

Get rid of needless flag burning statute

There was no big surprise last week when a federal judge in Washington state upheld the right to burn the American flag as a sign of political protest or expression. Not only was the decision anti-climactic, it was expected.

When the flag-burning bill was passed last October, several protesters — including four in Seattle — set out to test the constitutionality of the law by torching the Stars and Stripes on the steps of government buildings. The Washington group was put on trial for their part in the protest.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein said the right to burn the flag was guaranteed under the First Amendment. Under the Constitution, the right to burn a flag, she said, was equal to the right to wave one.

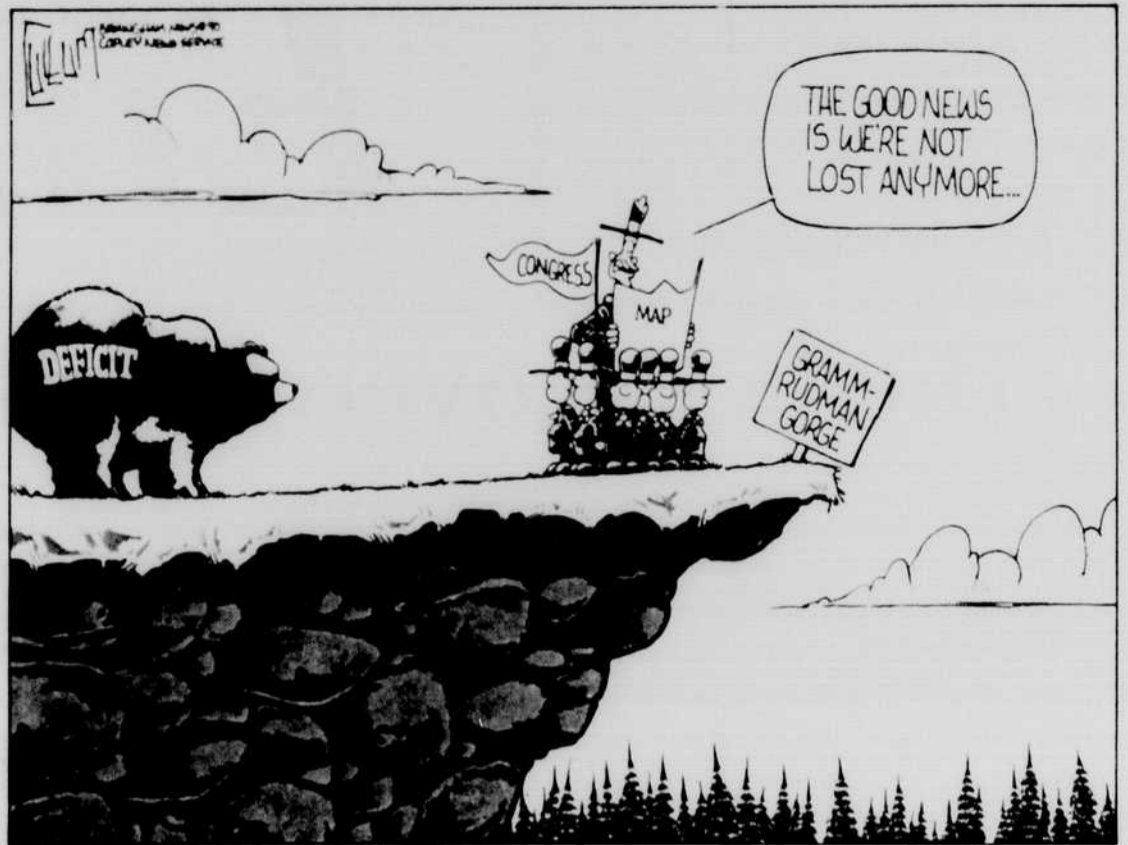
As soon as Rothstein's decision was announced, Congressional leaders and the Justice Department said they would ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case. Depending on which side you talk to, the Seattle ruling has several contrasting implications. Opponents of the flag burning law say the decision upholds constitutional rights. Supporters of the measure say Congress didn't go far enough with the law.

Congressional leaders are not giving up the law without a fight. Interestingly enough, both Republicans and Democrats, senators and representatives, are downplaying Rothstein's decision. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell said the ruling was "expected." House Speaker Tom Foley thinks the law will be upheld in the Supreme Court.

The flag burning law is idiotic. Literally the entire world is undergoing rapid change, but Bush and company continue to engage in useless political rhetoric about whether someone has the right to torch a piece of colored cloth. While South Africa strives to end apartheid, East and West Germany struggle to reunify and Eastern Europe reaches for democracy, the United States — the "leaders" of the Free World — debates meaningless and tired issues.

Burning something has a long-standing tradition as a form of protest. William Lloyd Garrison burned a copy of the Constitution to protest slavery. Draft cards went up in smoke in protest of the Vietnam war. It is a way to show dissatisfaction with what the government is doing.

The Supreme Court should strike down this law. What the executive and legislative branches of the United States have torn down, the judicial should seek to rebuild. The bill is an archaic piece of legislation, designed to do nothing more than waste government time, money and resources. It needs to go.



Old growth habitat deserves protection

A critical local environmental area is about to go under the blade, and it has prompted objections from people on both sides of the timber issue.

Plans for sales of old growth timber in the Coburg Hills, northeast of Eugene, have pushed on even though the U.S. Bureau of Land Management itself seems divided on the issue. The agency's own wildlife biologist, Charlie Thomas, has voiced his opposition to logging in the area.

The BLM is planning to sell a 92-acre parcel of old growth timber in the Coburg Hills, and a sale of 77 acres is set for later this year. Last month, 167 acres of Coburg Hills old growth timber were sold.

What's at stake — as if losing more old growth isn't enough — is a key roosting area for birds of prey.

Specifically, says Thomas, old growth is an optimum habitat for such birds as golden eagles and hawks. Along Interstate 5, there are 16,000 acres of land vitally important to the birds; only 3 percent of it is old growth now. If the upcoming land sales go through, the amount of old growth will go down to

about 1 percent.

Last fall Thomas justifiably urged the BLM to set aside areas of the Coburg Hills to protect the birds. However, BLM managers rejected his recommendations. The agency says it is working to protect and expand bald eagle roosting sites, and that it must balance habitat needs with meeting timber sale levels.

The BLM will be reviewing wildlife habitat needs when it updates its land management plan in 1992. By that time, the Sierra Club hopes to enact a legislation package that, among other things, would permanently preserve the region's remaining ancient forests.

Whether either of these moves would be made in time to save the Coburg Hills old growth is doubtful. The area is losing its old growth timber, and the impending sales are a threat to the old trees that remain, as well as to wildlife assets.

Old growth bird of prey habitat is worth a second consideration by the BLM, especially if a specialist within the agency opposes the idea enough to stand against it.

Letters

Compelled

We feel compelled to respond to the article that appeared about our colleague Richard Marrocco (*ODE*, Feb. 14). Certain allegations were made by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals about his work that were incorrect.

The "evidence" to which PETA refers as though it was fact is not. These allegations came from a pretrial hearing, since there was no trial.

In the hearing, the attorney defending the accused was allowed to question witnesses and bring out any information helpful in defending his client. The district attorney, however, was not allowed to cross-examine to establish the truth of the testimony.

We know Marrocco to be a careful, humane and conscientious researcher. It is simply not true that "many" animals were lost during surgery. Indeed, he has not lost a single animal during surgery.

Five animals have been lost over his 15 years of work here. These occurred during the recording phase of his work.

These particular animals may have had allergic reactions to the drugs, since scores of other animals were tested with no adverse drug effects.

In his current protocols, care has been taken to ensure that the animals involved will not undergo pain or suffering. We all welcome close scrutiny of the proposals by the Institutional Animal Care Use Committee to ensure that every appropriate precaution is taken.

We recognize that there are difficult moral issues involved in using animals in research, but there are also moral issues raised in failing to carry our research aimed at advancing our knowledge and perhaps treatments of mental illness.

Michael Posner
Psychology professor
Daniel Kimble
Head, Psychology department

Inkling

The most disturbing assumption inherent in pro-vivisection arguments is that non-human animals are here for our use, even at the expense of their

pain and suffering.

I could talk about the unreliability of the animal model, with Thalidomide-deformed babies as case in point. Or the fact that alternatives do exist — clinical observation, computer modeling, tissue cultures in test tubes, etc. — and that many more alternatives would be found if we ceased our reliance on the animal model.

I could talk about the fact that the majority of diseases we're fighting are human-caused, due to high fat diets, tobacco smoking, pesticides, smog; the list is endless.

But what I really wish people

would do is just begin to imagine an inkling of the pain and fear of an animal forced to live in a cage, without the contact of their fellow creatures, as the subject of human cruelty.

Imagine having your head transplanted onto the body of another, having your eyeballs rotated, having something implanted into your brain, having cocaine forced into your system or having your baby forcibly taken from you at birth. Imagine being treated as just another piece of lab equipment.

The same arguments that are used to justify such experimentation on non-human animals

today have been used all through history to justify the enslavement, torture, and murder of other human animals.

As Jeremy Bentham wrote: "The question is not 'can they reason?' nor 'can they talk?' but 'can they suffer?'"

Nicole Bourcier
Student

Correction

A story in Friday's *Emerald* misidentified the group American Society of Interior Designers.

In Friday's Et als column, the wrong day for a Tuesday IFC budget hearing was given.

The campus production of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is being performed in the Robinson Theatre March 1-3 and 9-10. The location was erroneously reported in Friday's "Encore!" section.

The *Emerald* regrets these errors, and apologizes for any inconvenience they may have caused.

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.