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■ In my opinion

Good riddance to bad attorney general

Attorney General John D. Ashcroft, the most Orwellian figure of the Bush administration, announced Nov. 9 that he is resigning from his post. Praised by some conservatives, disdained by most civil libertarians (myself included) and vilified by leftists, the former senator has served as a visible face of the administration's domestic anti-terrorism efforts.

Ashcroft epitomized the Bush administration's approach to all brands of challenges it faced during its first term, from sex education policy to military action in Afghanistan: Ashcroft has served as direct and uncompromising, stymied in policy goals only by the bounds of constitutionality and, occasionally, jurisprudence.

That simple, unyielding rigor extends to his personal life, too. He doesn't smoke or drink or even dance. Such asceticism may seem odd, but politicians appointed to federal office are often offbeat. It takes an eerily tireless breed to brave the day-in-day-out goings-on of managing a Byzantine bureaucracy in turn responsible for the common defense of the world's third-largest nation.

In fact, you might want someone this adamantly square, albeit peculiar, to be your attorney general. (President Clinton certainly thought so when he tapped eventual Saturday Night Live joke Janet Reno for the position.) Someone so dedicated to rules and unsusceptible to philosophical or political caprice might serve well as the nation's chief legal



TRAVIS WILLSE
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officer, representing a government to best improve the livelihoods of a nation's citizens through arguing public policy.

But even during the close of his often-embattled tenure, Ashcroft only lives up to half of this hypothetical bargain. During remarks to the Federalist Society's national convention, he blasted the judicial branch for a "profoundly disturbing trend" of "intrusive judicial oversight" (read: checks and balances) over executive decisions.

His argument is as follows: "Second-guessing of presidential determinations in these critical areas can put at risk the security of our nation in a time of war." Later: "Our nation and our liberty will be all the more in jeopardy as the tendency for judicial encroachment and ideological micro-management are applied to the sensitive domain of national defense."

This argument is philosophically bunk, but worse, it's dangerous. The sensitivity and exigency of these "areas," and the extent to which novel national security measures violate traditional rights, should make "second-guessing" more important, not less. ("Second-guessing" should be

cynically read as "due review to ensure constitutionality of government conduct.") Were Ashcroft really so interested in protecting liberties and staving off "ideological micro-management," he should welcome balanced judicial insight, not reject tests of constitutionality applied to new policies that probably overstep the government's authority.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a Justice Department argument that the Bush administration may indefinitely hold and interrogate alleged al-Qaida and Taliban combatants without the right to an attorney. Enemy combatants (or whatever Guantanamo Bay detainees are) certainly aren't due all the legal benefits that citizens are due when charged with a crime. However, Ashcroft ought to have come up with a justification for de facto habeas corpus that was cogent enough to pass muster under judicial review, rather than sloppily denouncing the involved judges as nettlesome and partisan "activists."

Despite his composure and constancy, these and other jurisprudential missteps — which have often served the end of curtailing important liberties — mean that I won't soon miss Attorney General John Ashcroft. We need for the nation's top legal office someone with Ashcroft's steadfast soul, but with a mind that will apply that resolve to placing civil liberties and the balance of powers above unchecked executive privilege, not the other way around.

traviswillse@dailyemerald.com

INBOX

College administrators: We like them apples

I am somewhat embarrassed to say that I have been dealing with Oregon college administrators for nearly seven years now, some good, some bad. Well, some really bad.

But my point is they aren't all burnt-out or unethical, or just plain mean to students. I wish I could say that I had the magic bullet to turn the sour apples into sweet ones, but I don't. I do know that even with the bad apples in the bunch it is import to honor and respect the good ones, to encourage their growth.

That is why we are really lucky in Oregon to have presidents like Elizabeth Zinzer from Southern Oregon University and Dan Bernstiene from Portland State University and Ed Ray from Oregon State University and even Dave Frohnmayer here in Eugene, to name a few. These people genuinely care about what they are doing and have a thirst for learning unmatched by anyone I have ever met. They are excellent human beings and it shows in their work.

Some college administrators, like Chancellor George Pernstienner and

others, I like to think of as students that couldn't help but eventually grow up. They care about our campuses, like a good student body president would, and take steps to ensure the well-being of their peers.

I guess my point is, when reading about salary increases that go against the directions of the governor and public employees that get caught stealing money from us so they can renovate their homes, keep in mind that they aren't all bad and that there is hope for us. Not every public employee deserves jail time or a public flogging and if we throw all of them into one category, we are going to do harm to the good ones. To go against the cliché: One bad apple will not spoil the bunch.

Tim Young
Graduate Student

Media 'sharks' have racist feeding frenzy

It's so shameful to read in the Emerald of venomous attacks against Muslims, Arabs and the Palestinian people. The death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has provided an "opening and cover" for the

many bigoted and hate-filled allies of Israel to launch a relentless campaign against the Palestinian people. Under the "cover" of venomous attacks against Yasser Arafat, these pundits and "talking heads" have been emboldened to indirectly attacking the Palestinian people while conveniently ignoring their daily suffering and ruthless oppression at the hands of the Israelis.

Like a school of sharks that smell blood in the water, the media has gone on a racist feeding frenzy at the expense of the Palestinian people. Isn't it time that we start examining the tragedy in the Holy Land with a clear head and eyes wide open, free from cult-like worship and undue influence of Israel, her hatchet men and apologists?

The tragedy in the Holy Land is not about one man. It is very much about decades-long brutality and injustice that has been unleashed on its indigenous inhabitants, the Palestinian people. Let's not bury the truth about Israel's inhumanity along with Mr. Arafat.

Nadia Sindi
Eugene

■ Editorial

Suicide surrounded by sad social stigmas

Suicide touches us all. Everyone knows someone who has contemplated it, or might have contemplated it themselves. Suicide can happen to anybody. Nobody is immune, and it can hit without warning. At one moment, a person might feel deliriously happy, content, even bored, then at the next moment everything can feel wrong. For those who suffer from depression, even the smallest incident can bring about suicidal thoughts.

When the sadness comes, it reaches to your bones. And, worst of all, it feels like it is never going to go away. It convinces you that it is permanent; that you will never again feel the slightest twinge of happiness or pleasure.

Of course, this is never the truth. Things always change. Life is always in flux. We are never powerless. Happiness will return to a sad life, just as sadness will return to a happy life. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of that. Sometimes we just need to talk to somebody. That is why 24-hour suicide hotlines, and campus counseling services, make such a critical difference. A caring, anonymous voice, even in the darkest and most troubling hours of the night, can save a life.

Suicidal feelings are nothing to be ashamed about. As a culture, we need to be more open about our dark emotions. We aren't weak for feeling these things. We aren't "mentally ill." It isn't abnormal. It isn't childish. There should be absolutely no stigma attached to having suicidal thoughts. What we need to foster is stigma-free open communication.

That is why the Emerald is concerned about proposed policy changes, which would allow the University to force suicidal students to take medical leave. We understand that the policy is only meant for the rare depressed student that refuses to seek help and is becoming danger to others. We understand the University's concerns about liability issues.

It is of concern that the policy might create an environment of fear, real or imagined, in students; they might think if they admit to suicidal thoughts, they will get kicked out of school. The last thing the University should be doing is giving students additional reasons to stay silent and keep their pain a secret.

We don't know if our concerns are justified, mostly because the student body has not been involved in the process up to this point. The Emerald insists that, at the appropriate stage in the process, the student body is given the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. We further insist that student comments are taken seriously and that they result in changes to the developed policy, if that is the will of the students. Refusing to do so will make the policy illegitimate in our eyes, and it will greatly hamper the University's effectiveness in enforcing it.

Occasions like this one are an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the issue of suicide. The University should be worrying more about ways to encourage students with suicidal feelings to come forward rather than giving them more reasons to stay quiet. We must as a society work to remove the stigma surrounding suicide.

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