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IN OUR OPINION

Think before
going to war

The United Nations approved a resolution Friday that calls for Iraq to comply with weapons inspections. The Washington Post, however, reported a Pentagon plan to possibly mobilize 200,000 troops for an invasion of Iraq. The United States has gotten the cooperation it desired from the U.N., but the U.N. said there would be no immediate military action against Iraq. And the United States will only get itself into more trouble by going to war without

international support.

The resolution gives Iraq until Nov. 15 to accept its terms and until Dec. 8 to declare its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs. Secretary of State Colin Powell said on "Meet the Press" that Iraq needs to cooperate immediately. If the United States offers Iraq ample

time to meet the terms of the tougher U.N.

resolution, it might avoid military action that would only, as Arab League foreign ministers said, be a threat to the security of all Arab nations.

If, because of further noncompliance, the United States goes to war against Iraq without international backing, its allies could be scarce. Fewer nations would send their troops or allow American troops to use bases in those countries.

And the United States will also need other nations to assist in a possible rebuilding of Iraq if Saddam is ousted. The Bush administration has talked little about what would happen to Iraq were the regime overthrown, and careful consideration needs to be placed on how it would help Iraq during its transition to a new government. The United States can't just leave Iraq's citizens to fend for themselves.

The resolution represents an accord between the United States and the U.N., and that accord should be honored. America should wait to see the results of the new resolution before jumping the gun and once again threatening to take military action without the support of the U.N.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

In Monday's paper, Terrance Beeks was incorrectly identified as the president of the South Carolina Student Legislature. Beeks is a member of College Democrats.

In an informational graphic in Wednesday's paper, it was incorrectly stated that the Richland County referendum to raise taxes by 1 cent passed. The referendum was defeated at the polls.

In a correction in Friday's paper, Paul Tagliabue's name was misspelled.

In a comic Friday, Quigmans author Buddy Hickerson's name was misspelled.

The Gamecock regrets the errors.

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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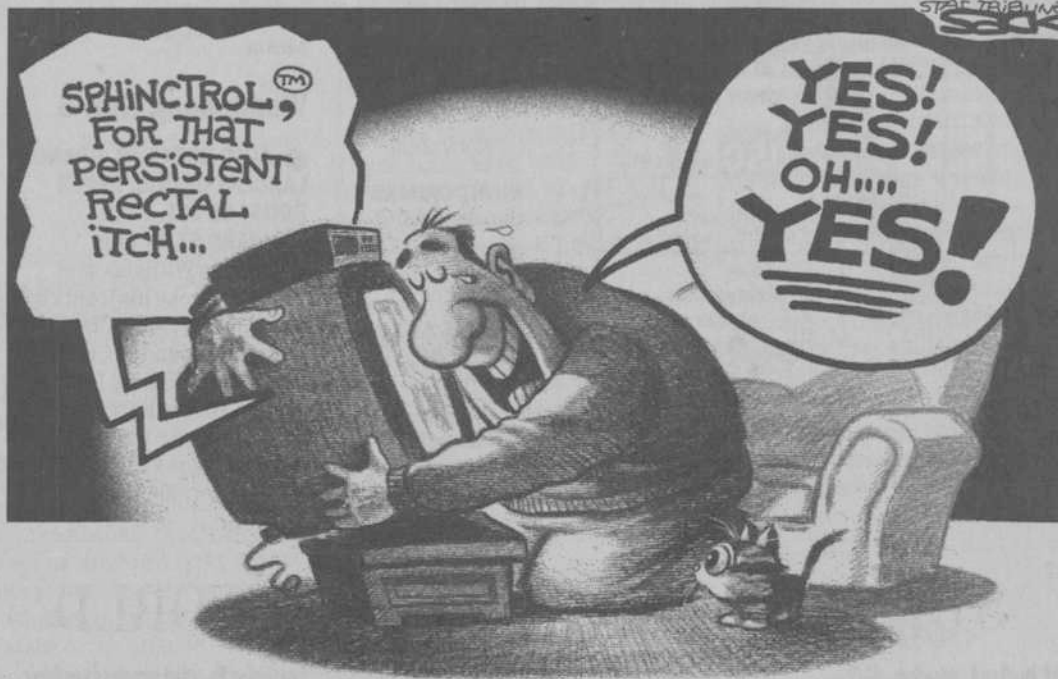
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Feeding our moral appetites



CATHERINE BABB

GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

Ethics and eateries are better left separated.

When an old friend with comparatively deeper pockets came to stay a few days in Columbia this past week, my roommate and I enjoyed a rare treat: dinner at a restaurant. Typically, our evening meals are either burnt or frozen. Occasionally, they are both. So, Cathleen and I were happy to entrust our appetites to the more capable folks at Harper's in Five Points.

The hostess sat us in a dark corner by the bar. A waiter appeared a few moments later and took our order. I sipped an import, lit a cigarette and waited for my salad. Our conversation idled as we each relaxed, enjoying the novelty of being out together. Cathleen and our friend leaned back, deep in their seats. Their faces fell into complete shadow.

Yet I could sense their smiles.

Soon, the waiter returned and set my salad down. It was colorful, fresh, appealing — and covered with bacon bits.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

"Yes. No. I mean, sorry. I don't eat meat. I didn't think to ask ..."

His eyes flicked quickly from the cigarette in my right hand to the beer in my left. His point wasn't lost on me; I felt a little ashamed. He apologized, removed the plate and had the salad remade, this time meatless.

I became a vegetarian by complete accident one year ago. My roommate at the time had asked me to proofread a paper she'd written on the topic, for which she'd researched the methods by which the meat we consume is produced — i.e., factory farming. There wasn't any agenda hidden behind her request; Sarah just wanted a good grade on her project.

I haven't had a burger since. I don't suggest examining the origins of your Big Mac, spare ribs or chicken wings if you want to continue to enjoy them. The reality of the modern meat industry is ugly and especially compelling.

That is not to suggest that I feel compelled to preach and

screech the nuances of my decision to waiters or any other captive audience. Some issues are best not argued openly. They are better left to one's personal discretion, if for no other reason than that they are the result of highly personal sentiments.

A good example of such an issue is the death penalty. It bothers you, or it doesn't. Arguing with those who feel differently tends to be futile. Besides, who am I to preach the gospel of vegetarianism? I've other habits that directly contradict the seeming moral sensitivity of that one.

Yes, I think factory farming is an abomination. It isn't right to treat animals as mere commercial ends, to trim the bottom line by debasing living creatures. Pigs, chickens and cows aren't human; they aren't potatoes, either. They deserve a greater degree of compassion than they receive at the hands of the industry.

Still, it's wise to stay off the soapbox. Occupying the moral high ground is like owning beachfront real estate: it's risky and expensive.

As with dining out, I simply don't have the means.

Babb is a third-year English and advertising student.

There's
no need
to make
pot legal

JASON L. RAPP

GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

It's easier to regulate alcohol than marijuana.

Like PETA's futile and pointless efforts to get USC to change its mascot to something unoriginal yet animal-friendly, such as Tigers or Bulldogs, the "Legalize Pot" movement won't go away.

Since my last column, Cheech, Chong & Co. even had a debate about the topic in the Russell House. I presume with smoking and nonsmoking sections. While I don't support their efforts, I do admire their tenacity. Ditto the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which could do good in this world if it picked its fights wisely and didn't resort to extremism to prove a point.

But I can admire without lending support. I can't support the legalization of marijuana. While it closely parallels alcohol, I doubt marijuana would be regulated like alcohol is. I doubt grocery or convenience stores would sell marijuana, like beer, thus taking away the possibility of ID checks.

There might not be much difference between getting drunk and getting high, but the way drugs and alcohol are sold differs. It would be too easy for children to come in contact with drugs. Drug dealers don't care whether they sell to bitter letter writers, who respond to bad columns to make their own miserable existences seem better, or, worse, to children. I think the efforts beer companies take to curb underage drinking are sincere; even if they weren't, the companies would at least have to answer to irate shareholders.

But I'm open to the use of medicinal marijuana for the terminally ill under tightly regulated conditions, with marijuana grown on government farms and available only in the office of the prescribing physician. To me, that isn't abuse of a mind-altering substance.

We don't need to legalize marijuana to have fewer drug offenses. The government has major holes in how it looks at drugs and how it sentences those convicted of drug offenses.

Take, for instance, the race-driven disparity in sentences for crack and powder-cocaine offenses. But America's drug policies are backward in more areas than that.

One of the biggest problems is our desire to punish instead of rehabilitate. Drug dependency is a medical problem and should be treated as such. The government's current method of dealing with the drug problem, punishment through incarceration, is making little impact. We won't win the war on drugs by sending addicts to prison. We have to cure the addiction.

Doing nothing to solve this problem guarantees that our corrections system will continue to face overcrowding that stresses our corrections officers and spreads our resources thin. It's more cost-effective to rehabilitate drug offenders than to continue incarcerating them. That practice has no upside, while much difference and progress can be made by rehabilitating drug offenders to ease the burden on taxpayers and the corrections system.

We don't need to legalize marijuana. It's not the same as alcohol. Alcohol is legal if you're of age, but it hasn't made us a nation of drunks. But legalizing marijuana would have more serious consequences. What kind of society condones unfettered use of mind-altering substances? Most people don't drink to get drunk, but people who blaze up do it to get high. Do we really need that?

Rapp is a fifth-year print journalism student.

IN YOUR OPINION

Society's stupidity reflected in Rapp

Wow. It might be the very definition of irony that The Gamecock let Jason Rapp, a fifth-year journalism student disguised as a retarded kid, write a column ("Observing society's stupidity," Oct. 28) about the decay of intelligence in America.

Rapp says he enjoys observing and analyzing everyday life. Perhaps he should observe himself reading a book on tolerance and then analyze how he became so idiotic. I am not impressed by the way Rapp tries to masturbate his intelligence by using words from my 11th-grade vocabulary lists, such as "morass" and "nadir." He has yet to learn that using big words makes him sound smart only if he actually is smart. Otherwise, he sounds only like someone trying to condescend to the lowest common denominator, unaware that he is the lowest common denominator.

It's like one retard calling another stupid. Rapp blames the advertising industry for America's cerebral decline. First of all, advertising is the reason we have any kind of affordable mass media whatever. So, Jason, when you're the coffee bitch for some low-level reporter at the Peon Chronicle, you can thank the advertisers (and Folgers) for even having a job.

Rapp complains about society's creeping toward the lowest common denominator. Society has always been about the lowest common denominator. That's just another way of saying "average." Most people fall into the category of average. That's why it's called average.

Why do you think there are no books by or about Joe Schmo? Because every other average person already knows what his life is all about. We don't care. Does Rapp honestly think there were no average people in the days of Plato and Socrates?

Speaking of average, perhaps Jason should take English 101 again and try for something better than a C. His article goes on a ridiculously diarrheal rant that struggles to make sense, much less a point. We go from "Seinfeld" to "Critical Mass," with about six undeveloped ideas in between. He starts a paragraph about political apathy in which that topic is barely discussed.

Rapp makes assumptions that apparently were pulled out of his ass because he doesn't bother to rationalize them to us, the lowest common denominator.

Jason does hit the nail on the head when he says, "How we relate to people says a lot about us." Hopefully, the "critical mass" that is your fist is smart enough to realize that Preston protestors are just asserting their right to free speech, which, in case you've forgotten, Jason, is fundamental to journalism and a free society.

Maybe, Mr. Rapp, you should add media law and constitutional law to the list of classes you should refresh, because advocating violence against hippies and protestors is a big step away from observing and opining. Like he says in his opening paragraph, Jason Rapp's life is his own personal episode of "Seinfeld": a show about nothing.

BRENT CAMPBELL

FOURTH-YEAR ADVERTISING STUDENT

Gamecocks' offense sputtering since UT

I would like to express my support for Jay Stinson's letter ("Gamecocks, get your act together," Nov. 4). This season, the plays have all been predictable and the situations in which they are used have been incorrect.

There is no reason this should happen. The responsibility lies solely with the offensive coordinator. Even after Skip was given two weeks to prepare for Tennessee, the offensive output that was displayed Nov. 2 was terrible.

I remember that at the beginning of the season, we were finally promised an offense that could put up points. Wrong!

The fact is, the defense has been the heart and soul of this team again this year. Our defense can't be blamed when it is on the field for 38 minutes.

I have all the confidence in the world that our quarterbacks have the talent and ability to accommodate a passing attack, but we, the fans, will never know how good our quarterbacks are if they throw only 19 passes combined.

Finally, a lot of people are dreading the day when Lou finally retires. But, after careful thought, I have concluded that it might not be so bad. We all know Skip will take Dad's job, and we can finally get a new offensive coordinator.

JOSH CHENEY

FOURTH-YEAR CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENT

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