

Libel trial leads to question of fairness

Although both sides claimed victory, the Sharon vs. Time libel trial was hardly a victory for the due process of law. The trial itself was based upon a paragraph which appeared in a Time cover story on Feb. 21, 1983.

The paragraph in question stated that former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon had "reportedly discussed with the Gemayels the need for the Phalangists to take revenge for the assassination of Bashir, but the details of the conversation are not known." The paragraph was a reference to the Gemayel family, the head of the Lebanese Christian militia known as the Phalangists, whose leader, Bashir Gemayel, had been assassinated the day before Sharon met with his family. It was the Christian Phalange who carried out the infamous 1982 massacre of unarmed Palestinians in the refugee camps of Shatila and Sabra, claiming revenge for the assassination of Bashir Gemayel. The Time story directly linked Sharon with plans by the Phalangists to carry out the massacre. To Sharon, it was not just a lie that Time printed, it was a blood libel against the nation of Israel.

Although the jury ruled in favor of Sharon on two accounts (that Time had defamed his reputation by printing a false statement), it ruled in its final verdict that Time had not "consciously intended" to defame Sharon. Thus, both Sharon and Time were able to claim victory at the end of the trial.

But while much of the national media criticized Time for printing a statement they could not substantiate in court, few acknowledged that events during the trial went against Time from the beginning. For one, Time had no access to any of the Israeli witnesses that it considered key to its defense. Specifically, the Israeli government denied permission to any of its top-ranking military and intelligence officers to testify. Also, a number of documents (other than the one known as Appendix B) that were in the hands of the Israeli government and which Time felt were of great importance to its defense were forbidden to be used as evidence by the Israeli government.

This is not to say that Time was right in the article it printed. Time was certainly wrong for printing inaccurate and false statements in its story. It was poor journalism by any standards, and Time's refusal to admit this could hardly be seen as anything other than arrogance. But the fact that Time was never able to call to the stand key Israeli witnesses it felt were essential to its defense leads to the question of whether the magazine was given fair treatment. Had Time been able to summon the witnesses to the stand that it wanted, the results of the trial could have been very different. In a very real sense, the trial was in Sharon's favor from the start. With this in mind, it's hard to rule out that Sharon used the trial to clean up a tarnished personal image and propel him back into Israel's political spotlight.

Editors note: An error in the Emerald's production process resulted in a misstatement in Tuesday's editorial. In criticizing the New York subway shootings by Bernhard Goetz and those who praised the incident as a form of "citizen justice," a sentence read: It would be far more productive to advocate that everyone pack an illegal handgun and shoot the first sucker that messes with them, which is what Goetz did. The sentence should have read: It would be far more productive to advocate that citizens support and help one another in the face of street crime, rather than advocate that everyone pack an illegal handgun and shoot the first sucker that messes with them, which is what Goetz did.



letters

Hunger

I come seasonally
like the winter
I am invisible
People notice me only when
I am with them

I am respected
and respectable
I am unadmired
and unadmirable
I am unwanted by everyone
But whenever I visit,
I am received

I am the director
of food stores
I am the instructor
of dish-washing
I am the harbinger of death
I bring death
to a peopled kingdom

I beat children in the presence
of their parents
I force a man to take
his neighbor's belongings
I make a president to
have a break
vooommmmm like the
nuclear missiles
I send materials to
a troubled stomach
I am hunger
The cause of every endeavor

Dedicated to
the hunger victims of Ethiopia
and the U.N. Food
and Agriculture Organization.

Victor Onyeodor
Eugene

Nightmare

The police entered my home
at 9:30 p.m. Aug. 31 to remove
my child, Autumn, age 6. She

refused to go. After a brief but
intense chase, she wilted in the
corner while I helplessly watch-
ed...custodial interference, ya
know.

Arbitrarily, the mother decid-
ed her children could no longer
visit their father 3-4 days per
week. She demanded absolute
power over all her children
...women's version of rape.
She would not listen to their
wishes or reason.

Autumn faced 11 squad cars
and 18 police over a two day
nightmare. They finally got her
on the third try. I have had no
contact for five months.
...ah...restraining orders.

The final decree mysteriously
omitted any reference to the
children's rights to see their
father, visitation. "You have no
rights" says the mother, the
police, the court. Why?

With Modification of Decree
pending, I have subpoenaed the
judge who signed that final
decree to explain. Equal rights
for blacks, women, et. al. is/are
alive. But what about children's
rights?

I choose to give care. But that
is not enough in the eyes of the
law. I also must pay. I have been
sentenced to a year, \$200 per
month, or bingo, jail. I still
don't get to see them. Why?

I have written to senators,
governors, the president, and
even Dear Abby. It is out of their
jurisdiction. Simply a matter for
the courts. If you have a
message for the courts, please
contact me now. Do not wait! I
will deliver it Feb. 1, my day in
court. 503-344-9184, Help.

Donald Anderson
Eugene

All for it

So the Women's Task Force is
looking for volunteers. Well,
I'm all for it. After all, our Presi-
dent is encouraging all of us to
pull together for the betterment
of the nation by being
volunteers.

And you couldn't ask for a
better cause. It is time that all
Americans pull together to
bring women out of the bondage
that has held them out of good
jobs, cheated them of equal pay,
and denied them the right to
assert themselves, all on the

basis of gender. And now we
have an opportunity to right
these wrongs.

In fact, I thought this was
such a worthy cause that I
volunteered months ago to work
on the organizing committee.
Everyone at the first meeting
agreed I could have meaningful
input, that I was a positive force
in the fight for equality of op-
portunity for the sexes. But I
made one fatal error that caused
the members of the Task Force
to deny me a chance to be a
leader in the equality move-
ment. This error was so dread-
ful I was asked to leave the
meeting by Julie Davis and was
never contacted again by that
august assembly. I was born
male.

Ronald Harper
Marketing

Irritating

Attention students. We need
to organize immediately in
defense of the unborn plastic
dolls. As you may have noticed
during the pro-choice march on
Jan. 22, these helpless victims
are being selfishly slaughtered
by a human robot from
Maranatha Ministries — the
Grim Reaper himself. If you
spot someone wearing make-
up, draped in black polyester,
and brandishing a deadly card-
board blade, wrap both arms
around your Cabbage Patch kid
and run!

If you were able to ignore the
lurid presence of the Reaper and
his tasteless display of impaled
dolls, perhaps you noticed the
pro-choice marchers. If the
Reaper led you to believe that
the marchers were an assort-
ment of murderous fanatics,
consider this: those of us sup-
porting choice are also "pro-
life." I simply feel more con-
cerned about the lives and well-
being of women than I do about
the potential lives of three-
month-old egg sacs (abortion is
legal only during the first three
months of pregnancy). As a
male who will never be faced
with the possibility of pregnan-
cy, the Grim Reaper is being
fundamentally hypocritical,
and I find the tactics he uses to
communicate his views ex-
tremely immature and
irritating.

Jennie Bricker
pro-choice

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