

Condom warnings falling on deaf ears

In the past 15 years we have witnessed many life-altering events, the fall of communism, the crash of the Challenger space shuttle, the San Francisco earthquake, and the Ducks' Rosebowl berth. All these things have had an impact on our global consciousness and in doing so have in some small way shaped the society we now live in. But there is one thing that we have born witness to that has not had as profound an effect on our lives as it should have — the AIDS epidemic.

There are more than 1 million people with AIDS in the United States. Not gay men, people. People who are married, people who are single, people who are black, people who are white, people with children and children themselves are infected. This disease does not discriminate.

Even you, sitting in the there in the EMU drinking that stale coffee, are at risk.

I know you've heard it all before, and yes you believed that safe sex is important. But do you really use a condom every time you have sex, even with a "faithful" partner? The truth of the matter is you can't be with that person every minute of every day, and you can never, ever, be sure that you are safe.

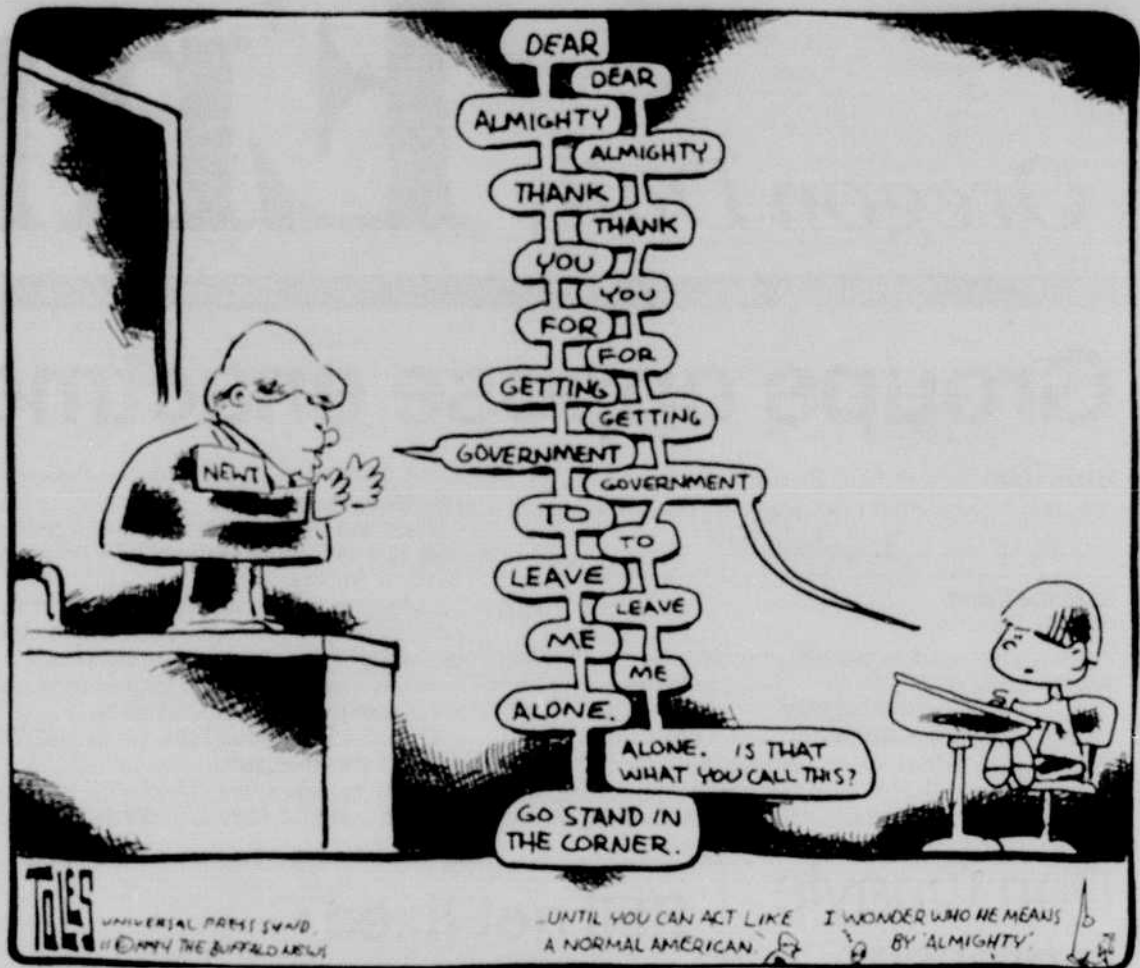
The reality is brutal — a lifetime of latex.

I was talking to a friend yesterday and she and I decided the situation can be likened to wearing seat belts. For a long time in this country seat belts were just not the way to go. They were bulky and uncomfortable and you really didn't get the same sensation that one did when riding without. Now, we are wiser. We put our seat belts on automatically. We do it because we know that that barrier may save our lives. Sex with a condom should be no different. You must wear them, in this day and age there are just no other alternatives.

The difference between AIDS and car accidents is that you will see the Mack truck before it hit you. You don't know what AIDS looks like. It comes in every human shape and size. So, while you're enjoying yourself for that 3 seconds or 45 minutes you won't know that your body has been invaded. You will pay for that physical pleasure with your life.

We have to just accept condom usage as the norm. Television and movies must reflect this, since they are where many of us get our romantic ideals. Even with it, there is risk, but it is substantially less.

Tomorrow is World AIDS Day, and there will be many speeches from community leaders and politicians will give lots of flowery speeches about suffering. Go and watch and listen, glean all that you can. We hope when the day is over you have gotten the message. We are in the throes of a terrible epidemic, one we have the power to prevent. Empower yourself, if you are going to have sex, any kind of sex, protect yourself.



OPINION

Journalism vicious, irrational

In November 17th's *Emerald*, a column of mine ("Tedness" key to Kennedy win") was printed where something happened for which I must apologize. In contrast to the intelligent analysis that I aspire towards, the piece in question was mean, reactionary and basically against the principles of journalism in which I firmly believe. I am sorry if my words, those which *without basis* where hurtful, offended the sensibilities of any readers.

Since I fell into the trap myself, I would like to discuss the current state of attack journalism, as well as the attack politics which have followed. Both will have grave effects upon our society if they are not curbed immediately.

Journalism is obviously at its lowest point in modern history. Shows such as *Hard Copy* and publications such as *USA Today* have brought news to its basest levels. However, this lowest common denominator reporting is not the most pressing of journalism's problems.

That would be the viciousness and irrationality which is prevalent in the current news. We should look at the greatest innovator of this medium, Rush Limbaugh. In the midst of the Bush presidency, conservatism was at a troubling crossroads, stuck between the President's lack of a platform, a hostile takeover from the Christian Right and a confluence of other negative factors.

Rather than starting the necessary revolution using the words of one or some of today's great conservative thinkers, such as George F. Will, Robert Novak or William Safire, intelligence such as theirs was forsaken for audacity.

While Will and his counterparts represent the analytical and studious side of the rightist population, Limbaugh is their reactionary evil side. His fiery and stringy tirades, which are largely built upon unfounded "facts," fueled the fire which led to the GOP's usurpation of Congress a



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

few weeks ago.

Quite obviously, he has been extremely effective. Yet he has raised the stakes for all opinion journalists in a manner which should not go unnoticed. In this new Limbaugh era, prudence has been replaced by pugnacity, and even more frighteningly, edification by vilification. Where in another time a quick and biting wit was sufficient alongside the facts, the only current means of selling an opinion is through utter demolition of an opinion journalist's opponent.

This is not only a problem for the right. On the left, the recent debate over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has been a perfect example. Liberal opponents of GATT have used Limbaugh-like tactics in order to fight the agreements, especially in the bending numbers category.

Also, magazines such as *Mother Jones* use ill-constructed arguments and reactionary rhetoric in the same fashion as their right-wing opponents in order to push the agenda of the PC left. Instead of allowing the great liberal writers of our day, such as Michael Kinsley, David Broder and Russel Baker to drive the left into the future, the radicals are holding them back in the dark and murky bogs of socialism in health care, isolationism in trade policy, and worst of all, fascism in the multicultural debate.

The current situation in our political system is quite similar. We could look at literally hundreds of examples, but it would be much simpler to simply look at the new leadership of the House. The recently retired Robert Michel (R-Illinois), the for-

mer House Minority Leader, has been replaced by Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia). This is an immense de-evolution. The bipartisan collegiality of Michel, which was successful on so many occasions, has been replaced by the malicious obstructionism of Gingrich.

Although the new Washington throws out numbers and sound bites which may sound impressive, we must look towards what true substantive policy lies ahead for America. To me, I see none.

We have heard tons about the sweeping change which we are about to see, but let's look closer.

Cutting foreign aid. You know, all of that money we send overseas? How about the facts: foreign aid accounts for one-half of one percent of the budget. So if we totally cut all programs, the savings would still be minimal.

How about welfare? Don't we just dump tons of tax dollars into the laps of greedy poor people? The facts again: welfare accounts for three percent of the budget, a tiny portion, especially compared to the monstrous budget of defense.

Term limits? Yeah right, this was the GOP's big joke on the voters. Dick Army, the new House Majority leader has backed away from the idea, and his party will likely follow. There goes the contract.

School Prayer? If you think that dumping the Constitution and instituting a civic religion will solve any of this country's problems, I've got a bridge to sell you, it's right on Ferry Street.

The new Washington sounds like it is going to lead this country to a different future, but it really amounts to very little.

Its just like the new journalism. At first read, it seems to make a point.

Simply take a closer look. If someone must be vicious to push their point, they probably don't really have one.

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Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159 EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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