

FBI tactics illustrate institutional thinking

Speaking for the unemployed and the disenfranchised who have no public voice, we would like to say two words to the FBI: Hands off.

America, as some have observed, has entered an ethical winter in every sector, a season in which people find themselves trapped in the ice of corporate and government indifference to civil rights.

In light of the sculpted realities we are dealt by the manufacturers of this new America, we find no problem believing that the FBI thinks nothing of purchasing Social Security numbers from government agencies.

In this dark time, the invisible boundary which separates the unacceptable from the acceptable — the line that private integrity once kept us from crossing — has been wiped away by organizations that have found civil rights inconvenient.

Certainly the FBI protects us, and we do not quarrel with its deserved status as a heroic institution.

Nevertheless, Social Security numbers were not created for the convenience of institutions that want to keep potential customers or irritants on a short leash.

Today, Social Security numbers can unlock a Jack-in-the-box that we think we have hidden from the world. If the numbers are cast like apple seeds to an institution like the FBI or the CIA with the power to turn the life of an innocent citizen upside down, then all people are scrutinized, not for their histories, not for any personal evidence or lack of evidence of civic and ethical prudence, but for their potential as criminals, as traitors and as spies.

We can look for innocent victims of this corporate and organizational brand of thinking under the ominous earthen mounds in the McCarthy era cornfield, or perhaps at the bottom of a dark lake of paperwork, just a skeleton in the trunk of a car.

After state unemployment officials blew the whistle on FBI agents in Portland who tried to buy Social Security numbers at two bucks a shot, the FBI shamelessly reacted with a shrug, and offered the most insidious of reactions: a "so what, we've done it for years" attitude.

The attempt at purchasing the list of numbers was representative of a continuing national FBI effort to purchase names, Social Security numbers and birth dates from private companies and government organizations.

The rationale for approaching Oregon state unemployment officials is that fugitives may fabricate an alias, but they still have to work, and they cannot fake a Social Security number. According to the FBI, this method of law enforcement has been routine for several years.

Which unleashes an ugly question.

What other secretive practices fall into the realm of the reasonable for the FBI?

They claim that Social Security numbers that do not turn up wanted felons will be discarded from their deep computer files.

While we can see the practical reasons for the agency's justification for its actions, we see a rationalization emerging that discounts the same agency's responsibility to the citizens it was designed to protect.

The results of bending our constitutional rights always seems profitable to the short-sighted, but the profits are not worth the sacrifice.

While we discourage recruitment of volunteers into the growing army of paranoids, we experience no hesitation in condemning attitudes of constitutional indifference. We join in with the public outcry against the tunnels of secrecy which are occasionally uncovered by attentive passers-by.

Letters Policy

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

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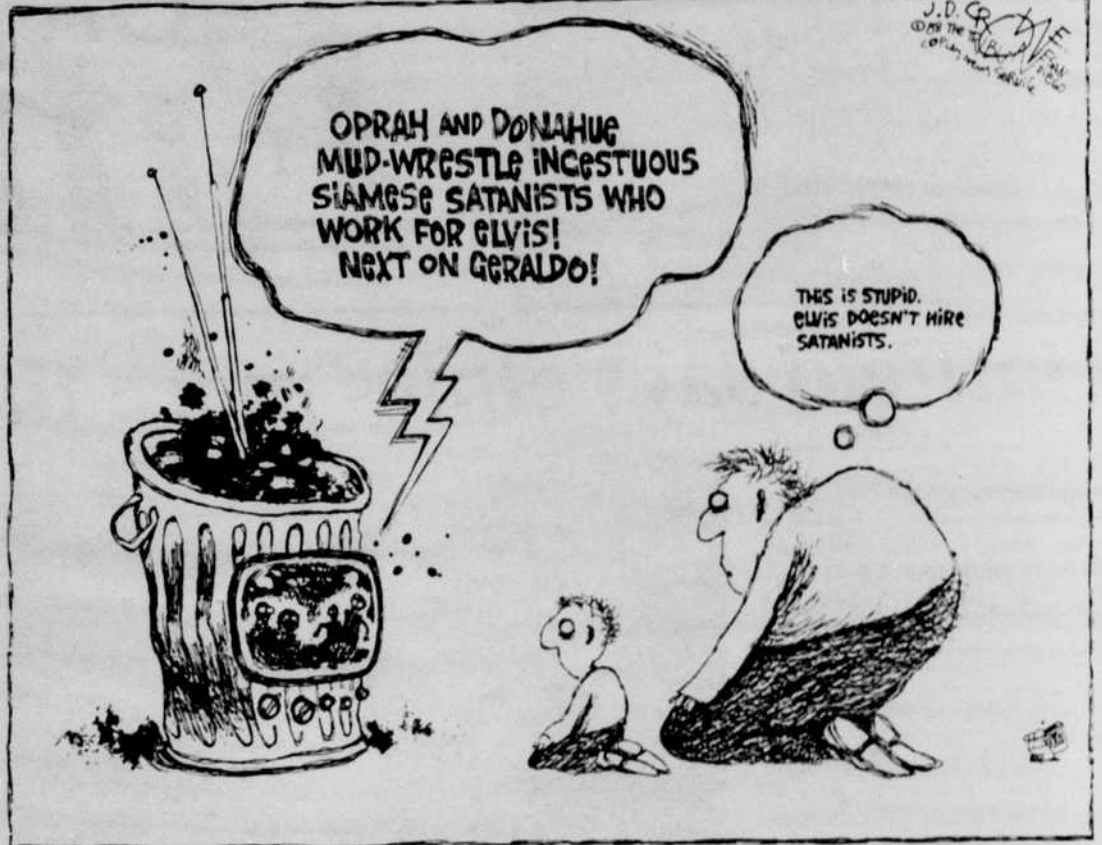
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Letters

Strike

As a citizen who sympathizes with the goals of the striking Lumber and Sawmill Workers at the Nicolai plant in Springfield, I would like to remind your readers that the strike is entering its fifth month.

Morgan Products bought the profitable, Oregon-owned mill in 1986, and is now attempting to impose large wage and benefit cuts. Since the workers are in large part responsible for the continuing profitability of the plant, they are entitled to an equitable wage and benefit package. Morgan's current contract proposal is neither fair nor just. The Wisconsin-based company is attempting to take advantage of Oregon's depressed wood products industry and exploit the large number of people who need jobs at any price. The local economy, however, will not benefit if the payroll at Nicolai is drastically cut back. The workers are entitled to a fair package, and neither the plant's competitiveness nor Morgan's profits will suffer because of it.

For those interested in assisting the strike, letters of support directed to government officials and the officers and stockholders of Morgan Products can make a difference. The union also has established a strike fund to provide assistance to the 300 striking workers and their families. For information, contact Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union Local 3035,

1116 South A St., Springfield, Oregon (747-3565).

Michael Hennessy
Instructor
Computer Science

No ticker tape

I just went through financial aid hell, and vowed that I'd tell you about my trip. Now, maybe I'm just one of those "rare cases" and maybe I'm exaggerating, but I felt that not only was I not given the attention that my unique situation required, but the attention I did receive was in a patronizing, nonchalant manner. When I left the director's office for hopefully the last time, I had the distinct feeling of being a little girl who has just been "patted on the head and sent on her way." Translation: I felt I was talked to in a very condescending manner, and my problems, or rather the extent of their importance, minimized.

I consoled myself by saying that I at least got what I asked for, the change I requested — but it bothered me that I had to go through the humiliating process to get it. Exactly what is our Financial Aid Department here for, if not to "aid the student in financial matters"? Whatever happened to service with a smile? And who selected these self-serving bureaucrats who inhabit 260 Oregon Hall?

They don't return calls or answer mail, and will flat out ignore you if they feel like it. And, of course we, as only students, have to grovel, because we're requesting financial aid because our parents couldn't afford to send us. When I went in to talk to the director, both times I had to explain to him that I was an independent since I was thirteen — guess he forgot to look at my file before he met with me. Great. I feel so good that someone is taking the time to really help me get started. Actually, I'd settle for being treated like an equal.

I still wonder if maybe I should drop everything and seek my four-year degree else-

where. If I do, I'll be sure to send a letter to the Dean and let him know my reasons...I sure hope he's more receptive.

Lara Lambert
Eugene

Rah rah rah!

Hats off to the University cheerleaders who had the class to stay the ten minutes after the Tuesday night game to hear the AIA speech.

I wish the coaches and the team had had the class to take the 10 minutes for their guests.

Connie Schwartz
Eugene

Labor market

To all who oppose CIA recruitment on campus:

I commend your attempts to educate the students at the University about CIA activities. I cannot, however, support your attempts to ban the organization from the campus. This radical position invites opposition and thus weakens your cause.

My suggestion is this: Let the labor market decide whether the CIA comes. Look, college recruitment isn't cheap. In fact, it's quite expensive compared to other forms of recruitment. What do you think the CIA (or any business) would do if only two people showed up for interviews? The University would become an economically unattractive source of new recruits, and they wouldn't return.

Continue to pass out flyers, make speeches, and demonstrate peacefully, and you will succeed in educating the labor market. The labor market has a very loud voice; a voice even the CIA can't ignore. If, however, you continue to push for the banning of the CIA, this misguided energy will not unite the student body, but it will come back to haunt you.

John Gates
Management/finance
Thursday, December 1, 1988