

Wednesday, August 20, 2003

EDITORIAL

Blackout illuminates necessity of regulation

In the aftermath of the blackout last week in which a mysterious run of errors wreaked havoc in several U.S. states and Canadian provinces, the American people are left with a troubling question: Are we ready for a potential terrorist attack targeted at our electrical infrastructure?

Survey says no.

According to Newsweek, senior Bush administration officials have said the CIA has believed for some time that terrorists are currently seeking power grids in the United States. And now that terrorists see the scope of what can happen if they do, it's the government's responsibility to develop an upgrade and contingency plan as soon as possible. In the meantime, we can be thankful that we still have time to do it before we're faced with another crippling attack.

So what's wrong with the power grid? One word: deregulation. Power companies have increasingly been given the ability to sell power to the highest bidder, but power grids are still controlled by the states. What results is a confusing system desperately in need of modernization, including a centralized control.

And in light of recent reports that U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft will embark on a campaign tour to promote his questionable "anti-terrorist" USA Patriot Act, which 140 local governments and three states have condemned as unconstitutional, we wonder whether the government is focused in the wrong direction. One must wonder whether keeping tabs on American's reading habits is more cost-effective and logical than, say, upgrading the power infrastructure.

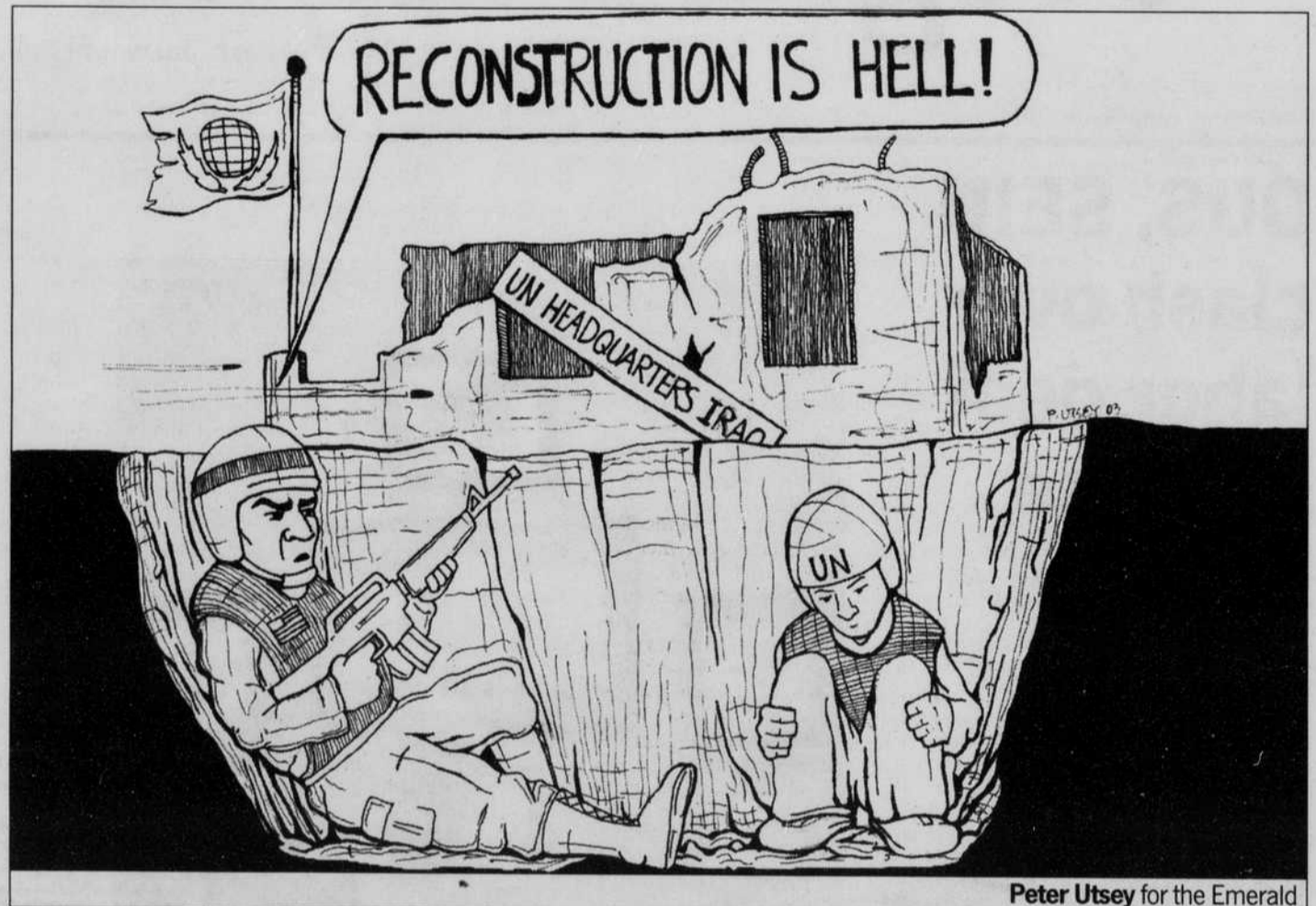
Another distressing aspect of the whole affair is the time it's taking to actually pinpoint what caused the blackout. In the hours following the initial power outage, rumors flew and fingers pointed, but nobody really knew exactly what happened. They still don't really know exactly what happened. President Bush appeared in a news conference like he'd seen a ghost, proclaiming that the event probably wasn't a terrorist attack. Then officials did the next best thing to admitting they had no idea why the East Coast was in darkness: They blamed Canada.

Meanwhile, millions were left in the dark, wondering and hoping this wasn't another Sept. 11.

If we've learned one thing from the whole debacle, it's that the United States is highly prepared to blame Canada in events such as catastrophic power outages. Other than that, access to a key utility Americans rely on for survival — electricity — is extremely vulnerable to terrorist attacks, and the U.S. government is not prepared to deal with it.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Send responses to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.



Peter Utsey for the Emerald

Media tarnish Kobe Bryant's sterling image

Lakers star Kobe Bryant was charged with sexual assault after an incident in Colorado. He stated to the media regret for his actions. He faces four years to life if convicted.

Bryant will hope for an unbiased trial, but for now he can only control the words of prayers asking to be there for his newly born daughter Natalia.

The allegations Bryant faces stunned his teammates, family and friends. Those who witnessed his progression from high school phenom to NBA poster boy know that such actions are inconsistent with his disposition.

Now, a story of an attractive woman being raped by a young professional athlete has cap-

titivated a national audience and facts are sparse. As a star entertainer performing in a metropolitan area, Bryant's fame and adulation have set the stage for an extreme reversal. His recognizable image is now being exploited in a manner that tarnishes his accomplishments and overlooks a chance at redemption.

Bryant has maintained positive relations with the media and has no history of criminal behavior. Yet, some hungry news outlets have taken extremes by releasing questionable information regarding the woman involved, who has yet to reveal herself to the public. After all the exaggerating and sensationalizing are analyzed, most turn out to be mere hearsay. Bryant's image lies on the brink of disappointment at the expense of the fresh news.

Helping lead the Lakers to three consecutive

championship titles, the articulate young man made his critics swallow comparisons to Michael Jordan and take notice of a new breed of superstar. Incredibly, Bryant's public image was largely positive leading up to his unfortunate mistake.

This case is not about crime and punishment — only moral retribution. No one but Bryant and his accuser truly know all of what happened that fateful night, and passing judgment on either party would be unfair. In a situation like this, it is crucial that law and morality are distinguished. Bryant's main focus throughout the trial will be mending the damage he caused his most loyal supporter — his wife Vanessa.

Dan Jones, a freshman majoring in journalism at Eastern Oregon University, lives in La Grande.

GUEST COMMENTARY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Republican voices make message stronger

I have to agree with Greg McNeill on his Aug. 14 guest commentary ("ASUO must include Republican voices," ODE) that a more politically diverse group of students would have painted a better picture of who cares about the lobbying effort at the University. Especially when we have such a high level of College Republicans in our midst here at the University, it would have made a whole lot of sense. I say this as an active member of the College Democrats and an avid and self-described liberal, who probably agrees with McNeill once every other blue moon.

Now, I realize that ASUO is technically supposed to be nonpartisan. The sad fact of the matter is that those in the student body who choose to vote in ASUO elections are not, nor do they elect their ASUO representatives with

a nonpartisan mind when these elections come around. It is therefore important for ASUO, when dealing with issues such as education budgeting that have been split down partisan lines in the Oregon Legislature, to present its lobbying efforts as truly unified among the student population. The message would have been even stronger than at other universities to include College Republicans in the University's lobbying effort, as we are infamous for being liberal, and even radically so.

Ethan Firpo
 sophomore
 anthropology

College Democrats, Students for Dean

Be respectful: Take a bath

Readers, I have one simple request to make of the general public: Would you people please bathe on a regular basis?

I know many people do bathe regularly,

and often use soap and shampoo, too. But there are also a lot of people who feel they have every right to impose their personal choices on everyone else. I'm sure those people are going to be quite outraged when they read this, but I am serious. I don't care what lifestyle they choose, or how they dress, as long as they don't stink.

They must not understand that when a person has a foul odor it is absolutely impossible to ignore them. It is distracting and rude to force someone to have to put up with that sort of thing. So, if you are one of these people, and you have any sense of decency, please take a shower or bath and use soap. If you expect to be treated with respect you must take the first step and treat your fellow students with respect.

Grant Leffler
 senior
 accounting

ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: How do you feel about gays being in positions of religious authority?

Results: 95 total votes

It's the same as a straight person in the

position — 35.7 percent, or 34 votes

It's a positive step in the right direction — 22.1 percent, or 21 votes

God will have his day with them — 20 percent, or 19 votes

Military mentality; don't ask, don't tell — 11.6 percent, or 11 votes

It's outrageous, and I quit going to church — 5.3 percent, or 5 votes

Leave me alone! — 5.3 percent, or 5 votes

This week: What's the best college movie of all-time?

Choices: "Back to School"; "Dead Man on Campus"; "Girls Gone Wild: Endless Spring Break"; "National Lampoon's Animal House"; "National Lampoon's Van Wilder"; "Old School"; "PCU"; "Real Genius"; "Revenge of the Nerds"; Leave me alone!