

Arabs, Israelis take step toward peace

As far as first steps go, this one can be measured in inches. But like all journeys of any importance, the first step is the most difficult and important one.

Today begins the Middle East peace talks in Madrid, Spain. For the first time in 42 years, Arab and Israeli representatives will sit down at a table and try to resolve some of their differences and end the strife.

Nobody is predicting instantaneous reform or answers. The chasm between the two sides is just too great to overcome in one meeting. But the prospect for peace — or at the very least, a dialogue for peace — has never been better.

At stake is the future of the Middle East. Since Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948, Arab-Israeli tensions have erupted into five full-scale wars and countless other minor conflicts. Compounding the problem is the matter of the occupied territories — the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights — which Israel captured during the wars.

The problem takes on ironic twists. In 1937, when Great Britain sponsored a proposal to create separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine, the Arabs balked and demanded a single state with minority rights for Jews. Neither side could agree, and after a long period of both legal and illegal Jewish immigration into the area, the U.N. stepped in and created Israel, stripping the Palestinians of their land. Now Arab settlers in Israel exist in much the same way the early Jewish settlers did before 1948.

This is not the first attempt at peace talks. In 1979, Israel and Egypt sat down to work out their disagreements. President Carter was the guiding force behind the Camp David Accords. The two countries remain on cordial terms, but Israel continues to have conflicts with its Arab neighbors, most notably Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

There are similarities between the newest peace talks and ones sponsored by U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Geneva after the 1973 war. Israel backed out of the talks at the last minute, refusing to have anything to do with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO has been a major sticking point in getting Arabs and Israelis to the peace table. Israel still refuses to acknowledge the PLO except as a terrorist organization and would not go to Madrid if the PLO was included. The Palestinian delegates acquiesced.

Both sides have their strong and weak points. The Israelis feel they are surrounded by enemies, so their reactions (and often overreactions) are understandable. The Palestinians just want a home. Radicals on both sides push the two groups toward the brink of massive conflict.

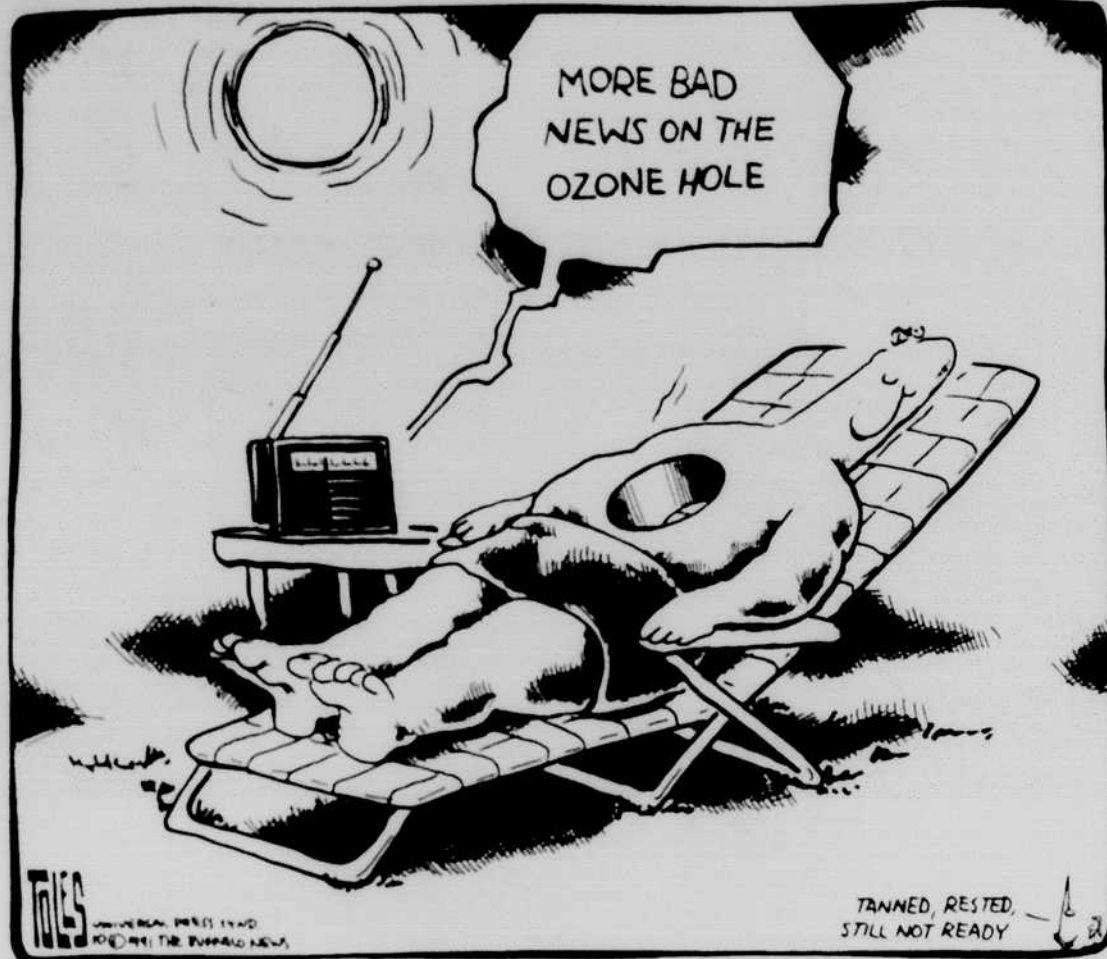
Even in the face of the peace talks, the conflict continues. Tuesday saw terrorist attacks in the West Bank and in Turkey. Such attacks will only resolve the will of the two sides, making the peace process more difficult.

The United States is behind the Madrid talks. Secretary of State James Baker made eight trips to the Middle East to set it up, and President Bush will make the opening remarks. The Gulf war has a lot to do with making the talks possible. The U.S. allied itself with many Arab nations, such as Syria and Saudi Arabia; and Israel, under intense pressure from the Bush administration, stayed out of the conflict. Had Israel retaliated to the Iraqi Scud missile attacks, the precarious balance of European-Arabian allies would have probably collapsed.

It's impossible to tell what the peace talks will bring. Most likely, the Bush administration, as well as the Palestinians and Israelis, is hoping a cordial, uneventful meeting will lead to further talks, where real progress can be made. That is the best that can be hoped for from Madrid.

Let's hope the radicals of both sides are ignored, and the rational Israelis and Palestinians can perform the much-needed role: that of peacemaker.

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LETTERS

Health care

To Michael McGee, who wrote to criticize Jason Moore's belief in health care for all (*ODE*, Oct. 14), regardless of ability to pay.

Your point of view demonstrates an acute lack of ability to empathize with your fellow human beings. You state that "health care is a commodity that is paid for by those who choose to make money and can afford it."

Do you really think all the poor people choose not to work? Single mothers, kids in the ghetto with no way out, college students, unemployed workers, you think are all "unwilling to earn" the right to health care? Give me a break.

Good health is the most important thing to most people, certainly more important than a \$300 billion dollar per annum military, tobacco subsidies, oil subsidies, etc. If our government would get its priorities straight, we would have plenty of money for health care.

The "wealthy who made modern medicine possible" need to wake up and realize what made them wealthy was the blood and sweat of the poor, and exploitation of the Earth.

Michael, take a look around you. Are those people? Do they have feelings? Think about it.

Jeff Heiman
International studies

Two things

To Michael McGee (*ODE*, Oct. 23), who wrote "(Health care) is not a right of nature by merely being born and by existing."

Do two things: 1. Look around 2. Think back.

If you look around, you will notice that a Rockefeller, Coors or Heinz gets automatic health care simply by being born with

that name. Unlike the rest of us, they need not earn this privilege, they simply inherit it.

Now go back to the beginning. When you were born, someone took your unbreathing blue body, made you breathe, and gave you nourishment and warmth, human to human.

Your new-born screams did not evidence "integrity and discipline," and certainly did not earn you the care which brought you out of an infant's helplessness. It was given you, based on need, simply because you were born.

People do not ever independently earn any of the privileges they are given, whether through finances or because of another's human decency. We live only through others we may or may not see. Left solely to an individual's means, the individual will die ... in a moment.

Aiden Bungum
Student

Men

Are you a man who wants to do something about the problem of rape and sexual harassment in our society and on campus? Would you like to meet and work with other men who share this concern? If so, Men Against Rape needs your support.

Men Against Rape is a group of pro-feminist, gay-affirmative, male-affirmative men working to end sexual and physical violence against women. We meet once a week to give each other support, discuss issues, and to plan our various educational activities. These meetings occur each Wednesday at 6:30 in the EMU (see the Wednesday *Emerald* for the exact place), or you can call us at 346-4306.

We need your help, and we hope to hear from you soon.

Bill Brozman
David Peterson
Co-directors

Headline

The titles for the letters in the Oct. 22 *ODE* ("Details, details..." and "Life sucks") were chosen poorly and in questionable journalistic style. The Letters column has traditionally been an area for diversified opinion and uncensored speech. While letters such as these may be amusing, it is not the staff's job to critique the authors, nor select these letters over less trivial ones simply for laughs. Please keep in mind that journalism claims to be objective.

Steve Ransom
Theater Arts

Fallacious

Regarding Pasquale Anolfo's thoughts in "Jump in" (*ODE*, Oct. 24), the discussions revolving around social issues show a lack of careful thought — in this case, some contradictions.

Anolfo suggests that we should emulate the natural world, and yet he espouses homosexuality, which is not represented therein. If people like Jon Wollander are to join the majority of the "larger world," why should they accept a viewpoint which essentially excludes majority belief?

Furthermore, Anolfo proposes the protection of individual opinion, but only if it isn't Wollander's point of view. This suggests that "truth" is subject to personal opinion, but also affirms that truth is absolute because someone's opinion is wrong.

I refer to Anolfo's letter only as an example of larger problems: fallacious reasoning, disregard for evidence or the nature of truth, and incompatible ideas.

Think about it: We cannot reject intolerance without being intolerant ourselves. Diversity can be extremely oppressive.

Andy Sauervein
Music