

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Advertising revenue should not decide news

(U-WIRE) LOS ANGELES — Ted Koppel's hair may not be as funny as David Letterman's gap, but the host of ABC's "Nightline" has provided a respectable, intelligent news outlet for more than two decades.

It is deplorable that ABC is considering bumping "Nightline" in favor of Letterman's "Late Show."

Society has already taken a turn for the worse when it comes to favoring entertainment over news. ABC was the last bastion for late-night news junkies, a refuge from repetitive, looped CNN stories and the pot-shot humor of Jay Leno, Letterman and reality dating shows.

In Los Angeles, "Nightline" was an outlet that viewers could turn to after weathering the fluff that passes for local news. A fire could destroy downtown but here stations lead with a Robert Downey Jr. drug arrest.

Industry analysts point out that "Nightline," which debuted as a special show during the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, has watched its audience erode because of cable options.

But what it boils down to is money. Advertisers can't hock beer and video games to an audience that is considered older and less lucrative. ABC can charge much more to advertisers for Letterman's "Top Ten" than for a serious analysis of current world events.

That is where ABC has gone wrong. Money talks, but integrity in television is almost extinct. The network should leave "Nightline" as a shining example that television can still educate and inform, regardless of ratings and advertising dollars.

If Letterman jumps to ABC, a dangerous precedent will be set. Let the laugh tracks begin.

This guest editorial is courtesy of the University of Southern California's campus newspaper, the Daily Trojan.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

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.

Consumers need to educate themselves

GUEST COMMENTARY

Char Heitman

Having attended a presentation by Jim Keaty and Leslie Kretzu detailing their experiences living with Nike workers in Tangerang, Indonesia, I felt compelled to reply to Vada Manager's guest commentary ("Nike cares for its contract employees," ODE, Feb. 12).

Manager stated Nike's products are made at factories that regularly undergo independent monitoring. In fact, the monitoring organizations utilized by Nike are Price-WaterhouseCoopers, who is paid by Nike to provide monitoring services, and the Fair Labor Association, of which Nike is a founder and board member. Hardly the impartial scenario implied by "independent monitoring."

It's no accident corporations choose to locate factories in countries with notoriously lax enforcement of labor, health and safety standards. Even when monitors discover violations, their reports are paper tigers without the teeth to force factories to make required

changes. Companies realize the cost of hiring monitors is an investment in corporate image that helps maintain profits.

Manager also referred to the Global Alliance for Workers study (underwritten by Nike to the tune of \$7.8 million, incidentally) stating that "a majority of workers expressed satisfaction with their relationship with their superiors and managers." This is not surprising considering that interviewees who meet with monitors are hand-picked by management and interviews are done with management often acting as translators. How honest is a worker likely to be about factory conditions and supervisors with a supervisor present?

Manager also talked about wages and benefits. At minimum wage, workers in Indonesia receive

300,000 to 350,000 rupiah, which is \$26 a month or 76 cents per day. Many people reason that since costs in the country are lower, workers can afford to make less. According to calculations by Keaty and Kretzu, however, a meal of rice and veggies, a soft drink (less expensive than bottled water, local water being non-potable) and a bag of peanuts cost 62 percent of a workers daily wage. That would be like an American minimum wage worker paying \$31 for a sandwich, chips and drink! Or imagine not being able to afford the medicine and doctor's office visit for a sick child because it costs 654 times your daily wage.

Even the Indonesian government admits the minimum wage meets only 80 percent of an individual employee's financial needs. Yet, economically struggling countries are pressured by foreign governments, corporations and financial institutions to maintain a "favorable investment climate," which encourages the suppression

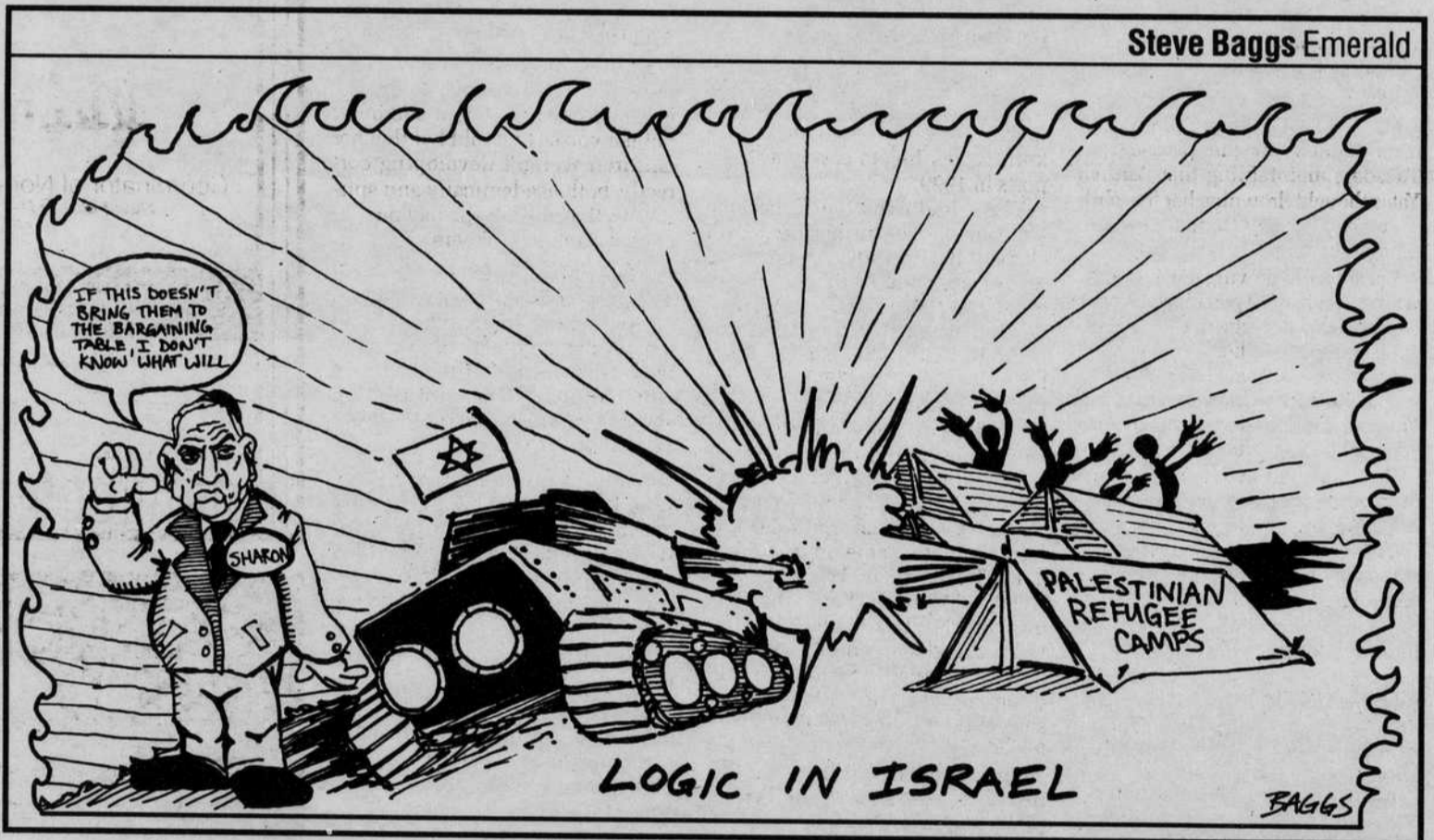
of labor movements and attempts to increase minimum wages.

Taking advantage of exploitable workers under deplorable labor conditions is how companies can realize the gargantuan profits which make it possible to amass obscene personal fortunes (Phil Knight's net worth: \$52 billion) and offer lucrative endorsement contracts. Is it right for Tiger Woods to make \$100 million or the University of Michigan \$25 million for wearing Nike products while the laborers can not even meet their basic needs working 60 hours a week to make them?

This is a complex issue without easy answers. But rather than accept the corporate party line, educate yourselves. As consumers, we are part of the equation. I urge you to go to:

www.nikewages.org/FAQs.html#Anchor-49575/ for an excellent in-depth analysis of this issue.

Char Heitman is an instructor at the American English Institute.



Letters to the editor

Student renters need to take action

A housing code functions to define standards of safety, sanitation and livability within a city. Currently, the city of Eugene lacks the presence of a code that not only holds renters and landlords accountable for the condition of their buildings, but also provides a tool for solving disputes over housing issues. The lack of housing standards affects University students and community members alike, and students need to advocate around housing standards in Eugene in order to protect their rights as renters and ensure proper living conditions within their community.

ASUO is running a student

awareness campaign to bring this issue to the attention of the students and city councilors of Eugene. Running through Thursday, ASUO will be putting on a week of action encouraging students to voice their own complaints about the conditions of their housing situations. During the week, a table will be set up outside the EMU for students to drop by and share their grievances, which will then be shown to visitors from the city council during the final day.

Through the week of action, students can educate themselves about the issue of a city housing code, as well as voice their own opinions of complaints to be heard by the city council and other students.

Ian Henri
 junior
 English

Think before acting

Whether as groups, nations or individuals, we humans are capable of atrocious acts. The rationale for these typically boils down to "you don't think or behave like I/we think you should." True-believer fanaticism underlies our species' abhorrent, murderous history. As beings who usually do know what love and caring and safety feel like, what can we possibly be thinking when we permit ourselves — en masse as a nation, or solo as an individual — to perpetrate suffering?

I submit that in "thinking" lies the answer to this question: How many of us have ever really stopped and watched our "own" thought process? Even doing this for a few moments, the watcher may discover that thoughts are "thinking themselves" — that thoughts arise and leave constant-

ly, and none of it is "me." To then believe — much less commit war and murder on the basis of — those thought forms, those little voices inside our heads, is a genuinely psychotic act.

Yet it happens all the time, given holy sanction in fact by mullahs, priests and rabbis (not to mention presidents and prime ministers) who all believe their "own" internal voices. The remedy isn't just to "think good thoughts," as the bumper sticker advises; it is to question the relative usefulness and lovingness of one's thoughts, before acting on them. A truly compassionate and peace-loving culture will teach its members to still themselves, check the unreality of thoughts and beliefs, and then act with awareness.

Vip Short
 Eugene