

OPINIONS

The Fat Lady's Song

A Modest Proposal, Part II

By Geoffrey T. Coffey

The poor Middlebury Dining Services—they take nothing but abuse. Many of their efforts to make dining a more pleasurable experience, such as decorating Proctor with an army of pumpkins in October, playing Christmas music in December, or (dare I mention it?) serving special Winter Carnival meals in February, are not appreciated, and are, in fact, eclipsed by such unworthy acts as ID checking and the infamous "only one entree at a time," leaving Director Ted Mayer open to ridicule and humiliation.

Students gripe at the grease: they bellyache over the long lines; they grumble at being obstructed while trying to reach a glass, which then turns out to be boiling hot anyway; they weep at the thought of empty milk dispensers; the mere mention of "fried scrod" invokes innumerable grunts and the gnashing of teeth. Constructive criticism has been replaced by dour predictions of impending vomit.

As this column has, so far, only added to the wave of execration (twice, in fact), I will now reveal a plan which should end the reign of Proctor-induced misery, while simultaneously solving a few other



pressing issues on the campus. It will be, if you will excuse what may at first seem an exaggeration, the Plan of the Century.

To fully understand the Plan of the Century, you must first consider the environment into which I am proposing it be born. First, note that the future of the fraternities looks dim indeed, which indicates that Middlebury's social life will soon be forced into a savage choke hold. As the Deans, Security, the RHA's, and the JC's continue to crack down on parties in dorms, we can expect the incidence of such things as beers on a Friday afternoon and fun to decrease sharply.

Also, let it be known that the college is currently spending rather a large sum of money on condoms, which they offer for free in the infirmary; if predictions hold, these condoms will begin to accumulate in their bins, unused, and the spent money will be rendered wasteful. Some final points to keep in mind are that money has been a hot subject for the administration lately (i.e. with tuition protests, union demands, professional salary debates, etc.) and that both AIDS and abortion have been dominating the national news for quite some time.

Here, then, is the Plan of the Century. The condom-provision system must be scrapped, while, simultaneously, casual sex must be encouraged and, perhaps, even subsidized. This subsidization might be achieved through coed freshman roommates, college-supported dates, or even a secret-sex-partner system, which might be molded after the many "Secret Santa" games on campus. In any case, sexual activity must be

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Bread Loaf official protests administrative cover-up in sexual harassment case

By Robert Pack

I am writing this article from the point of view of my direct experience and with the hope that our community can learn from the Cubeta case something about the abuse of power and authority that can help us deal with such problems in the future with greater wisdom.

Without Paul Cubeta's persuasiveness on behalf of Middlebury College, I would not have accepted Middlebury's offer to teach here in 1964. Paul has been my friend ever since, and despite the recent disclosures, I still consider him to be my friend. I am indebted to him for many years of encouragement as a reader of my own poems and for his having invited me to teach at the Bread Loaf School of English since he was appointed its director.

The four students who brought charges of sexual harassment against Paul in the summer of 1988 were all students of mine and have remained in touch with me since they graduated. When undergoing the agonizing decision about whether or not to bring charges against Paul, some of them confided in me and asked my opinion. Painfully, they chose to bring charges in order that other students in the future be spared the kind of betrayal that they had endured. I believe that they made a noble choice.

Despite my obligations to Paul as a friend, there was no doubt in my mind: the highest priority required the safeguarding of future students and the deepest consideration for the suffering of these young men.

According to specified college rules, Bruce Peterson, in his role as Provost, took testimony from the students, and a mandated hearing was scheduled in which Paul Cubeta was given the opportunity to face his accusers in the presence of the members of the Committee on Reappointment. It was an excruciating event for all concerned, and subsequent to this hearing, Paul elected to take early retirement. In my opinion, President Robison should have made it clear to the community at that time that Paul's early retirement came as a result of the hearing so that the role played by the members of the C.O.R. to end decisively an intolerable situation would be understood and the college community reassured that its vulnerable members were being protected.

By Danish Mustafa

With the recent events in Soviet Azerbaijan, and the increasingly separatist tone of the revolt there, the issue of pan-Islamic resurgence in the Soviet Union has become a subject of renewed interest among the Western public. In the past, the Azerbaijanis were content with slaughtering a few Armenians and burning their property. But in the wake of the recent Soviet Army aggression, the Azerbaijanis may want to establish a state of their own where they could settle ancient scores with ethnic and religious minorities and neighboring republics without interference from the almighty Red army.

Based on its centuries-old blind hatred of Armenians, the nationalist movement in Azerbaijan is reactionary in character. Russia established hegemony in the Trans-Caucasian region as a result of the mutual hatred and suspicion among the myriad of nationalities inhabiting the region. Armenia and Georgia voluntarily became republics of the Soviet Union to protect themselves from antagonistic Muslim neighbors. In attempting to prevent the massacre of the Armenians by hostile neighbors, the Soviet army is playing the

same role that the czar's army fulfilled almost a century ago.

The Azerbaijanis are playing a dangerous game. Their rash actions and chauvinistic nationalism invite

the concept of nationalism on many Asiatic peoples. Previously, most of the modern republics were mere provinces in the Russian empire. Because traditional ethnic, religious,

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Unlike the case of the Baltic republics, where nationalism evolved as a part of a broader European movement, the Soviet state imposed

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steps that must be taken in revising our procedures to make them more open and honest, for dealing with the abuse of authority, and in revising the college's printed statement about sexual harassment, in particular.

As I see it, only truthfulness, even when painful, can restore trust and the assurance of protection to this campus. Sexual harassment and the abuse of authority, just like the destructive, anti-social, and exclusionary behavior that has always been endemic to the structure of fraternities, constitute violations not only against individuals, but also against the academic community as a whole.

Such violations, whether perpetrated by faculty members or students, cannot be kept secret to avoid embarrassment to those individuals of the college of which they are part. Their disclosure strengthens the community's commitment to its fundamental value of trust and of mutual empathy and helps prevent future violation. People in a vulnerable situation must be assured that their complaints will be listened to with sympathy and respect. Comments like Robert Baker's surmise that the students were acting out of a motive to take revenge must be deplored. Such an attitude of blaming the victim is all too familiar in our society.

President Robison, having now acknowledged publicly that there was a direct connection between the hearing and Paul Cubeta's early retirement, has appointed a committee to come up with new proposals for dealing with sexual harassment. That is a start, but beyond that we need an open and ongoing debate on the subject of the abuse of power by administrators, by teachers, and by students in their social organizations in relation to the college's commitment to protect both the welfare of individuals from harassment, abuse, or exclusion, and the free expression of ideas.

These two rights—the right to be protected from intimidation and the right to express one's ideas freely—may sometimes appear to be in opposition, but we must find ways to affirm them both and to bring them into reconciliation. The debate that the new committee on sexual harassment will foster must include everyone who wished to be heard, and it will help restore the openness of controversy without which no academic institution can flourish.

Azerbaijan revolt: start of Islamic uprising?

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lengthy war just might induce the Soviets to cut ties with Azerbaijan. This new independence would involve an incredible sacrifice on part of the Azerbaijanis; but, if history is any indication, the people in the Baltic republics would not mind these kinds of sacrifices once given the impetus for them.

Letters to the Editor may be sent to The Campus drawer 30, or submitted to The Campus office in Hepburn. Letters should be received by Monday of the week of publication.