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COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, October 17, 2001

Editorial Our biggest fear is the unknown

News outlets have been bombarding viewers in the past few days with word of anthrax outbreaks in both Florida and New York City. One man in Florida has died, two others tested positive for the bacteria, and now a 7-month-old baby of an ABC News worker has anthrax. Suspicious letters to Tom Brokaw of NBC News and the office of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., in Washington, D.C., have also been laced with anthrax. All the while, our trusty American media outlets and government officials are reporting that these outbreaks are isolated incidents and that there is nothing to worry about.

They are partially right. The issue of bioterrorism has been prevalent for more than a decade. Biological warfare is very serious and real. However, a few isolated incidents on the East Coast are not cause for panic, chaos or any encroachment on our freedom.

It is fairly unlikely that terrorists are going to use biochemical weapons to attack Eugeneans, and the recent increase in calls to the Eugene Police Department to check out "suspicious white powder" are largely due to people overreacting. The incidents are causing more fear than is warranted, especially when one realizes that anthrax is difficult to create in a transmittable form, and that it is not contagious.

At the same time, we need to do a better job of educating the public about biochemical weapons. Our biggest fear is often the unknown, and until people know the facts about possible biochemical weapons and the dangers they pose, we will continue to have a panicked populace. The government and the national media need to step up their efforts to inform the public about these dangers.

As a country, we are responding to these anthrax outbreaks in exactly the manner the attackers intended: with fear. But we should not let our fear dictate how we go about our everyday lives — we should not avoid opening mail or going to the post office, for example. And most importantly, we should not allow security measures to compromise our civil liberties. After all, freedom is what we are supposedly fighting for in Afghanistan — we shouldn't sacrifice it at home.

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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Solution to terrorism is industrialization

GUEST COMMENTARY

Bret
 Jacobson

Anti-war/anti-sweatshop/greens now face a terrible conundrum. On the one hand, they want an end to the violence in Afghanistan as a result of the terrorist attacks originating from that region, while on the other hand they normally advocate against the very cure most likely to stabilize the region once America ceases its military action and the Taliban ceases to rule. They now must choose peace over all other ideologies.

The best method for insuring long term stability in the region which breeds terrorism is improving the economy of Afghanistan, as well as that of the entire Arab world. It is quite obvious that an exacerbating factor to Islamic fundamental-

ism is the abject poverty that has reigned for years in a region torn by war and lacking the natural resources to sustain themselves without becoming industrialized.

This industrialization, without which Afghanistan will not know prosperity and we will not know security, will necessitate a period of factory production — which will, in turn, necessitate factory-style working conditions and increased pollution associated with industrialization.

It is quite clear for the individual in the mainstream of American opinion — those that support reasonable strikes against those responsible for attacking our homeland — that the conditions workers will face in the new version of Afghanistan will actually be an improvement over the current lot in life for many there and that improving technology will insure that the increased emissions of greenhouse gasses will be tempered over time with more modern technology.

Obviously the tendency by leftist ide-

ologically-driven groups — those that make the loudest noise on America's left-leaning academy — will want the government to stop the strikes, begin massive handouts and totally alter our foreign policy. That will not do, so these groups must come to a difficult resignation. They will have to put their own security in the hands of corporations that will invest in, and reap the rewards of, industrializing Afghanistan and any other nation that will have its current regime toppled if it continues supporting terrorists.

Leftists, you now must choose between lasting domestic security versus squabbling for your normal political favorite targets. For the rest of us, the decision should be clear. For our long-term security, after destroying terrorist networks we must help industrialize countries that currently support terrorism.

Bret Jacobson is a senior business major and publisher of the Oregon Commentator.

Letters to the editor

University does have funds for parking structure

Although the solution to the parking problem presented by the editorial on Wednesday is feasible, it is not practical for the understated number of people who live further than two miles away. The majority of people who live close to campus either move here every fall, or have moved here at one point, and it wasn't using a bike.

Reality says that most people won't give up a car in the dead of winter, even to ride the bus. I wonder how many times I've ridden the bus and had to sit next to some person who hadn't bathed for weeks and was also carrying the bug I would suffer from for the next several weeks.

Additionally, I used to regularly ride my bike the five miles, often through a torrential downpour. Why would I ever want to drive a warm, dry, germ-free car?

Regarding the placement and funding of a parking structure: There is a big University parking lot right across the street from PLC that is an ideal spot. And how many tens of millions of dollars does the University spend on athletic facilities that us "regular" students aren't even allowed access

to? There's no shortage of cash. If the University was the least bit practical with their money, the building of a parking structure would have been implemented years ago.

You've got to fight ... for your right ... to parking.

Tyson Kidder
 senior
 general science

Don't condemn what you haven't tried

Today's editorial ("There's no hope with dope," ODE, 10/15) was an example of sophomoric reductionism. It's just not that simple. There are many highly motivated, successful people who "Puff the Magic Dragon"; you might be surprised. From the tone of the article, it was apparent that the author herself had not tried marijuana. Critiquing something that you have never personally experienced, especially in a public forum, can lead down a dangerous road.

Joel Wilts-Morrison
 junior
 environmental science

Hate causes war

The Taliban is to Islam what the KKK was (is) to Christianity. This is a profound and accurate analogy. For more

than 100 years, the Klan terrorized mostly black Americans of the South. If Americans would pick up a book on the history of the Klansman and their so-called Christian beliefs, one might better understand what terrorism and bin Laden are all about — hate.

Readers may question why I bring this up at a time like this, when we're all striving to be united as one. It seems that America is sometimes in a history-free zone, where history does not matter. But alas, history has brought us where we are today, and there is no turning back. We are possibly on the verge of the last war, a Holy War, World War III. And all because of hate. Maybe we need to look inside ourselves and see how much hate is in our own hearts and minds, for our fellow Americans as well as for people all over the world.

I hope this letter doesn't provoke anyone out there to send me hate mail. I'm not full of hate but hope, hope that this country comes out of this united and whole, a better nation. Peace and love my fellow Americans; finally and perhaps forever, we are all in this together.

Pamela A. Hairston
 Washington, D.C.