

U.S. should join in on new peace plan

Despite the best efforts of the United States, peace may one day return to Central America.

On Monday, the presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua reached an accord that could put an end to the military strife that engulfs the region. Under the agreement, the U.S.-backed Contra rebels in Nicaragua and Honduras will be disbanded, as will the pro-Sandinista rebels in El Salvador. Soldiers of both forces will be either relocated or repatriated.

The agreement is a bright hope, and it should be one that the United States backs enthusiastically. Of course, that isn't what's happening. The peace plan is held in disdain by the Bush Administration and the Republican sugar daddies who keep the Contras alive.

The official word from the White House is that the administration would prefer to see any disbanding put off until after the Nicaraguan elections next February, so as to see if the Sandinista government will abide by their promise to hold fair elections.

That concern almost derailed the summit between the five Central American presidents, until Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega surprisingly issued a list of steps it would take now to ensure the election process along with other democratic reforms. These steps include negotiations with the score of opposition parties in Nicaragua and an end to military conscription and random police arrests.

These steps have satisfied the Central American leaders, who have more at stake in the region than we do regarding how Nicaragua behaves, and so they should satisfy the United States. Besides, as the CIA gears up its ballot-stuffing machine, the U.S. commitment to fair elections sounds hollow and hypocritical. If this country continues its one-nation crusade to dictate how the region polices itself, you can bet that support for U.S. policies will turn to nothing.

The Contras also would find it in their best interest to lay down their arms. So far, they have not indicated a willingness to do so, despite the promise of repatriation. The United Nations may have to intervene, but if the United States were to cut all support, that would probably be enough to do the Contras in.

As noted in an earlier editorial, all funding should be cut anyway — attacks by Contra forces last spring were in violation of the bipartisan Congressional agreement that provided the rebels with this year's humanitarian aid package. There has been an outcry from legislators, led by Oregon Rep. Pete DeFazio, and the Contras may find themselves completely cut off Nov. 30 when the current package expires.

Contra leaders need to show that they are willing to work with the process and not fight against it if they are to be taken seriously by the world community. Support for the new plan would be one such indication. Without that support, the ragtag army continues its international reputation as a band of roving outlaw bandits, whose presence is wanted by no one.



Letters

Not activism

As a University employee and lifelong resident of the Eugene area, I view the recent proliferation of signs and demonstrations by individuals seeking to preserve the tranquil neighborhood quality of fraternity row at the expense of a parking structure with considerable annoyance.

There seems to be the assumption that the population of commuting students and employees is composed of automobile worshippers with no concern for the environment who could easily walk, bicycle or hop on a frequent, convenient bus but are too lazy to do so, when the reality is that most people dislike wrestling with the campus parking nightmare and would happily use alternate transportation were it not for its limitations.

In particular, as people go farther and farther afield in search of affordable family housing, it is precisely those of us who must somehow combine a long commute (from areas with no bus service, or with infrequent service and multiple transfers to get to the University) with work, school, day care arrangements and shopping who become the target of "don't park on my doorstep" activism.

This activism may masquerade as concerned liberalism, but it is fundamentally selfish — it is the same sort of mentality which, in the name of neighborhood preservation, opposes low income housing in segregated areas. It is a mentality which uses services but neither respects nor is willing to make accommodations for those who provide them. It is, I fear, the American way — but please

don't ask me to admire it.

Martha Sherwood-Pike
Administrative assistant,
Russian language

Decent burial

William Moore's commentary (ODE, Aug. 1) expressed a belief that he and many other anti-choice advocates claim to hold: "We do not get to choose whether or not a human life begins at conception. It does."

Since Moore has demonstrated a fondness for biology, let's look at some biology. Frequently after conception the embryo does not become properly implanted in the uterus. Instead, a spontaneous abortion occurs within the first few weeks after conception.

Usually this event goes undetected, although it is quite common. For example, in one study, 57 percent of all conceptions ended with spontaneous abortions. The normal, healthy women involved in the study were never aware that they had (transiently) been pregnant (Edmonds, D.K., et al., 1983, "Fertility and Sterility 38," pp. 447-453).

If you believe that life begins at conception, then you think that a real person dies when these spontaneous abortions occur. Doesn't that real "person" deserve some recognition: maybe a name and decent burial? Yet anti-choice advocates blithely ignore the possibility that one of their "unborn children" has died during a spontaneous abortion!

Detecting spontaneous abortions during the first weeks after conception requires, at very least, several blood tests for a female during every month she has intercourse. Does anyone do this? No. Do the anti-choice

advocates really believe that life begins at conception? Unless they are celibate or do those tests, apparently not.

Jeffrey A. Bell
Molecular biology

On Shelley

The History of Atheism in Britain, by David Berman, presents an interesting description of sophisticated suppression of British atheist writings, especially those of Percy Bysshe Shelley, by literary commentators who curiously seem unwilling to accept Shelley's abundant identification with atheism. In an effort to cloud Berman's lucid arguments they describe Shelley as an agnostic and with labels other than atheist.

Shelley was expelled from Oxford as a young student for writing "Necessity of Atheism" (1811). His atheist views are further confirmed in "Queen Mab" (1813) and in "Refutation of Deism" (1814).

To escape prosecution for blasphemy, Shelley was compelled to couch his atheist argument in the dialogue of two literary characters he fashioned, one a deist, the other a Christian, a literary technique of ancient origin used by writers in times of persecution.

Sympathetic to the cause of the American and French Revolutions, Shelley was avidly read by the Founding Fathers and early American intellectuals, as were the works of Thomas Paine, Ethan Allen, Paul Henri d'Holbach and Constantine Volney, all of whom challenged religious theist claims.

Understanding the extensive evidence of censorship and suppression of atheist argument refuting theist claims existing in our public libraries would shatter the respect and confidence people have accorded educators and librarians. Clearly, they have colluded silently or actively in these violations of intellectual freedom.

A Congressional investigation into library censorship and suppression of philosophical views may be necessary to correct the religious tyranny and threat to the democratic process it represents.

Bert Tryba
Eugene

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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