

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, June 3, 2003

Editorial

Quacks & smacks

Smacks to campus-area landlords who have removed recycling options for their tenants, smacks to the city for not having a housing code that mandates recycling availability for all tenants, and smacks to those tenants who misuse the recycle bins and lead some landlords to remove recycling.

Quacks to Ruben Studdard for becoming this year's "American Idol." Studdard's presence and voice had many anti-reality TV types cheering for him as he beat the less-charismatic Clay.

Smacks to congressional Republicans for pushing through a giant tax cut and at the last second, slipping in language that removes child tax credits for the poorest Americans. For shame.

Quacks to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas for making concessions and getting the peace process moving again. Let's hope when they meet Wednesday with President George W. Bush, even more progress will be made.

Smacks to the University administration for deciding to publish students' e-mail addresses in the print version of the student directory — which likely will turn everyone's gladstone account into a trash can for spam.

Quacks to the LGBTQA for finishing off Pride Month on campus with a "Love-In" that successfully demonstrated there is support for LGBT members of the campus community.

Smacks to whoever vandalized University student Sanam Aarabi's artwork displayed in the EMU Aperture Gallery. Art is often a political tool — so create your own art if you have a statement to make, but respect other people's work.

Quacks to the ASUO Student Senate for funding a digital upgrade for campus radio station KWVA, and super quacks to Charlotte Nisser for all of her hard work at KWVA to make the upgrade happen.

Smacks to the FCC for voting Monday to let major media companies own even more outlets, which will help extinguish the voice of independent and local media across the country. Super smacks to Chairman Michael Powell, who it seems is single-handedly fighting to eliminate American democracy.

Quacks to the University Theatre for its 1,000th production, "This Ship of Fools," and super quacks to the theater and Noah Smith's friends for organizing a benefit performance to help pay for Smith's medical expenses.

Smacks to the Lane County Budget Committee for eliminating its animal abuse investigator. Sure, let's not worry about the kids mutilating kittens — it costs too much. Instead, we'll be sure to catch them *after* they become serial killers.

Quacks to Florida legislators, who recently repealed a two-year-old law that had forced women to publish their sexual histories in a newspaper if they wanted to give a child up for adoption but didn't know who the father was. Why was this archaic throwback to public shaming passed to begin with?

Where's the WMD?

According to decision theorist Philip Tetlock, when confronted with choices, decision-makers take into account not only the potential ramifications of their actions, but also how others will perceive them. The easiest way of dealing with this social accountability "is by making decisions that one is reasonably confident will be acceptable to others."

The United States and Britain sold a preemptive attack of Iraq by invoking the imminent threat of Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. It is unlikely that any motive other than the elimination of these weapons could have convinced Congress and Parliament to assent to war.

So was the elimination of WMD an authentic *casus belli*, or was it an easily digestible rationale cooked up by administrations intent on deposing Hussein for other, less justifiable reasons? This question becomes more pressing with each day we fail to find WMD, the search for which has now stretched into its third month.

It appears that the consensus on the WMD story is fraying at the seams. Early last week, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggested that Hussein may have destroyed his WMD before the war began. He later retracted this comment.

Assistant Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, in an interview with *Vanity Fair*, alluded that the Bush administration pushed the WMD issue because it was "the one reason everyone could agree on."

Meanwhile, across the pond, a senior British intelligence official has murmured that a government dossier on Iraq — which claimed that Hussein was capable of deploying biological and chemical weapons within 45 minutes of deciding to use them — was altered to make Tony Blair's case for war more compelling.

BBC News reports that the dossier, which was "presented as the work of the intelligence services," was actually compiled by junior aides of Blair's. They apparently mistrusted their own expertise, for "long passages were copied almost verbatim — and sometimes exaggerated — from a paper written by a Ph.D. student in California," while "other information came from Jane's Intelligence Review."

Whether or not the Bush or Blair administrations actually believed there were WMD in Iraq, the failure to find those weapons would reflect on them equally poorly. If no WMD turn up, we can postulate a number of reasons for their absence, all of which make the coalition of the willing look bad.

If WMD were never there, then the coalition either acted on poor intelligence or lied outright. If the weapons had been there but were smuggled somehow to Syria or Iran, then the war failed in its purpose of nullifying the proliferation of WMD.

Rumsfeld's suggestion that Iraq may have destroyed its weapons before the war is patently ludicrous. Why would Hussein have done such



DJ Fuller
No holds barred



Steve Baggs Emerald

a thing without telling the United Nations?

The only reason for him to have destroyed his WMD, in the face of imminent attack by a superior military, would have been to prevent the attack from happening in the first place. For Hussein to have publicly destroyed his WMD would have been purposeful; what function could secretly destroying them have served, except to expedite his own demise?

It doesn't really matter which way you look at it — if no WMD turn up, the Bush and Blair administrations' preemption policy will look either disingenuous or poorly conceived.

Which is why they are still insistent that the weapons will be found, in light of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. As Tetlock

writes, "the need to justify policies that have worked out badly can place great pressure on decision-makers to increase their behavioral commitments to these failing policies."

The Pentagon announced Friday that it is sending a new team to Iraq to hunt for WMD. This, after the first team, the Army's 75th Exploitation Task Force, has dismantled its operations after a fruitless search. Why a new team will be more successful than the first isn't all that clear. Why the Pentagon would send one anyway is quite a bit more so.

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U.S. media's negligence threatens our democracy

Guest commentary

Uncounted stories of magnitude and relevance go untold by a negligent and conflicted United States press — the disgrace runs deep.

The U.S. press completely ignored the story of 60,000 valid Florida voters in the last presidential election illegally purged from the voter rolls by Katherine Harris. The press focused almost exclusively on the "hanging chad" issue while ignoring an outright act of treason.

Journalists such as Greg Palast who investigated and reported on the issue had to go to Europe to be published. Let us not forget secretary of State Colin Powell's urgency in making the

case for war with Iraq, utilizing 5-year-old plagiarized and moot information from some grad student's research paper. Frankly, this is also an act of treason, but where is the press follow-up?

And of course, this war was supposed to be about those apocalyptic WMD's, which have never been found, but that is old news. While Iraq and Afghanistan lay in ruins, news network cheerleaders are already gearing up for Bush's Caligula-like war mongering ambitions for a regime change in Iran. Continuing, ad nauseam.

"Top gun" President George W. Bush flies onto aircraft carrier for photo-ops while simultaneously cutting veterans benefits in half. The press completely ignores this act of outrageous

hypocrisy, not to mention the deafening silence pertaining to his being AWOL from the National Guard for 18 months.

And finally, three cheers for the press falling all over itself to saturate the American public with the touching Jessica Lynch rescue story. Remember the debunked "incubator baby" stories from the first Gulf War. It turns out that the saving of the little white princess from the evil ones is nothing but a big propaganda scam (see BBC documentary "Saving Private Jessica").

Our democracy is unraveling, and it won't stop until an irresponsible and pathetically compromised news media is held accountable.

Gerry Rempel lives in Eugene.