

EDITORIAL

Three strikes might guarantee cons life

One, two, three strikes, you're out of the old crime game: violent crime.

Clinton's State of the Union address last week presented (or represented) the plan to lock up three-time perpetrators of violent crimes for life, or in some cases give them the death sentence.

The plan is a good way to repress violent crime, but a few issues remain unresolved. For one, the policy is only useful on a state level. Only a tiny fraction of violent crimes are federal crimes, so a federal three-strikes policy will not have much of an effect. Even if the states follow Clinton's lead, however, the policy will be virtually unenforceable, due to the lack of available prison space. With the amount of violent crimes that are committed in this country, certainly there will be a large surplus of prisoners with nowhere to go.

Right now, prison bunks are at maximum capacity, and new prisons should appear on the agenda first. In order for the three-strikes plan to work, there will need to be a significant amount of prison space created. Prisons must be built in order to stand behind the plan.

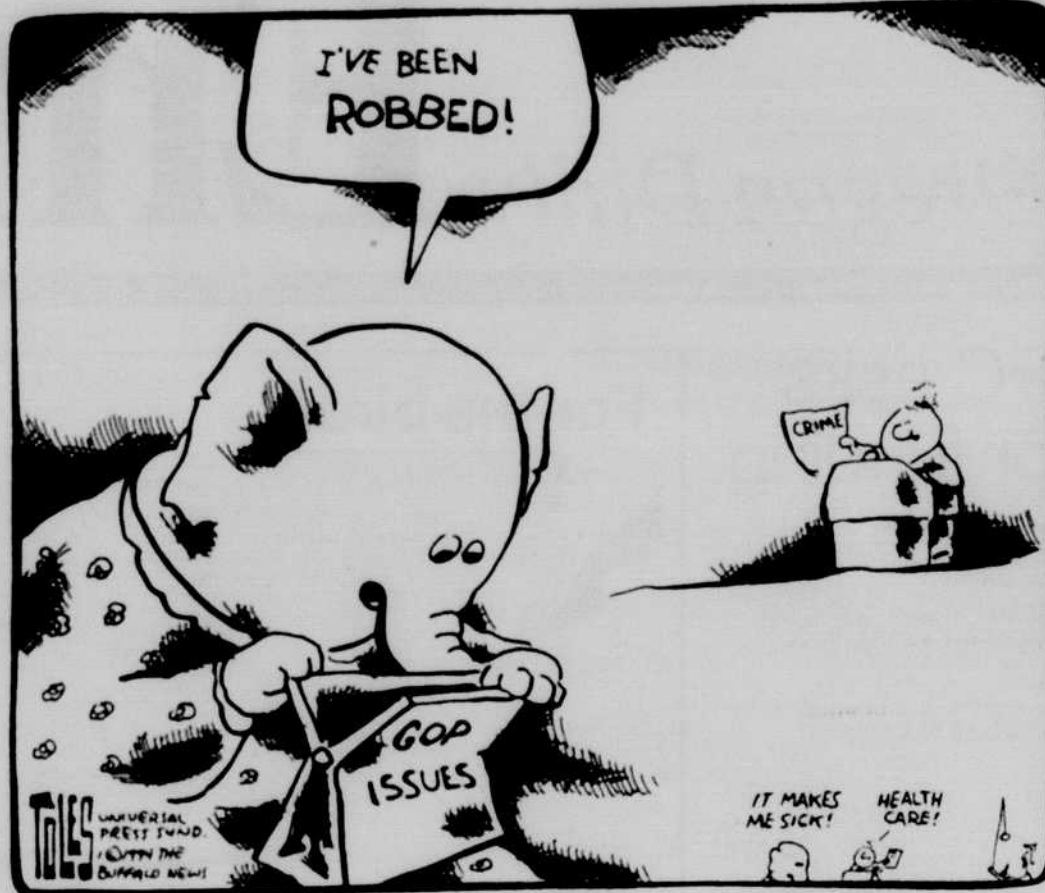
Criminals that are imprisoned for life probably pose very little threat after a given age. Occupying prison space with people that are simply growing old and turning gray, at the taxpayers expense, may not be such a wise use of money. It seems quite uncommon for an 80 or 90-year-old ex-convict to commit a violent crime. So why continue to keep them imprisoned?

While money is being spent on the old and imprisoned, to keep them imprisoned, there will still be a need for revenue to keep up the war on crime. With so much money tied up just in keeping old inmates out of society, it seems, less money will be available to combat the up-and-coming criminals, who will continue to pose a grave threat to public safety.

Certainly, even with a tough crime bill, violent crime will still be committed. Those that depart from the norm and commit crimes obviously do not intend to get caught. Most criminals are not rational enough to weigh the opportunity of jail time against a violent crime, let alone three violent crimes.

In the big picture, Congress probably won't support Clinton on this idea. But on the state level the idea is quite possible, and is actually in place in Washington state. Washington passed a three-strikes initiative that said it was time to stab crime in the back, and other states are following in its footsteps. Oregon, in fact, is in the front of the pack with signatures out to put a three-strike initiative on the ballot in November.

Mandatory sentences, furthermore, may pose a threat to the separation of powers in the U.S. government. While most people favor a three-strikes policy, they should be careful not to allow their passions to push punishments too far. They must try to prevent legislators and overzealous voters from infringing too greatly upon the independence of the judiciary. But a three-strikes policy isn't too much to ask for, and maybe its time has come.



LETTERS

Attacked

On April 1, 1993, I was violently attacked by a large man with wild hair. His cruel eyes were glazed over with a demonic gleam. He growled with bared teeth and pounced on me, with his chest pressed next to mine and his hands gripping my shoulders. He was violently shaking me, his face in my face. I was terrified! I was traumatized! I thought he was going to rape me! Slit my throat!

The attack took place in an outdoor art class conducted by George Kokis at the University. It turns out Kokis had instructed the student to attack me.

On April 16, I called the Office of Affirmative Action to report it. They told me there was nothing they could do. Oct. 12, I returned in person to report it to Affirmative Action. This time, they said I could have filed a formal complaint, but I was 12 days late.

That is just one example of many injustices I have experienced in reporting sexual harassment on campus. The administration believes the attack was educational, designed to create an adrenaline rush which would stimulate creativity.

Their opinion is an outstanding example of the logic of lunatics at work. Off campus, the attack I suffered is harassment, Class B, a misdemeanor, with possible jail time for the assailant. On campus, they call it education.

Tragically, I did not create art again until Jan. 15, 1994, the day I reluctantly abandoned my academic career goals and dropped out. I cannot justify jeopardizing my personal safety on a campus where faculty and administrators claim access to my body, and not just the right to touch my body, but attack it.

Devon Gray
Eugene

Pathetic reality

Asian-American discrimination? The implication is that when an "Asian-American" is discriminated against that an

"Asian" is somehow excluded from that discrimination. The fact is not that "Asian-Americans" are discriminated against but rather people with certain racial qualities are discriminated against.

I am a "white" male, and when I am with my Japanese girlfriend I notice the occasional condescending stare from the people of many races. She usually doesn't notice it. So perhaps it is just me. The point is that discrimination is a pathetic reality of life. It is not unique to any culture. It becomes more obvious in mixed race societies such as the United States, the former Yugoslavia or South Africa. But it also happens in seemingly homogeneous societies such as Japan, China or the United Kingdom.

It is unfortunate that in our desire to eliminate this discrimination we don't concentrate on legitimate education, but rather focus on such trivial labels as are assigned by the politically correct elite. I'm sure that we should not refer to an Israeli as an Asian-American. It seems to me that Native Americans are Apache, Navajo and so on, much like Europeans are Russian, French, German and so on, and Asians are Japanese, Indian, Russian, Pakistani and so on.

Perhaps we Americans should just trace our ancestry back to our roots and use that as a description. Since I am partially French, Swedish, Irish, English, Dutch and Italian, that might be difficult. Besides, maybe we are all related to Richard Leakey's Lucy or the ever present Eve.

The point of all this is that discrimination is going to occur even when we try to do silly things that might end discrimination. I remember when I was in Colombia, South America,

with about 30 other teenagers. Some local kids had thrown stones at us and called us "gringos." It bothered me then, but at some point I just had to say, what the heck, go on, live with it and swear that I would never behave that way. Perhaps one day our society will grow up and be able to treat people equally without regard for meaningless labels, physical appearance or social orientation.

Lawrence A. Martin
Architecture

Disturbing

In response to the anti-Israeli opinions that were expressed in Mr. Fooladi's Jan. 26 letter about the Baha'i faith (ODE), I would like to take the opportunity to correct his inaccuracies and stress the importance of supporting Israel.

Mr. Fooladi maintains that the Baha'i have "collaborated with...the state of Israel," and proves this by pointing out that "the Baha'i headquarters are in Haifa." Though it is true that the Baha'i are based in Haifa, he fails to mention that this station predates the formation of the state of Israel.

What is disturbing about Mr. Fooladi's accusations is that he implies that connections with Israel should be seen as detrimental or are in some way slanderous to those involved. This is an inaccurate depiction.

It is important to realize that one does not have to agree with all of the Israeli government's policies to be in support of the nation of Israel. Anti-Israeli sentiments should not be interchanged with criticisms of the Israeli government.

Zach Hochstadt
Student Director

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