

Freemen keep America, FBI trapped in standoff

■ OUR OPINION: Action by the FBI is overdue in settling Freemen fiasco

After more than 60 days, the standoff between the Freemen of Montana and the FBI has become a boring and ridiculous example of a weird situation turned pathetic.

While the Freemen may no doubt believe the whole country is watching them closely, that belief couldn't be further from the truth. They're old news.

There's basketball, baseball and *Home Improvement* reruns to watch. Freemen standoff? Those guys are still holed up in Montana? Freemen Shmeemen. Sheesh.

Why don't they just give in and give it up? Let go of it? They've proven their point — above and beyond the call of absurdity — and now it's time to go back to being good, old-fashioned, law-abiding, over-taxed, over-worked, underpaid and obedient citizens like the rest of us. After all, it beats anarchy any day.

The rest of Montana appears to be fed up with the whole scenario, and many citizens have protested to get the FBI off its negotiating rear-end and after the Freemen. In essence, Montana is doing everything it can to sic a reluctant FBI watchdog on the bad boy Freemen.

According to one regional paper, a group of local Montana ranchers were planning to take on the Freemen themselves weeks before the FBI even arrived.

What a sight downtown Jordan, Mont., must be — people marching, protesting and shouting because the

FBI isn't interfering enough!

"Dang it all! C'mon you buncha' lily-livered, yellow-bellied Washington bureaucrat sissies! Grab your assault rifles, jump in your green tank and go bust some Freemen butt! Shoot 'em with tear gas and play some of them psychological games on 'em. You all better mount up and head out real quick-like or we're gonna take matters in our own hands!"

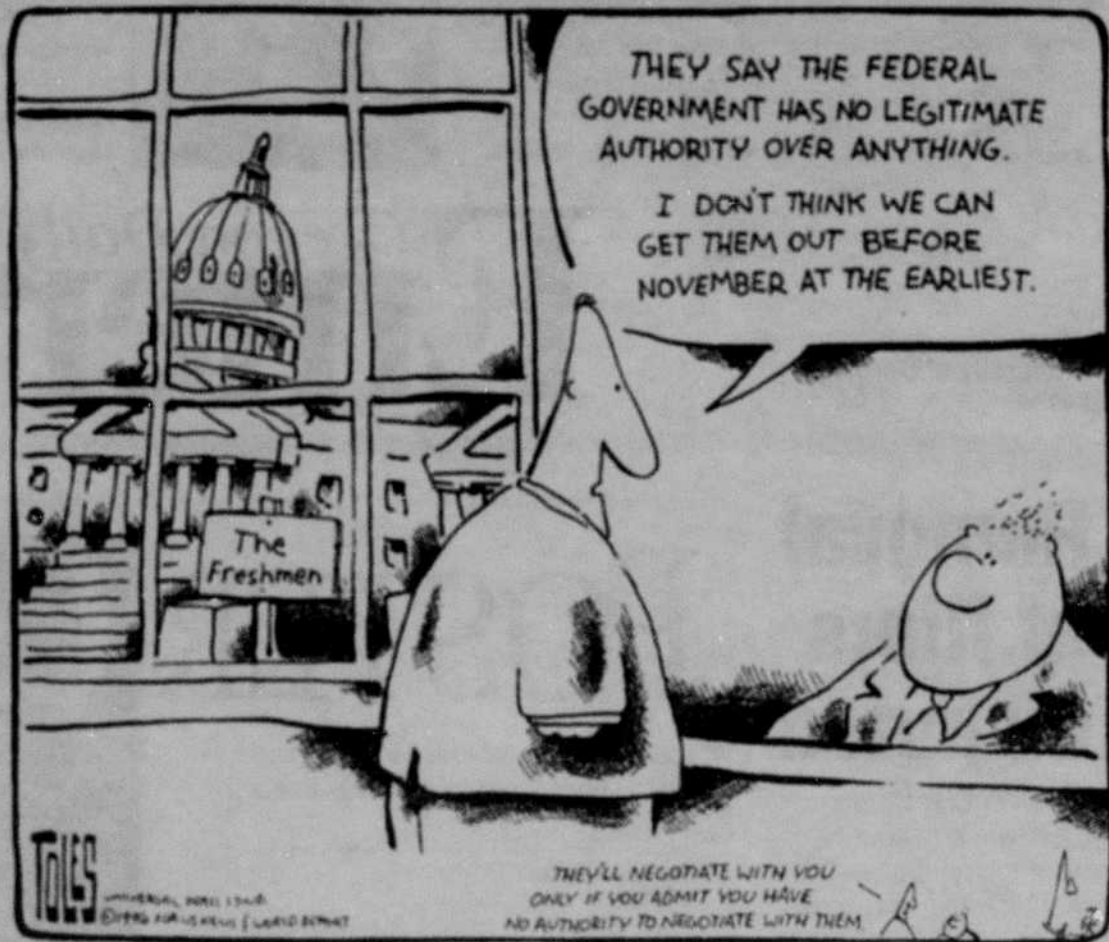
Montana farmers have crops to plant and the 100 FBI agents are in their way.

It's nothing new that the FBI are clear over on the opposite side of the aggressive policy that encouraged the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (under the fumbling management of Attorney General Janet Reno) to roar into David Koresh's Waco, Texas, compound with a 5-ton tank.

With all the time it's taking, the FBI could be rewriting the book on operational guidelines while agents sit around watching the Freemen who sit around watching themselves and the FBI.

The bottom line is that the FBI needs to settle this fiasco very soon. How hard would it be for the agency to cut all power (as is currently being considered) to the Freemen's cabin and to tell the Freemen exactly what is happening, and why it is happening? That way, there are no surprises, no "final stand" John Wayne heroics, no martyrs and no Armageddon (though this is hardly a religious struggle).

The alternative is that the Freemen are allowed to continue their tantrum and make a mockery of justice.



Strippers and the self: Where's the humanity?

All right Keith, you've got to come with us this time," my buddy said. "Strip-clubs are great. Those chicks will do anything for a couple bucks."

This delightful advice was given to me by a fiend, uh, I mean "friend," last weekend. As had happened many times before, I was in a group of guys who, after several hours of alcohol consumption, decided it was time to frequent a naughty nudie club.

Needless to say, my refusal to "go with the flow" was met with some mild antipathy. Well, actually the comments were more like "What the fuck are you, a fag?" and "Don't worry Keith, we won't tell God."

Ha, ha, ha. My friends are so darn clever sometimes.

Being the lone dissenter on this topic, I had to explain that my reluctance to objectify women was not a value unique to homosexuals or religious zealots.

In fact, believe it or not guys, Catholics and gays aren't the only people who think that there is something a tad bit wrong with making a naked woman crawl on all fours and take dollar bills from your hand with her teeth.

I've been arguing this point with friends for years to little avail. The responses I get are the usual ones about women "choosing" to strip, saying they make good money and that nobody is getting hurt.

What I find most intriguing about my friends' propensity to drool on naked dancers is not so much the sexual dementia manifested in their spilt saliva. What amazes me is their utter inability to consider for a moment what their staring does to the subjects of their gaze. They refuse to think about how it would feel to be that lone, naked woman dancing in a smoke-filled bar of howling, drunken men.

I guess it makes sense for the gawkers to remain blinded to the dancer's condition; any consideration of her emotional state would yield the painful realization that their pleasure is derived at the extreme expense of another human being.

Sadly, this kind of obsession with self-indulgence that lacks any sense of moral obligation is not isolated to my friends and their erotic pathologies. After four years at the University, I have come to the brilliant conclusion that students are primarily concerned with enhancing their own pleasures. All other considerations take a back seat to these priorities. Their actions are governed by the illness of insatiability.

Indeed, there is a profound college-aged fascination with the self.

OPINION



Keith Cunningham

After four years at the University, I have come to the brilliant conclusion that students are primarily concerned with enhancing their own pleasures.

This obsession takes many forms. I have been with men so hung up with eying women, it's sickening.

They have been conditioned in the language of macho bravado: "I'll take that one to head-board heaven. I'd go balls-deep in that one." Their words lack conscience; their staring is devoid of cognizance to their action's impacts.

Other students engage the self by posting fences of fear in their psyche. So bent on anger, they resort to terms like "street rat" and "bum" to demonize the homeless.

I've walked with friends who, after being aggressively panhandled, have said, "That's the kind of shit that makes me want to beat those people over the head."

We say "white trash" with the same frequency that our parents and grandparents' generations used terms like "nigger." We remain wrapped in fright, oblivious to all others within our "civil" society.

One would hope that a liberal university would promote "consideration of fellow human beings." Yet many students do not see this as a valid collegiate goal; the University is here to prepare us for the "real world," and God knows lessons of humanistic concerns won't be useful there.

These pre-wealth majors see college as some sort of monetary incubator. For them, the University serves as a tool to increase the personal consumption of the self.

No, there is nothing necessarily wrong with being rich. It is only when we champion our own accumulation above all other causes that our social obligation is neglected.

Less than 1 percent of the world's population possesses a college degree. If that does not connote a moral responsibility to do more than simply serve ourselves, I don't know what does.

We have been taught to privilege the individual and not the society. Philanthropy and benevolence are viewed as archaic wastes of time. The value of altruism has been marginalized.

In our culture, self-indulgence is the duty and pleasure is the obligation.

There must be more important goals.

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