

Freedom of speech: Soviets disqualified

Freedom of speech protects your right to say anything you want — as long as you're not a Soviet. This appears to be the reasoning of the Reagan administration. The administration wrongly assailed ABC for allowing a Soviet journalist to contest a speech by President Reagan. And ABC wrongly apologized.

Soviet journalist Vladimir Posner disputed a Reagan speech on ABC News Wednesday. The White House responded Thursday in a letter to the network stating it was "astonished" that a "trained propagandist" was allowed to discuss the speech at length without presentation of the opposing view.

Thursday, ABC Senior Vice President Richard Wald apologized. It is appropriate to allow a Soviet spokesman to discuss a presidential speech describing U.S.-Soviet relations, he said, but Posner was allowed too much time without an "opposing voice to point out errors and the inconsistencies in what he said."

The administration's contention that Posner is a "trained propagandist" is accurate. But the spokesperson of any organized group, whether a country or a company, is specifically trained to present the group in the best possible light. The audience is fully aware of this and considers the comments of a spokesperson in this context.

For example, if a General Motors Corp. spokesperson is invited to appear on a news program to respond to charges against the company, the audience knows the spokesperson was hired by the company's public relations department to defend the company's interests. The same is true for a spokesperson representing another country. The administration does not need to protect citizens from themselves.

When ABC postponed production of the miniseries, "Amerika," in January, members of the Reagan administration complained bitterly that the network was allowing the Soviet Union to influence programming decisions. Now the administration has attempted to assume that role itself.

ABC added insult to injury when it apologized for its judgment. The network acted responsibly when it invited a Soviet to respond to Reagan's contentions that the only way to ward off Soviet aggression is to maintain a steady military growth rate.

Opponents argue that Posner's remarks were pure propaganda and thus were not protected by freedom of speech. This would be fine if the United States could devise an accurate and consistent method of distinguishing propaganda from other messages — and providing the Soviets are the only ones guilty of disseminating propaganda.

Also, why does the network think an opposing voice was necessary? Posner was the opposing voice — he expressed opposition to Reagan's speech.

In addition, why would it be necessary to point out errors and inconsistencies in Posner's remarks? Spokespeople, including Reagan, frequently make inconsistent and inaccurate statements during interviews. Does the network think an analysis should follow the comments of every spokesperson? Or do Soviets present "special" circumstances?

Nothing comes without a price. The price of freedom of speech is that disagreeable opinions must be protected as fiercely as agreeable opinions.

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Cover News Service



"No wonder it's so hard to cut the military budget... our ax was built by a defense contractor!"

Letters

Consider few

A recent letter from one of our most vocal defenders of legalized abortion claimed 90 percent of abortions occur in the first trimester. Let's ignore how developed these first trimester babies generally are though, and concentrate on that other 10 percent.

If there are over 1.5 million children aborted in America annually, then 10 percent of that would equal at least 150,000 abortions! Some are done when complications occur, but most aren't.

It's no surprise that many Caesarean and saline abortions go wrong, with the baby being born alive. But, hey, abortion is legal. I guess that makes it moral, right?

Michael Cross
Senior, History
Political Science

Take the class

I would urge anyone who is going to take the Graduate Record Exam in the future to take the excellent GRE preparation class offered by the Learning Resource Center here at the U of O. Taking the class was one of the brightest things I ever did, and the best \$40 investment I ever made.

Jesse Ledgerwood
Post-Master's Counseling

Set example

Bravo, Gary Paquin. Finally, someone stands up and exposes the fraternity system for what it really is. Unfortunately, those who chose to respond to his letter missed the point.

Mr. Paquin is not saying date rape occurs only in the fraternity system. He is not even blaming the entire system for the several incidents of "fraternity rape" that occurred. He is blaming the fraternity system for the "attitudes perpetuated in the fraternities."

These attitudes were never more apparent than when a fraternity posted flyers around campus advertising an "open party" for the WOMEN of the U of O. One cannot help wondering what the expected outcome of a party open to women only would be. I'm afraid it is sickeningly obvious. Despite what Ms. Hastings and Mr. White may think, a fraternity did reprimand its pledges for not "getting laid," and they did have a roster showing who was getting laid and who wasn't. Mr. Paquin told the shocking and revolting truth.

If it is true the fraternities are in the "social eye" more than any other organization, as Mr. Olenivich claims, then shouldn't that organization want to set the example for others to emulate? How is it that a woman can get raped at a fraternity "function" when so many people are present? The only way such a repulsive crime can take place in that environment is if such acts are normal or even expected, consented to or not. But that's life in the Greek system.

Scott Lewis
Psychology

Confused

Concerning the letter "Point is missed" (ODE, Feb. 19):

Mr. Dawson, you are apparently a very confused man. Your allegations that ROTC and the CIA have the right "to do or say anything that that person or group might wish" is simply, outrageously, false. Both groups' only purpose is to serve the people and the government of the United States. They are professionals who not only live by the socially acceptable criteria of our society, but also a stricter ethical code of their own professions. Further, being public servants, they do not make or initiate policy, they simply comply with it, as do we all.

Your next point, equally absurd, states that the most basic prerequisite for democracy is "the guarantee that physical harm or death will never be used to attain a goal." If that were true, no democracy would exist today.

Surely, the most basic prerequisite for any democratic government might be more accurately articulated to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." The survival of your country may necessitate the use of violent force.

Lastly, I would address your statement that the CIA and ROTC "ought not be allowed the privileges" of the democracy. When that occurs, we will no longer be living in a democracy, but something far worse.

Richard Thomas
History

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 or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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