

Democracy needed in South Korea

In response to 13 days of raging violence between students and riot police, the South Korean president held a meeting Tuesday with an opposition leader, a step that will curb violence and may lead to compromise in this strife-torn region.

President Chun Doo-hwan, who previously refused to meet with the opposition until after the 1988 Olympic Games, should be commended for meeting with opposition leader Kim Young Sam.

Communication between South Korea's government and the opposition forces of the Reunification Democratic Party is the first step toward restoring order and implementing democratic reform.

Communication, however, is not enough. The students of Seoul are not protesting for communication, but for democracy, and it is likely that the violence will continue until their objective is achieved.

In the days forthcoming, the opposition party will be pressing the government to amend the constitution in favor of free elections. Under the present constitution, the new president is chosen in an indirect election, ensuring that Chun can hand pick his successor.

The opposition rightly refuses to accept this rigged transfer of power that would continue the military dictatorship. If President Chun does not commit to free elections, the students are justified in continuing their protests.

Considering the large amount of U.S. economic and military aid to South Korea and the presence of 41,500 U.S. troops there, the Reagan administration is in a position to intervene in South Korea's political affairs and push for democratic reforms.

If the South Korean government does not respond to diplomatic pressure, then, at the suggestion of Senate and House democrats, measures to curb South Korea's favored trade status should be employed until the military dictatorship permits free elections.

Testimony under hypnosis enhances judicial process

The Supreme Court acknowledged the benefits of hypnotically enhanced testimony Tuesday when it struck down Arkansas's absolute ban on testimony aided by hypnosis.

Although the ruling only applies to the testimonies of criminal defendants, the decision emphasizes the right of defendants to testify on their behalf and the reliability of testimony under hypnosis.

Many states currently ban hypnotically enhanced testimony, of defendants as well as witnesses, because they deem it unreliable. A person under hypnosis is more susceptible to suggestions and can have problems distinguishing between fantasy and reality.

But under supervised and regulated hypnosis sessions these dangers can be reduced. The testimony presented can also be double checked by other known facts. The Court recognized this in its ruling.

It also recognized the importance of defendants having the opportunity to present their side of the case. In the Rock v. Arkansas decision, Ms. Rock only remembered detail of the murder she was accused of when she was hypnotized. Her version was confirmed by examining the handgun.

The Court limited hypnotically enhanced testimony to criminal defendants which is good. Eye witness testimony under hypnosis can be wrong and is not always necessary. In this ruling the Court has respected the rights of the defendant and provided the means for fair and well-informed trials.

AS THE OPTIMIST SAID AS HE FELL FROM THE TOP OF A SKYSCRAPER...



Commentary

Exchanging ideas purpose of letters

It seems to me that the letters section of a newspaper represents an enormously valuable thing. Within an admittedly restricted format (250 words or less), we can be exposed to viewpoints concerning a wide variety of topics from an even wider variety of people.

The opportunity exists to examine, question and evaluate these points of view, to compare them with our own and to see which views best fit or explain the issues surrounding a given topic.

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We are also able, if we are willing to take the risk, to expose our own ideas and values for other people to consider and question, and thereby gain the additional perspective that their comments or objections can bring.

Sadly, the letter section can be used for less worthy purposes, as well, such as an arena for personal combat, for propagandizing, or for championing causes for what often seem to be purposes of self-display.

Enough animosity and bitterness are generated as a result of such writing as to amply demonstrate some of the reasons for the fact that we seem to be on the brink of destroying

our planet and ourselves.

Category 1 The Warrior Class

Rather than seeking to increase my understanding of what others believe and why, and to gain from their insights, it is possible for me to use the letters column as a battlefield.

I simply look for someone stupid enough to hold an opinion contrary to one of my own pet theories. Once I have selected a target, I then attack in an attempt to injure or destroy that writer by humiliating and belittling him or her.

I may indeed be able to make my opponent look foolish and pathetically inferior, and to cause myself to appear to be clever and vastly superior by comparison, but I do so at great cost.

I am also quite likely to make my own ideas and values look ugly and malevolent by demonstrating to people how poorly I treat those with whom I disagree.

Category 2 "I'm Right Because I'm Me"

Another type of writer whose letters appear frequently is the one whose support for arguments seems to consist solely of the unspoken assertion that their ideas are true simply because they are their ideas.

I do not think it is inappropriate to seek to persuade others of the rightness of believing a certain way. That persuasion, however, ought to have enough content to it so that analysis and evaluation of its ideas can take place, rather than stating a point of view and seeming to expect other people to agree on the strength of their being certain of being right.

I think most of us "feel" right, and we can easily take that feeling of certainty as some sort of irrefutable proof that we are right. Unless we recognize the built-in trap of believing that "because I feel right, I am right," we are likely to hold what is, quite frankly, a

foolishly high regard for our own assumptions and opinions.

Category 3 The "In-crowd" Supporters

The final category of letter writers that I wish to consider here are those who seem to adopt and argue for currently fashionable ideas and moral issues for what appear to be no better than that they are currently fashionable.

I suspect that these people often attach themselves to ready-made ideals and then proceed to parrot the "party line" of the particular cause they wish to be identified with, because they see a personal cost involved in actually becoming one.

It is much easier (and a much surer way to gain public acclaim) to pick up a popular banner and wave it than it is to think through complex issues of life from ourselves and then respond appropriately.

Intellectual integrity involves a genuine willingness to seek to understand a thing, to look at my own assumptions and ideas as if they weren't "mine," to try to evaluate their worth fairly, using the same standards that I would use in evaluating another's viewpoint.

It also involves, I think, a willingness to follow my understanding of the truth, regardless of the direction it leads me, and regardless of how it might make me appear in the eyes of others.

Our use of the letters column reflects the kind of people we are as well as what we believe and value.

My hope is that we can come to recognize and take advantage of the potential that exists in openly exchanging ideas in an atmosphere where courtesy and respect are expected and given among people who differ and where words and ideas are used as tools with which to inquire and build and enrich, instead of as weapons to injure and destroy.

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