

Let freedom ring: end imperialism

For over 200 years now, we've celebrated a rag-tag group of outlaws who started a revolution in the name of self governance.

We've tagged that day, yesterday, Independence Day and worship it yearly with parades and barbecues, family get-togethers and firecrackers.

But since becoming a world power ourselves, we've come full circle and have taken the role of oppressor instead of oppressed.

Vietnam is a good case-in-point.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower recognized French rule over Indo-China and ignored Ho Chi Minh's plea for U.S. assistance in creating a Vietnam independent of French rule.

A Geneva Conference of world powers later cut the country in half, with Ho taking the north and cementing his ties with the Communists, and France backing the South.

As French forces fell in the ensuing war, the U.S. rushed to South Vietnam's aid.

By the late 1960s, the U.S. was carpet bombing much of Vietnam. By the end of the war, the U.S. defoliated over 14 percent of South Vietnam's forests.

The effects of that war can still be felt today. The Dioxin-based Agent Orange still soaks the land and kills many through birth defects. The hundreds of bombs alive in Vietnamese fields still maim countless civilians each year.

In Cambodia, that country's forces were weakened so badly by secret U.S. attacks that the Khmer Rouge gained control of the country in 1975 and slaughtered one million of its own people. Yet, the U.S. still backs its leader, Pol Pot.

Cambodia still suffers today. The people of Phnom Penh run back to the countryside at night and intellectuals across the country still don't wear glasses for fear of death.

In all, America's Southeast Asian war was utterly devastating, killing millions for years. The Vietnamese economy only saw the light of day in 1989, when international trade sanctions allowed multinational companies to do business there. Cambodia has yet to see any light at all.

All this could have been avoided had Eisenhower recognized Vietnamese sovereignty and not French control; Ho Chi Minh wouldn't have turned to the Communists for support and true peace could have been made.

In reflecting on this year's fourth, we should again reach back to the words of our forefathers and realize how far we've strayed.

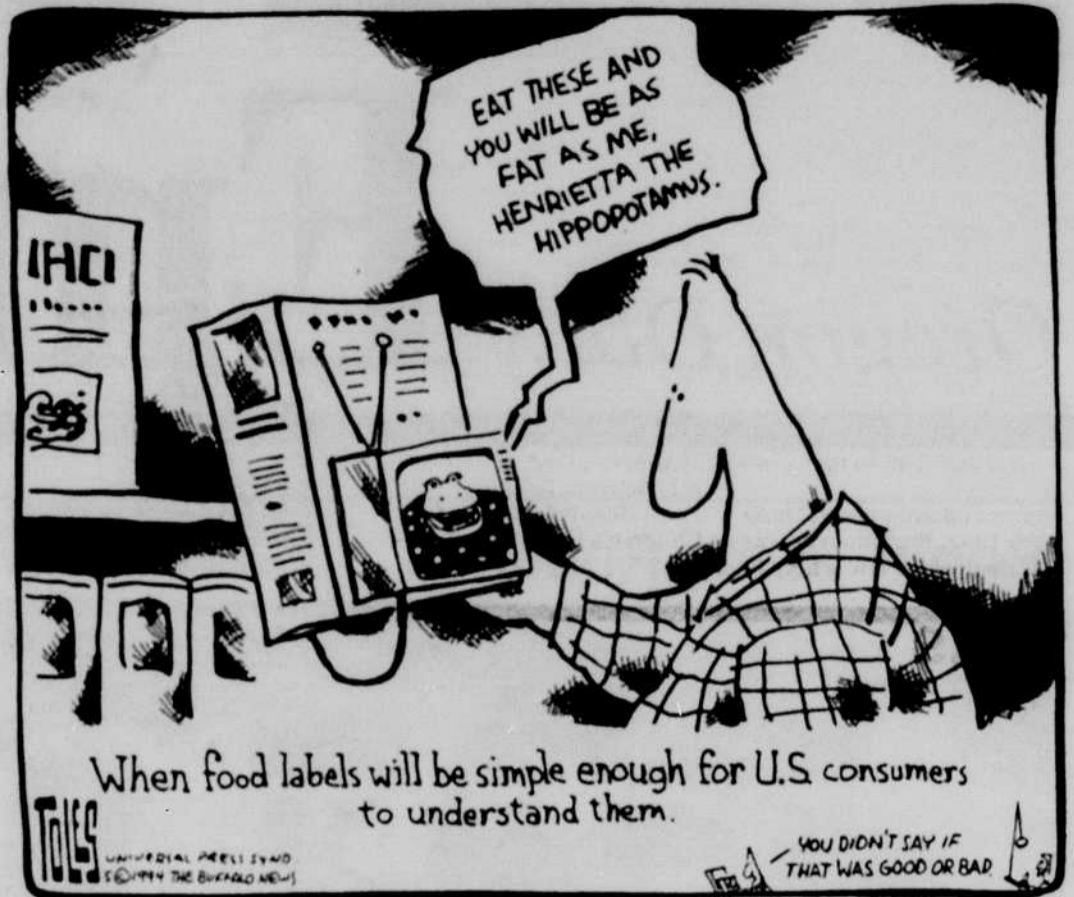
The unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has strings attached in its modern version. Those rights, still "under God", are quantified by national boundaries or the political interests of the U.S.

As the world's military superpower, we need to live by our ideals because without them, we will succumb to Britain's disease of the 1700s and ignore the rights of even our own people.

Putting our ideals into practice can happen this year. Vietnam is up for reconsideration of its trading privileges with the U.S. That economic ban should be lifted, and we should let those people finally live in peace after well over 50 years of struggle.

To do so would represent not only a reconciliation with Vietnam but also with ourselves.

It would finally allow us to match our words with our deeds.



OPINION

Too much junk TV can make you sick

Gee, I'm so excited to be a budding journalist. I can't wait to hide outside of celebrities' homes and hunt through their garbage for clues into their sordid, private lives.

And it looks like the minor degree I will obtain in Theatre Arts — the one I thought would be completely useless yet fun — will come in handy. Look at any magazine. Watch any TV news program. Infotainment is the name o' the game.

So what, say you, the intelligent reader. (Uh-oh, I'm not a very good future journalist, am I, assuming that you are intelligent.) It's not news to me (pun intended) that my "information" is loaded with junk food for the mind. Everyone in the country, including those junky news programs, is talking about the shotgun marriage between news and drama.

Well, I'm sick of it. Sick of not knowing what a reader wants. Sick of the one extreme that thinks news is a bunch of gray-ing men in gray suits stringing way too many big words together for the American public to care. Sick of the other extreme that thinks that news is Dan Rather pretending to be concerned about O.J. Simpson's "suicide notes." Sick of being sucked in and misled by those horrid TV movies that present the "truth" so convincingly that "criminals" are convicted without a trial and "heroes" are made overnight.

I am not convinced that this is what you want. Want to know why? Because I believe that you are smart. You crave information the way your body craves nutritious food. But when you go to the EMU for a study-snack break, all that's offered for you are high-fat crap foods. And when you turn on the TV or pick up most publications, all that's offered is a little bit of mind nutrition cloaked in a lot of junk.

And who can blame the intelligent reader for liking junk? We are all guilty of swallowing it. Goddess knows I've been guilty of feeding it to you. If we are



LIA SALICCIA

offered a carrot vs. a cookie, how many of us would take the carrot? Even if the cookie makes us feel like we swallowed a lard ball an hour later, whereas the carrot gives us energy, we might still opt for the instant gratification that a cookie provides.

Get to the point, Lia. The point: the media thinks that you are dumb. The media thinks that this is what they need to do to make money. They don't think about the fact that you lead a busy life, make important decisions every day, and are swallowing their crap because you need a few laughs, some entertainment. They think you swallow their crap because you are dumb and profitable. They think that the "American public" are a bunch of Budweiser-swalling slobes that do nothing but sit on the couch and consume their b.s. disguised as "news."

There's nothing wrong with craving entertainment. Our cave-dwelling ancestors did, and created rituals and cave-drawings to feed that need. The rituals and drawings had meaning which reflected the meaning in their daily lives. Both our TV docudramas and news reports derived from invasions of private lives have meaning too, but that is what we are struggling to find.

It angers me when journalists don't think about those meanings. When they are afraid to speak out against the blurred lines between news and junk, between nutrition and crap; when they deny the entertainment element is there; when they say that this is what you, the intelligent reader, wants; when they say they have to run 25 million stories on Lorena Bobbitt and the angle at which

she chopped off John's...member...because if they don't, the competition will.

I don't suggest we go back to boring news that people don't understand or care about. Of course dramatic elements will make the news hit home with a bigger punch. But how about some honesty? How about calling it what it is? How about renaming *Hard Copy*? How about coming clean and telling the public about those journalistic biases that always slip into stories and always will? (The biases are useful, they bring meaning to the story, but are harmful if the reader doesn't realize they are there.)

Readers, it's time to stand up (if you are already standing, then get on the soap box) and tell the media what you want. Where you want the news, and where you want the entertainment and how you want the hybrids labeled. Do you really want *Time* magazine, something you should be able to trust, screwing around with O.J. Simpson's picture to make him look blacker? Are you going to swallow their pitiful excuse that it was "a work of art" designed to make Simpson look more "sinister"? (Can you say racist?)

Everybody likes a cookie once in a while. They remind us of the proverbial comfort Mom gives. But nobody wants to die of a heart attack because they have been eating cookies made with globs of lard. We should be able to trust cookies. But they are often made of the stuff that clogs your arteries and gives you cellulite. We should be able to trust the news. But as *Time* and countless others have proved, "news" is often made of junk that clogs your thinking and puts fat on your brain. But you, intelligent one, have always got the choice of what you put into your mouth.

What are you going to swallow?

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