

The Sociology Department:

SOAP DISPENSER

Spring 2002-03

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The Editor gets the First Word!

By Brian Colwell

In keeping with the lighthearted tone I had established I was going to write another cheesy little blurb. But given current affairs it just seemed a little awkward. So I present to you, four (of the many) issues that have been gnawing at me lately.

#1 Let's face it, there are some values that we are not neutral on as academics. Violation of these values can get you a failing grade on a term-paper or even a ticket out of the Ivory Tower.

As social scientists we tend to agree that a good-faith presentation of evidence is central to our craft. Just as any two architects may differ widely on design philosophy and aesthetics, all architects would agree that a structure should at least be able to support itself.

That said (and this should come as no surprise to most of you), when it comes to the "war" in Iraq, the current administration is either intellectually lazy or operating in bad faith. Put more bluntly, they are either inept, liars or both.

I will not detail the list of inaccuracies and willful employment of faulty evidence here (we all have Lexus-Nexus). Suffice to say it includes the known use of fabricated evidence, the misrepresentation of both U.N. and C.I.A. reports, and persistent assertions of fact that lack any substantive support.

"F". How can you give the White House any other grade? Even if you agree with the policies that they pursue, you can't honestly 'pass' them because their agenda is based upon fictional evidence.

#2 Despite #1, we are currently engaged in a region where the majority of the people either do not, or in time will not welcome our presence. And speaking for myself, I don't believe this new 'preemptive policy' and its impact on geo-political order will leave the world a safer or more just place. The ridiculously obvious military superiority of the U.S. can only guarantee a pyrrhic victory in Iraq. It appears one or two of Bin Laden's prayers have been answered.

However the "war" phase in Iraq is resolved I endorse the view that our nation is making a big mistake. Our inevitable withdrawal from the region, whenever that occurs, will not be a glorious one. Unless you watch it on FOX, CNN, NBC, CBS, or ABC. In which case everything will be just fine.

#3A American citizens should not feel compelled to withhold their opinions and perspectives when troops are engaged in battle.

If we want a democracy then we want a vocal and engaged citizenry. If civilians are discussing the war in the Oval office then

civilians should feel comfortable discussing the war at work, at home, or on the street.

Anyone seeking to infringe upon the right of any citizen to publicly engage in such discourse is an enemy of liberty.

#3B While I believe there are limits to the sort of orders military personnel should follow (i.e. My Lai), I don't feel U.S. troops should ever be held responsible for implementing a crappy political policy. It is not the military's fault if they are faithfully enacting the will of civilian authorities. That is their job! The most important way the military protects our freedom is by not second-guessing their orders. So if you don't like what the military is doing, don't blame them, blame your elected leaders, and maybe even yourself.

So appreciate the military for its loyalty, and at the same time feel free to vocally lag or support the policy.

I'm sure each of the above issues has acted as a filter and only 2% of the people who began my editorial have made it this far.

Still, I'd like to credit everyone that has contributed this year and helped fill the Soap Dispenser.

Jen Van Stelle, Victor Thompson, Colin Beck, Simon Weffer, Gabe Ignatow, Robin Cooper, Mark Granovetter, and the anonymous faculty advice contributors.

"Your hands are clean."

For posterity I'd like to challenge every member of the Sociology graduate student body to make at least 1 submission to the newsletter during the course of their graduate study. One submission in five to six years is not that bad and will ensure a healthy, albeit informal, departmental medium.

It's been fun and I hope everyone has a great Spring and Summer quarter. Go Steph!

For ease of reading (and since there are no advertisers to please) all contents are continued on successive pages.

I'm more a "producer" or "facilitator" rather than an "editor". Typos are the fault of the author (or Microsoft). Authors are also responsible for the content under their name. Views are not necessarily those of the editor (except the above editorial which is all mine baby!) and definitely not the ASGS

Victor's Office

By Victor Thompson

Oh shit! Not this blasted newsletter monkey on my back again! If there's one thing Brian has been good about this year, it's being persistent. Persistently at my door asking, "Where's that article you're going to write?" He's probably wondering why everyone has been avoiding him in the halls. Well, let me be the first to tell him that I haven't been avoiding him because I don't want to write an article for his quarterly rag, *The Soap Dispenser*; it's because he smells a little rank ever since he's second kid.

But let's get to the point there. I have a duty to perform and nothing can stop me, except maybe a new episode of Buffy, or Nash Bridges, but that's beside the point. My role as senior-assistant-junior editor in charge of this article (a self-appointed position) requires

that I maintain the highest integrity in both the research I do for this article and the style in which I present it, which makes it particularly hard to write. So let me say before I get started that anything I say in this article may or may not be alive and all is deniable.

The first thing I would like to comment on is the new library interface for Socrates. Is it just me or is Stanford a few years behind in technology? It scared me the first time I saw it, but after a week of practice I have mastered the art of finding things on Socrates. For those of you who aren't sure what I'm talking about, the library is a large collection of DVDs and videos located underground. It is protected by an even larger collection of books and papers but don't get too distracted by them, they are only there for

looks. I even hearted a lot of videogames located somewhere on the premises. Of course, I wouldn't know where they are so you will have to ask elsewhere. Why I felt like talking about this is still a mystery to me.

More importantly, I would like to comment on Stanford's roach coaches. They may perhaps be Stanford's best kept secrets. What are they you ask? Why, it's the best damn place on campus to get your vittles. I know some of you are sipping your brandy and saying to yourself, [with a slight hint of a French accent] "No Way! The engineering café is the best place." But I'm heretotell you that the only good thing about the engineering café is the fact that you can steal good silverware for the fine eating you'll find at one of the campuses many roach coaches. Plus, you can rob those nerdy engineering people of their milk money! There's two coaches tooting their horns on campus around noon. One can be found behind the library at high noon and the other can be found at the Admin building a half-hour later. So, drop your wine and cheese engagements and haul your * & ^ & * over to one of the roach coaches for the best damn tampleson campus. Besides, that gruesome smell of the Mediterranean fruit next door is a far cry from what you'll get behind the library, at a half the price. Makesure you run though because they are on wheels and they don't stick around for slow folks.

The final thing before I head off into the sunset, or to be more accurate, over the cliff, is a quick note on how great this whole *SoapDispenser* thing has been for my career, as I'm sure all other contributors would agree. I am only in my third year and already I have more publications under my belt than most new graduates on the market. And let me say that these publications are going straight to the top of my vita, right above dishwasher and drug salesman (due to pending investigations I am not at liberty to elaborate on the later). If ya'll thought for one second that I was doing this for the common interest of the department, or even for Brian, you're gravely mistaken. What better place to get non-peer reviewed articles in print, explore new ideas, and spread propaganda than within the tattered

pages of the *SoapDispenser*. This whole *SoapDispenser* has been the best thing to come along for a long time in my life. I can't wait to show the grandkids!

In closing, I would like to shout out three cheers for those who have contributed to all of the *SoapDispenser* editions this year.

Three cheers for Brian! Ahh Hell! Let's give him 6 cheers!

Three cheers for Jen Van Stelle!

Three cheers for Colin Beck!

Three cheers for Simon (or as he is now known to me Slimeon)!

Three cheers for Gabe!

Three cheers for Mark Granovetter,

Three cheers for Robin Cooper

And three cheers for the anonymous faculty and those who provided questions for them to answer.

If there is a final line that has ellipses on it than it means Brian did not fill in the rest of the contributor that I couldn't remember. Or he didn't think they deserved it.

In closing, peace to all, avoid Oakland police, don't believe the lies, and remember he never won the election in the first place! Now... I'm packing my duffle bag and heading down the old Stampede trail into a small nook of lands somewhere west of Denali and along ways from Palo Alto.

Spring 2002-2003 Speaker Series

****Tentative****

The Department of Sociology will host the Spring Speaker Series in the Department of Sociology, Building 120, Room 21/59, in the basement.

When: Thursdays from 12:30-2:00

4/17 **Adrian Raftery**

4/24 **Marlis Buchmann**

5/8 **Eva Meyersson Milgrom and Willie Jasso**

6/5 **Deborah Gruenfeld.**

More information available online at:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/soc/speaker.htm>
or contact vtthomps@stanford.edu

Under the Cover of Darkness

By Simon Weffer

Though the second Iraqi war still rages and many still protest the actions of the U.S. Government both overseas and close to home, I think we need to look at some other issues that have been overshadowed.

Aside from proposed MONSTEROUS tax cuts, has anyone paid attention to what else is going on in the Congress? For example, how many of you knew that the Bush administration and Republican controlled Congress have renewed their attack on welfare? Apparently, there forms passed during the Clinton Era were not enough. Amongst its many changes in welfare, the Republican proposal gets rid of one of the most important components for welfare recipients: the education exemption. Currently, if you are enrolled at least part-time as either a student at a two or four-year college, you are exempt from the "workfare" requirements (working a minimum of 30 hours a week to be eligible for benefits). Under the new legislation, the exemption would be ended. We all know how important education, particularly the college degree, is to one's chances over the life course. So why hasn't anyone informed the Republicans of this? How can anyone be asked to work 30-40 hours a week at a low paying, often no benefit, job with no child care and attend an institute of higher education? Why are we so willing as a society to turn a blind eye to the poor during a period of economic stagnation, if not recession? Why, have the underclass been again targeted by Republicans?

What about the apparent suspension of *habeas corpus*, and the fact that to the Bush administration, it is no longer a basic right. Friends of mine that are lawyers have often referred to it as *the writ of liberty*. The basic notion of *habeas corpus* is that it protects an individual from unlawful imprisonment by the state. In fact, the notions of unlawful imprisonment by the state, combined with taxation without representation, are the two

issues that spawned the American Revolution. It is one of the first "inalienable rights" to be protected by the constitution. Yet there are individuals of all descents, Arab, South-East Asian, African, African-American, and Latino, currently held without notification of their families, without trial, without bail, without legal representation, without contact with their families, without proof of wrongdoing. Individuals that are naturalized AND U.S. born citizens being denied the very rights sure to them by the constitution. Secretary Rumsfeld, when questioned about these individuals, responded that "... we don't want them getting 'lawyered-up'" and that now is "... not the time to determine their innocence or guilt, but to find out what they know." Excuse me, but the last time that I checked, the innocent can't tell you what they don't know. And *I thought* the whole point of having a legal system was precisely to find out the difference between innocence and guilt—shows what I know. Though Supreme Court Justice Bryer stated that the Court was going to review this very issue, does it come too late to those who have been unjustly imprisoned and detained, or too late for the Nation's conscience?

Finally, how did we lose the "right" to object to war, while at the same time support those men and women serving in the Armed Forces? How did the Rights somehow make it such that if you don't support the War in Iraq, you aren't supporting the troops? I think in part, it somehow relates to the outcomes and aftermath of Vietnam. That too was an unpopular war, but unfortunately, those on the Left decided to punish, pillory, and pour scorn on the returning servicemen. If you speak to anyone that participated in those actions, they are the first to be remorseful and repentant for their actions towards the servicemen. Somehow, those images of protesters spitting on returning G.I.'s seem to have consciously or sub-consciously been adopted by the Right,

making it so no matter how one tries to frame it, they have been branded not just unpatriotic but unsupportive of the troops. It would be nice to just blame this on the MSNBC/Fox approach to all of this, but it seems overly simplistic.

So, what should you take away from this piece? Hopefully, we will all be part of a new, more aggressive Left. We must be unafraid to stand up not only for those without voice, but those that have had their voice taken away. In doing so, we must take a stand and not shy away for fear of being “alienating” or “politically incorrect.” We have let the Right be the aggressor in recent years, and now it is time for us to take the discourse to them. Though the anti-war

protest may have been ineffective in preventing the war, and might not figure into ending it, we must use that energy, enthusiasm, and eagerness and apply it to other “social movements.” Whether it is issues of discrimination, fighting for the poor, or our inalienable rights as outlined by Jefferson and the other founding fathers, it is time for a rebirth, resurrection, and rise of the voice of the Left. So aggressively debate those that say suspending civil rights is not just permissible, but good. Forcefully confront those that argue that racism and sexism areathing of the past. Uncompromisingly debate the notion that in every society there must be have-nots.

I Have a Dirty Little Secret!

And I Promise Nothing but Silliness in These Serious Times

By Colin Beck

I have a dirty little secret. I’m obsessed with Peter Jennings of ABC’s “World News Tonight.” Well, this may not actually be a secret. For instance, last quarter, I was in the building one evening preparing for section and Iran into Songhua. He approached me and said in a very concerned voice, “But aren’t you missing your national news with Peter Jennings?” Now I like Songhua, but we don’t talk that much. How did he know about my dirty little secret? I guess that’s the strength of weak ties.¹

My obsession with Peter Jennings grew slowly, but election night 2000 was really the clincher. It was about 3 in the morning, and the sun was just rising on the East Coast. Peter, who had been reporting for over 12 hours, had entered a state of eloquent magnanimity, referring to “my assistant Nancy, the keeper of all things.” Then a studio light caught fire from being on so long, and Peter’s poise in a moment of crisis pushed me over the edge into full fledged addiction. Say what you will, but it sure beats Brokaw’s

constant worship of “the greatest generation” and Dan Rather’s steady descent into lunacy.

Over the years, my addiction to Peter has grown. It now encompasses news of any sort. I currently read three national newspapers in the morning and watch at least two national news casts in the evening, with a side of CNN and Fox News, followed by the sweet dessert of Nightline. So you can imagine how exciting for me it was when our latest adventure in the Persian Gulf started. I now could watch Peter almost 24 hours a day! Oh, sigh.

But it’s not all reindeer games when it comes to my news diet. This addiction can really be quite debilitating. Last night, for example, I was up at 2:30 in the morning and saw a little banner that announced the Bush-Blair press conference would start soon. For some reason, even though I knew what they would say, I stayed up until 4 watching. It’s really quite a serious condition.

One positive side, however, is that I have been able to observe a lot about the media coverage of this war. Of course, I always like to base my knowledge in the New York Times and check in with Peter to make

¹I apologize for, once again, helping to run this j oke into the ground.

sure I understood everything he thinks is important. But I've watched everybody's coverage, and oh boy is it fun! Here's the rundown: BBC's got the best coverage but I don't get it except on C-Span late at night. NBC—it's just too annoying when Tom Brokaw always refers to soldiers as "young warriors." CNN is alright; they have some good coverage of the Kurds—my favorite ethnic group in the whole world. CNBC is a write-off; there's just some things sickening when they talk about oil prices and the markets while people are dying. CBS can do okay when Peter is available, but Dan Rather is clearly the most unbalanced George Clooney wanna-be out there. And then there's Fox News.

Whenever my hope fades, whenever my patriotism wavers, whenever it hurts too much from laughing at the name 'Abu Dhabi TV', I can just turn to Fox News. They have a war in Iraq graphic that restores my faith in everything good and holy and, God bless us, American. First, the stars and stripes begin to wave, quickly followed by two F-15E Strike Eagles zooming across the screen. Then thumping, martial music accompanies the appearance of a map of Iraq. It just makes me want to jump up and "Heil..." Or maybe it wassing 'Oh, Canada, my home and native land' while retching into a trash can. Incidentally, Peter is Canadian.

Apparently, I'm not alone in my adoration of Fox News. It's the most watched cable news network. This has really pissed off CNN, and its anchors have become quite petty. Exhibit A: Aaron Brown spent about a half hour making fun of a Fox News embedded journalist as they carried live coverage of a fire fight in southern Iraq. Exhibit B: CNN repeated the story of Geraldo Rivera's expulsion from Iraq about a gazillion times. The two networks are also in a fierce contest to see who can bring me the most

crappy video phone footage. But it's not only CNN that has engaged in the media 'Operation Iraqi Free-For-All'.

After NBC's Peter Arnett gave a controversial interview to Iraqi TV, the other networks were all over it. I don't know how many times I've seen clips from this interview playing on rival news programs. Fortunately, Peter stayed above the fray. As all other networks announced that their journalists would not go on Iraqi TV, ABC released a statement saying that their freelance correspondent, Richard Engel, "is there to get interviews, not give them." I like Richard Engel, too. He's the only American journalist in Iraq that conducts his interviews in Arabic.

This rivalry has been taken to a new level in the past 24 hours. First, several rockets destroyed the Al-Jazeera Baghdad office. Then the Abu Dhabi office took some small arms fire. But just so we know that this is not a war against Arabs or Islam, the US military made sure to fire at tank shells into the Palestine Hotel and kill a Spaniard and a Pole—two nations in our 'coalition of the willing'. I keep waiting for Fox News to report on how even-handed the US is: "See, we bomb *everybody*." Now that Fox's rivals have been crushed and are running scared, reporting from Amman, Jordan looks like patriotism and wisdom instead of cop-out cooptation. Things couldn't have worked out more perfectly for the O'Reilly Factor unless Christiane Amanpour did a striptease to the strains of the Islamic call to prayer.

Throughout the ordeal of my addiction, however, Peter has been my guide. When I hear the opening bars of the ABC News theme music, my heart leaps and I can't help but smile. And then there's Peter again, with his even voice, gray suits, and insightful questions. Watch him sometime, and then maybe you'll understand while I wait patiently for the next urgent war update.

Funniest things to happen to Sociology Grad Students. (N=11)

Compiled By Simon Weffer

Based on a *small* sample of grad students who have a sense of humor.

11. While drinking with fellow grad students at Coffee House, being told it "It's not the size of the effect that matters, but its significance."

10. The Tree.

9. Signing off in emails as "Best."

8. The bizarre Stanford tradition of abbreviating everything (MemChu, CoHo, TresX, etc.)

7. Discovering that Lake Lagunita doesn't actually have water.

6. Having my picture taken, **and** being video taped by tourists while I lecture.

5. Being invited to a faculty dinner at a dorm.

The other two invitees were a Nobel Prize winning Physicist and a McArthur Genius Award recipient in the Humanities.

4. Being asked by a prospective grad student if most people finish in *4 or 5* years.

3. Listening to a presentation in Strat by a PhD in the B-school about the Stratification of *catfood*.

2. Having a student from another department ask in 382 why we need variables.

1. My Stipend Check