

opinion

Solomon smiles as court reviews law

Why is Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., smiling?

The author of the law bearing his name is smiling because it appears the U.S. Supreme Court will overturn a district court ruling and declare the draft registration compliance statute constitutional.

"I'm certainly smiling," Solomon said after listening to arguments in a lawsuit brought by six college students in Minnesota.

Justice William Brennan, at one point, said he did not understand why the students maintained they were "compelled" to incriminate themselves by signing the compliance form. The lawyer for the students, William Keppel, replied the "compulsion stems from their need."

Keppel went on to argue the law infringed on the students' constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination and punishes them before they have been found guilty of disobeying any Selective Service rules. Last June a judge in Minnesota agreed with the students' arguments and struck down the statute.

But on the government's side, Solicitor General of the United States Rex Lee, argued the district court decision should be overturned because the statute does not result in any actual punishment for those who refuse to register, but only denies them "a noncontractual federal benefit."

Lee said the purpose of Solomon's law was to ensure more students complied with draft registration laws, not to penalize those who object to registration.

Apparently the statute has been very successful. Lee told the court that the number of students who have registered for the draft has increased dramatically. He said only 3 percent of those eligible had failed to register. This is down from the 7 percent who did not register for the draft last year.

Lee argued the law did not force students to incriminate themselves because they are not compelled to apply for federal aid nor to inform the government about their draft registration status. Rounding out his arguments Lee used a classic double negative. "It's not a crime not to apply for student aid," he said.

Keppel reminded the justices that upholding the Solomon law could have far-reaching implications on other government programs and benefits.

"Government... will be able to force people to swear or certify that they have committed no crimes in order to receive government benefits," Keppel said. As an example Keppel predicted people who want to get a driver's license could be forced to sign a form certifying they have never smoked marijuana.

The coercive aspect of Smilin' Solomon's statute is part of what we deplore. However, the fact that economically disadvantaged students who would normally be unable to pay their college costs may be denied federal aid because of their religious or moral beliefs is unconscionable. Solomon's Amendment creates gender and wealth distinctions which have no relationship to federal financial aid provisions.

Solomon will continue to smile — it looks fairly certain the Supreme Court will rule in the registration compliance statute. Solomon can wave the flag claiming "without the law there's discrimination against all 11 million patriotic Americans who have registered," but educational opportunity and patriotism don't seem the same to us.

So who cares? They're just bums

There's cause for hope and perhaps a reason to rejoice — The Department of Housing and Urban Development said Tuesday that there are only 350,000 homeless people in this country, not the millions estimated by some (cheesy, undependable, probably Democratic, fly-by-night) non-governmental organizations.

It is so reassuring to know that in this mighty nation of ours, a nation that can spend billions upon billions on military defense, only a paltry 350,000 people wander America's streets destitute.

We are certainly overjoyed that these 350,000 homeless aren't among those who aren't hungry in this country. Apparently hunger isn't a very widespread problem either.

It was just pansy liberal sour grapes that prompted Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass. to say the government was "trying to define the homeless out of existence... because they (HUD) don't want to spend money on the problem."

If the number of homeless is so small the government is right to just let 'em rot in the rain. Short of a Swiftian modest proposal, the government should do nothing about its indigent citizens — except maybe adjust the statistics.



'YOU'RE ALL TRYING TO GET ME! I KNOW YOU'RE ALL OUT THERE! I'M GOING TO GET YOU FIRST!'

letters

Safe with us

Photo by Ken Kromer. I don't know when or where those words first appeared. I do know that they appeared four years ago this month on the posters proclaiming my suitability for the ASUO presidency. He was a lighthearted freshman photo enthusiast then, and just wanted a chance to practice his craft. In the intervening years he practiced it very well indeed. More importantly, he shared his zest for being a person with all who came in contact with him. His example served to let me smile in the rain and live glad to be living.

A few weeks ago he photographed us as we counted ballots. I said a brief hello, made some humorous comment, then went back to counting. The next week he is dead. Death is that simple. Bob Dylan said the rest better than I ever could:

"May God bless and keep you always,
May your wishes all come true,
May you always do for others,
And let others do for you.
May you build a ladder to the stars
And climb on every rung,
And may you stay forever young."
Good-bye, Ken. You are safe with us.

Alan Contreras
law

Nutty-marvy

I have confirmed, commuting from classes, that the campus squirrel community has suffered a drastic depopulation. The extinction possibility stems not from the ever-present budget cuts, but correlates with the obvious influx of non-local transients (presuming that tran-

sients may possess locale).

Last weekend I had the unfortunate pleasure of witnessing three transients stalk and capture a bewildered squirrel. These Cro-Magnon like creatures proceeded to decapitate and skin the harmless animal. I stood in amazement. Predictably the rodent was skewered, barbecued and devoured in no mannerly fashion.

I prefer squirrels to transients; they don't pester one for small change, nor do they scour trash bins in search of that elusive returnable bottle. Yes, I understand that the trickle down theory has yet to trickle on all castes of the American society. Nevertheless, this type of famished human behavior jeopardizes the active growth of the campus squirrel population.

Bruce Bedortha
senior, international studies

Sadness, loss

I said maybe six words to Ken Kromer before his death Monday. But I knew him. I feel a tremendous loss and sadness, words — inadequate.

Last February, Kromer, on assignment, met with several tired but enthusiastic nuclear protestors at 2 a.m. at the Growers' Market. We all sacrificed sleep to drive to Portland to try to stop the White

(or Death) train which carried nuclear warheads to Bangor Washington. We all held hands and gave each other our strength and energy. I immediately identified with Kromer and sensed his spirit.

Kromer was with us the whole way. He wasn't there just as a photographer. He ate, talked, lacked sleep, prayed and held hands with us. He wasn't there just physically, but in spirit as well; and his spirit was essential in the unifying chain of all involved. His photos held all this life and spirit.

And God. When we saw the train coming towards us in the distance and we sat in horror and excitement, knowing what this train meant death, clutching each other, not knowing if this huge white monster would stop — Kromer was there.

As a journalist, and even more, a human, I was thrilled to see Kromer putting his whole self into an "assignment." He became a big part of me. Inspiration and truth.

I know all about objectivity in journalism. There is no such thing as objectivity when it comes to total destruction of all life — the nuclear arms race.

Kromer knew that. He knew about life.

I long to see his love of life in others.

Shannon Kelley

letters policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content.

"Comment" is an Emerald opinion feature submitted by members of the University community. "Comment" columns must be limited to 500 words and typed.

Letters to the editor and "Comment" columns should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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