

PERSPECTIVES

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Uncle Sam cries hypocrisy



CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

A few weeks ago, the United States ended up the victim of intense politicking in the United Nations. After fielding three candidates against us, Europe helped get us removed from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. This was an embarrassing defeat for the new administration of President Bush, as it gives us one less forum to talk about the abuses of members still on the commission.

I can imagine Castro and Jiang giving each other high-fives as the vote was announced. For them, there couldn't have been a better outcome. The United States was, for lack of a better term, the thorn in their side. For the last few years, our representative on the commission has submitted resolutions condemning Cuba, China and Sudan for human rights abuses. We have spoken strongly through resolutions on Tibet, the Falun Gong and our own citizens being detained in Chinese prisons right now, as well as Cuba's treatment of those with AIDS and the monstrous abuses going on inside Sudanese police "ghost houses." These have been understandably embarrassing to the countries in question.

Now, we had better ready ourselves for some payback. China, Cuba and Sudan, all three nations who are also on the commission, and all three who have been called out for their human rights abuses by the United States, are probably right now plotting their revenge through a resolution of their own. No doubt, they will try to paint a grim picture of the U.S. vis-à-vis human rights. They might try to point at our penal system (not that theirs are much better), which incarcerates a large number of people on drug crimes. Civilized China, on the other hand, just executes them. It would also probably include, as a cynical measure, a reference to our use of capital punishment. That, of course, is meant to get continental Europe on their side, as most of Europe has abolished the death penalty. Never mind that the three countries in question use capital punishment themselves.

At least we don't forcibly sterilize women to prevent them from having children, or torture people in police custody, or crack down on peaceful religious groups who just happen to express displeasure with the government, as in China. At least we don't throw people with AIDS into concentration camps like the Cubans. Our police don't haul dissidents to police safe houses where they can torture them nonstop until they



Bryan Dixon Emerald

confess, as in Sudan. Flogging, amputation and crucifixion are not acceptable punishments here, the way they are Sudan.

Let me also say, however, I don't believe our own rhetoric of being the "only nation willing to go to bat for human rights, anytime, anywhere." Where exactly were we when in Rwanda, the Tutsis were slaughtering the Hutu? Nary a peep was heard out of the government on this issue. Why haven't we pressured our drug manufacturers to lower prices to cost or below on drugs to fight HIV everywhere, obviously a human rights question? It was only when South Africa decided to enact some sort of legal sanction that the companies responded. Exactly what did we do when stu-

dents were being gunned down in Tiananmen Square? Now, twelve years later, and with absolutely no apology from the Politburo's lips, we have instituted permanent normal trade relations with China.

Further, we did put our own foot in our mouth by denying our U.N. dues after the vote. It makes us look like a spoiled brat, bawling and throwing a tantrum because we couldn't get our way. Apparently only President Bush was prescient enough to realize this — he actually tried to get the Senate to go ahead and pay the dues anyway. Granted, we finally ended another similar tantrum that we threw over UNESCO, which we apparently found to have "an anti-American bent" back

in 1984, by rejoining the educational organization in the same breath as withholding our dues. Those dues do go to providing help to those in dire need through U.N. programs, such as the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization.

By pouting and withholding our money, we are harming human rights at the same time we are complaining that our voice has been effectively silenced on the matter.

Pat Payne is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at Macross_SD@hotmail.com.

Letters to the editor

Dievendorf is strange counterpart to Runge

Since my retirement from the University, my tangible contact with student activities has been as a volunteer with the Cultural Forum. Though I do not know the circumstances surrounding the departure of Linda Dievendorf from her Cultural Forum supervisory position, I have interacted with Dievendorf enough to recognize her positive influence on student-University relations.

It seems ironic that the forced departure of Jody Runge as women's basketball coach, with a "severance" arrangement of \$500,000, ostensibly is because students complained about her personal interaction with them.

By contrast, Linda departs without cere-

mony nor significant compensation, even though she has virtually unanimous support from students who object to the University's role in her leaving.

George Beres
Eugene

A 'coon's age' continues on

Regarding "coon's age," let's examine some phrases from James Patterson's book, "1st to Die."

From page 7, "There might be a luckier man somewhere on the planet, David Brandt thought as he wrapped his arms around Melanie, his new bride. Somewhere in Yemen — some Allah-praising farmer with a second goat. But certainly not in all of San Francisco."

He's sensitive to Arabs who might have different values. Of what use is a decadent American wife? He's better off with a second

goat. If I knew an Arab bachelor in America, exercising self-control in a land of free women, I'd insult him more by asking, "How's the wife and kids?" than "How's your camel?" At any rate, the camel is an animal, just as a coon is sometimes a raccoon.

From page 45, "I didn't like leaving my partner behind, dumb-ass wisecracks and all."

A teller of dumb-ass jokes. That's not very flattering. Neither is calling an African-American a coon. But this is a different usage than the earlier one; *owning* an ass is different from being one.

From page 72, "This is not like popping aspirin for a headache. I'm afraid we're in this for the long haul."

The long haul refers to a duration of time. Sure, an ass is used to haul loads a long way, but that doesn't mean the good doctor thinks

his patient is an ass, only that it could take a coon's age to effect a cure.

Earl Gosnell
Eugene

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