of these? Sports have their achievements, corporate or individual, goals to strive for, the improvement of one's own body, and the gaining of glory through public approbation. Martial arts have their own goals, not only self defense, but also in many cases the formation of character and the ability to live life more gracefully. Military service has the honorable goal of protecting one's own home and serving the duties of liberty. Each of these are outlets for the aggression which is natural and inherent in most males (and some females for that matter), and each has some overriding noble purpose, which causes the participant to be a better member of society.

What then, is the noble goal of the first person shooter? To gain a higher respect for life by understanding death as something that's quickly overcome by "respawning?" That the killing of individuals can be a competition in and of itself? Is it a benefit to society to teach us that tools of death, however fanciful, are to be handled and understood with something other than respect and care? Is it better for us as people to subdue aggression with minimal exertion or with the experience of some individual pain?

There are plenty of well-documented social maladies among younger men; there are many posited solutions. First person shooters certainly may provide an outlet for aggression, but they do not provide the sorts of benefits that make us males into better members of society and gentlemen. Would it not at least behoove us to hone the double edged sword of aggression more carefully and more purposefully?

FACT CHECK: THERE IS NO TRUST FUND

BY ANDREW JAHN

Many politicians in Washington speak of Social Security as a hypothetical "Trust Fund" to make the system appear safe and accountable. This is false and intentionally misleading. There is no Trust Fund. There is no amount of money set aside with your name on it, waiting for you when you retire. Revenues collected by FICA from paychecks are immediately paid out to current retirees as their Social Security benefits, not stored away in a fund you won for your retirement. You have no legal right to the money in this pay-as-you-go system—once Social Security taxes are deducted from your paycheck, you will never see that money again. The only money for this generation's retirement benefits will be provided by the next generation of workers, which is becoming smaller while the number of retirees grows.

Determining if privatization of Social Security or another approach is best for the country will require more time and discussion. However, do not let any politician persuade you that Social Security acts as any sort of trust or secure deposit for your money. That is a lie, and one we should all be aware of while the issue is being debated.

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.

--George Bernard Shaw

The Observer is a non-partisan journal of social and political commentary. The opinions expressed herein are the sole creations of their authors. The Observer welcomes articles and letters from all viewpoints, and seeks to promote a diversity of keen and insightful thought at Carleton. Thanks for reading!

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Social Security is a government program with a constituency made up of the old, the near old and those who hope or fear to grow old. After 215 years of trying, we have finally discovered a special interest that includes 100 percent of the population. Now we can vote ourselves rich.

--P.J. O'Rourke

AN INTERVIEW WITH DON FEDER

BY PETER FRITZ

The noted conservative columnist Don Feder spoke at Carleton's Convocation on Friday January 4th. While a firm Bush supporter in the Presidential election, Mr. Feder voiced concerns about the President's foreign policy, the topic of his Convocation speech. The Observer had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. Feder before his speech.

Mr. Feder is a foreign policy realist, although he noted "most of us think our perspective is realistic." He identified foreign policy realism as essentially the antithesis of foreign policy idealism, the latter he sees in the Bush administration. To illustrate the way he approaches foreign policy questions Mr. Feder contrasted Sudan and Iraq. "In Sudan you have a murderous Islamic government which has probably been responsible for the deaths of over one million people... Saddam Hussein was also a brutal tyrant, the difference being that he was a threat to world peace. Two tyrannies, two bloody tyrannies, responsible for murder on a large scale, but one a threat to our national security." Iraq's intent to acquire weapons of mass destruction and support of terrorism tip the scale towards intervention.

This is not to say that Mr. Feder is a whole-hearted supporter of the current Iraq policy. He strongly believes that United States no longer has any business staying in Iraq and that the policy of instituting democracy is misguided. Mr. Feder is extremely skeptical of democracy's ability to take hold in Iraq, stating that "Iraq is not a good candidate for democracy" and instead suggested that the U.S. would have been better served by putting in power "a strong man who's friendly to us, relatively benign, has a vision for the future," and then leaving.

*"The Middle East has only one thing that's of interest to us
or any other sane person and that's oil"*

The relationship between natural resources, trade and the national interest occupied a large section of our conversation. "The Middle East has only one thing that's of interest to us or any other sane person and that's oil," Mr. Feder asserted. "At the moment though, we are dependent on Middle East oil. When I say dependent I don't just mean for our comfort, driving around in our SUVs, I mean dependent in terms of our economy and our national security." He allowed that this means we may have compelling interests to be involved militarily in the Middle East, but suggested the United States was not approaching military involvement in the best manner. "The question becomes 'involved militarily in what way?' It's always better to support proxies rather than sending your own forces into harms way. The British government did that very effectively in the 18th and 19th centuries."

Mr. Feder identified another area of prime U.S. interest, particularly for trade. "The one area where our trade interests very much lie is Asia." He also identified a threat to national interests in that region: "While we're futzing around in the Middle East, China which I see as one of the two major threats to our security in this century, is developing a military and an economy that could give it the status as a hegemony nation." He stated frankly that "I'm far more concerned about China than what's happening in the Middle East today."

*"I think the solution to the problem of education is to break the near monopoly
of the public schools"*

Our conversation moved to domestic issues, areas not covered in Mr. Feder's other public remarks at Carleton. We first spoke about No Child Left Behind and school policy. "I don't think much of it [No Child Left Behind]," Feder stated, "I think the solution to the problem of education is to break the near monopoly of the public schools." Until such monopoly is broken "you'll never have a genuine return to learning and knowledge in this country." Illustrating that assertion, he remarked: "We spend more and more money, we set up more and more standards, we talk about No Child Left Behind, and the racism of low expectations, and we devise model curriculum and we pay teachers higher salaries and we give them more training and on and on and on and we experiment with charter schools, schools with more local control," and yet there is no improvement. He believes that conservatives are, for the most part, so afraid of the teacher's unions that they've retreated from taking strong stands on the issue. In closing he asserted "reforming public education is hopeless, we should work to create private alternatives." CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

When asked about the issue of homosexual marriage, Mr. Feder said he saw no way to deal with the issue other than a constitutional amendment defining marriage. He sees homosexual marriage as the first step to the total deconstruction of marriage. “If you say yes to homosexual marriage how on earth can you say no to polygamy or group marriage? On what grounds? If two men or two women can marry why can’t three women and two men? Other than traditional morals, there’s nothing beyond that, that rules out other unions.” Mr. Feder also expressed frustration with conservative politicians who “want to save marriage without talking about homosexual marriage.” “I don’t know how you can oppose something without opposing that thing,” he observed, although he stated that he believed internal polling led politicians to believe they were more successful if they only spoke about mothers and fathers, families and children.

“It’s impossible to legislate without legislating someone’s morals. Liberals will point to laws restricting abortion or homosexuality and they’ll say ‘oh that’s morality legislation’ and it is”

We moved from marriage to the idea of legislating morality and values. When confronted with the question ‘Why should we be constrained by your traditional Judeo-Christian values,’ Mr. Feder replied “Whose values should we be restrained by? The whole concept of morality legislation is in many ways redundancy, the term is nonsense.” He elaborated “It’s impossible to legislate without legislating someone’s morals. Liberals will point to laws restricting abortion or homosexuality and they’ll say ‘oh that’s morality legislation’ and it is. But hate crimes legislation is morality legislation too. The progressive income tax is morality legislation, it’s based on someone’s moral concept that if you earn more you should not only pay more into taxes but also a greater portion of your income. Traffic laws are morality legislation, they’re based on the concept that it isn’t moral to drive your car over a certain speed in a residential neighborhood. All legislation is morality legislation.” The question, then, is “whose morals do you legislate?” For Mr. Feder, the answer is clear: “Do you legislate the morality of the Bible, Judeo-Christian morality, the morality on which the country was founded and by which it prospered, or do you legislate the morality of Margaret Mead, of Margaret Sanger, of Howard Stern, of Jerry Springer, a morality I would submit to you has not worked.”

“I think conservatives need a much better idea of historical conservatism and what it is conservatives must stand for”

Finishing up we spoke about conservatism and the prescriptions that Mr. Feder had for conservatives. He first addressed young conservatives: “I would urge young conservatives to read. It’s good to have conservative journals on college campuses, I think that’s wonderful, because I want students to be exposed to conservative ideas, which they won’t get from the campus paper in most cases, but too often young conservatives feel passionately on certain ideas and want to expound on those ideas, without doing the proper intellectual preparation.” He suggested starting with Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind* or Paul Johnson’s *Modern Times*. “One of the things I find frustrating,” he commented, “is that many of the people who call themselves conservative really aren’t. When they call themselves conservative they mean they’re anti-liberal, and that’s not a bad thing, based on what liberalism has become, and I can see why there would be this visceral reaction, but if we’re going to succeed we need a cadre, especially a leadership cadre that really understands what we’re fighting for.” And what are conservatives fighting for? “Often times when one asks a conservative ‘what are you for,’ he will respond ‘I’m for the free market, I’m for individual freedom, strong national defense,’ none of those things are bad, but they neglect the most important component and that’s decency. Without decency, without morality, without strong families, you can’t have any of these other things.” Mr. Feder concluded, summing up the direction conservatism should move: “I think we must stand for principle and clearly articulate those principles and not back away from them when opinion polls show the public in another direction. I think conservatives need a much better idea of historical conservatism and what it is conservatives must stand for.”

CSA ELECTION RESULTS: GRIFFITHS, WATKINS, MONN ELECTED CSA OFFICERS

BY ANDREW NAVRATIL

The results from last weeks Carleton Student Association (CSA) election were announced at the Senate meeting Monday evening. C.J. Griffiths, Jim Watkins, and Laura Mann were elected to serve as President, Vice-President, and Treasurer of the CSA starting this Spring Term. Seven new Senators were elected to serve three terms, and three to serve for one term. Despite the fact that the election was open online for one week and the Senate race was the most competitive in recent memory, voter turnout was no higher than in previous elections.

C.J. Griffiths and Alejandro Mendoza both ran for the Presidency. In what appeared to be a very low-key campaign, Griffiths clearly had the support of the student body. Griffiths garnered 544 votes, overtaking Mendoza's 167 by more than 300 percent. The other officer posts were uncontested. Jim Watkins took 446 votes to win the Vice-Presidency, defeating the only substantial write-in candidate, Emily Brimsek, who garnered 41 votes. Laura Monn was elected Treasurer with 472 votes. There was no substantial write-in candidate for Treasurer. Griffiths, Watkins, and Monn will take office on the first day of Spring Term and will serve until the end of Winter Term 2006.

Ten Senators were chosen to serve the student body. The seven candidates with the most votes won three-term seats. Dave Holman, Rivka Burnstein-Stern, and Tim Singer led the pack with 570, 480, and 408 votes respectively. Byron White, Ali Khaki, Cherise Jones, and Tim Blaha followed. The next three vote-getters, John Smith-Ricco, Ben Egerman, and Tom Duda, won one-term seats. The newly-elected Senators will take office on the first day of Spring Term. The election was one of the most competitive in recent memory, with 23 candidates competing for ten seats.

The only referenda item on the ballot failed to pass. The question "Shall the Constitution be amended to allow sophomores to be elected President?" was voted down 404 to 319. Had two-thirds of the votes been in favor, the CSA Constitution would have been amended to reflect the referendum. For now, it remains the same: only juniors can be elected to the highest CSA office.

Many students took advantage of write-in votes to express dissatisfaction with the Senate and with particular individuals. Others simply wrote in joke votes. One write-in for Vice-President read "whoever the write-in is;" for Treasurer "There is one candidate, why are you wasting our time?" Long-time candidate Joe Fabeetz took only four votes round. Ironically, George W. Bush garnered a vote for President and Senate, and Al Sharpton a vote for Vice-President. Current senator Andrew 'Andy' Navratil even took three votes for Vice-President, but was specifically voted against in the Treasurer race. He did not run for either position.

Despite the number of Senate candidates and the fact that the polls were open online for one week, voter turnout was a dismal 39 percent (based on the 732 votes cast for President). While this is not significantly lower than in past elections, this election was the first in which the polls were open for a week. It seems that this had no affect on turnout. For whatever reason, the majority of the student body chose to or was not able to vote. The full election results, with the exception of write-in votes, can be found online at the CSA Senate webpage at <http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/orgs/csa/elections/results/>

Elections are won by men and women chiefly because most people vote against somebody rather than for somebody.

--Franklin P. Adams

Apparently, a democracy is a place where numerous elections are held at great cost without issues and with interchangeable candidates.

--Gore Vidal

FISCAL IRRESPONSIBILITY: AN EXERCISE IN COMPARISON

BY MATT RUEN

Fiscal irresponsibility runs rampant in the nation's capital. The deficit is soaring far beyond any previous records. Congress has needed to extend the borrowing limit several times in order to keep up with the national debt. Better yet, the war in Iraq keeps draining more and more money. The economic picture is not pretty. But we'd better get used to it...it's coming to Carleton. But wait! You say. This is the result of 4 years of Republican control of the government! This is because Bush and his cronies are war-mongering, conservative politicians, who aren't concerned with economic sustainability. Something like this wouldn't happen here! We're different than the current crop of politicians; we're liberal-minded students, dedicated to social change. We're responsible and intelligent, right?

Wrong. The same sort of financial recklessness that's going on in Washington is happening here, with the CSA Senate's recent decision to grant the Social Programming Board's full \$12,000 request for spring concert.* In fact, it's really similar to the deficit spending exacerbated by the Iraq war. Let's compare, shall we?

A Handy Comparison Chart

	Bush Administration, Congress	Social Programming Board
Why are finances unusually tight?	Recession, War on Terror, Tax Cuts	St. Olaf no longer affiliated with Spring Concert
What is that money needed for now?	Social Programs like Welfare and Medicare, education, efforts to help the less fortunate.	Many small interest, activism, and awareness groups, which provide the broad opportunities not otherwise available in a small college in a small town.
What did these people want money for?	A large-scale, grandiose invasion of Iraq.	A big-name, popular, expensive band for Spring Concert.
What is their problem?	Not enough money to fund the war without severely hurting future finances and/or current programs.	Not enough money to fund the big-name group without severely hurting future finances and/or current groups.
Who are their supporters?	Financially, lots of upper-class whites who are wealthy enough that they won't be affected by crumbling programs.	At Monday's meeting, lots of white seniors who are leaving next year and won't be affected by the lack of funding available for student groups.
Why do they want their pet project?	Remembrance of past wars when there was plenty of money and lots of glory. Social programs don't benefit everyone. See the war as fulfillment of America's central duty.	Remembrance of past parties when there was plenty of funding and lots of fun. The smaller student organizations don't benefit everybody. They see Spring Concert as fulfillment of Carleton's duty to its students.

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*A budget tells us what we can't afford, but it doesn't keep us from buying it.
--William Feather*

What were their strategies?	Blatant misrepresentations of the financial situation, convenient ignorance of their own past actions (like arming and propping up Saddam in the first place), insulting dismissal of the value of social programs, mobilizing supporters who are ignorant of the facts.	Blatant misrepresentations of the financial situation, convenient ignorance of their own past actions (like not finding the alternative funds they were told to seek last year when the issue arose), insulting dismissal of the value of student groups, mobilizing supporters who are ignorant of the facts.
What were the results?	Invaded another country, boosted national deficit and debt to new heights, and endangered both social programs and future financial position.	Senate voted to fully fund SPB's \$12,000; ripped more money out of capital reserves (the emergency fund), endangered both student groups and the CSA's future finances.
What are the implications for the future?	Vastly increased debt and deficit, less and less money available for social programs, continuing arrogant expectation that there will be money provided for irresponsible wars.	Severely decreased capital reserves, less and less money available for spring allocations to student groups, continuing arrogant expectation that there will be money provided for irresponsible SPB spending.

Many of you call yourselves liberals. Many of you say you're opposed to the ridiculous way our government has been wasting money that could have been spent on social welfare or education or name your personal cause. Many of you are hypocrites. Irresponsible, reckless, foolish, money-wasting hypocrites. You don't care if Carleton's dozens of student groups can't hold events in the spring. You don't care if the CSA's financial reserves are crippled, so that there isn't money available when a real emergency comes along. You don't care about financial responsibility. As long as you can dance drunkenly to a fancy band, you don't care. So here's some advice: grow up. Accept reality. If what you want out of college is a big-name party in the spring, then leave. Go to St. Olaf—they've got money. Go to a state university—they've got more. Good riddance. If you're going to stay here, start behaving responsibly. Don't bankrupt future generations of Carleton student groups because you wanted a famous music group.

Otherwise, you're no better than the deficit-spending politicians you love to hate.

*This is not to suggest that, on their respective scales, the current government and the SPB/Senate are equally foolhardy and irresponsible. That's not at all fair to the current government. This sort of thing has been a pattern for many years at the national level. Current politicians are only aggravating an existing problem. The SPB and its supporters on the CSA senate**, on the other hand, are creating a new problem. That is a lot worse, and a lot more stupid.

**Also, it should be noted that five responsible members of the Senate voted against the ridiculous expenditure—Lily Shields, CJ Griffiths, Andrew Navratil, Becca Stark, and Jess Black. They deserve thanks for trying to prevent reckless and unsustainable spending.

Money is a handmaiden, if thou knowest how to use it; a mistress, if thou knowest not.
--Horace

A QUESTION TO SOCIALISTS

BY RAWDON BERGQUIST

A question to socialists: how do you justify yourselves?

Do you value independence, or is the ideal of equality too great a lure? Why do you find it necessary to strip the freedom of some for the benefit of others? Who are you to decide what I am to sacrifice? But who am I to ask the question?

I ask the question broadly and do not define what a socialist is, rather if you call yourself one, I am addressing you. I will not use the c word, for that has been too tainted already by total oppression. Socialism seems to be a milder form, the proper pragmatic and democratic approach, even moral you might contend. Hopefully your plan avoids vanguards of utopian democracy and images of bourgeois hunters. If not then I shall prefer to be dead rather than red.

I will not tread the tired path of fisherman and beggars, unless you actually wish to breed dependence. I suppose you could desire total control, maximum ability to mobilize the proletariat, liberate the oppressed peoples of the world, and exact your righteous vengeance on the capitalists and independents. One cannot forget them. Shall we agree that this is not a pleasant solution, but rather that a milder solution can be found? Is there consensus that education is the means to fair play?

To the central question – is there a place for liberty in socialism? What if I rebel against the state, refuse to pay the tax, and go live in the woods? Do you intend to further restrict my life and throw me in a prison? How about if I no longer feel affection for the state, what do you intend to do then? Will you force me to work for the greater good, even though I am selfish and lazy and will not pull the weight for you? Give me the choice, and I might, but take it away and then I lose my own incentive. You do not have to rely on my self-interest for your bread, but my generosity; if you take that away you will have to rely on the strength of your arms to make me bake. Are we free to disagree? You say the wish is to correct the injustices of society, redistribute the merits of labor and inheritance, level the playing field and regulate the great game, and make sure everyone has a turn at bat. How do you make them all throw the same? But if you only care about the first hit, how do you reconcile the single and the home run? Are you so set in this socialist paradise that you sacrifice liberty for equality? Are you so scared of liberty that you need enforced equality?

As has been seen many times and many ways in this paper before, socialism breeds hypocrisy. Do not worry, then, if you cannot find the answer, I'll ask another one. How do you propose to deal with men of steel and men of desire and men of ambition? Do you think you can so sap the spirit of a people that they have no heart for liberty? Is this your goal? Perhaps it can be done, perhaps one can counter it or divert it to other pursuits or use it to their own advantage. But then we would be living in the real world.

And so I ask you, what is the virtue of socialism?

Socialism proposes no adequate substitute for the motive of enlightened selfishness that to-day is at the basis of all human labor and effort, enterprise and new activity.

--William Howard Taft

Socialism is the same as Communism, only better English.

--George Bernard Shaw

Questions? Comments?

Want to Burn this Issue?

We want to hear your opinion.

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