

The Middlebury Campus

Founded 1905

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Weaving tangled webs

Our greatest regret in pursuing the sexual harassment story is that the Middlebury College administration played no role in bringing the issue to light. Interestingly, though, it was that very fact which became the axis on which our investigation revolved. The story took on much greater dimensions than we could have imagined. No longer was it what we believed it would be: a two dimensional story in which the good guys were clearly distinguished from the bad.

As we investigated—the more we talked to people involved as well as those on the peripheries—we realized the real story lay not in one individual's actions, but in the institution's reaction.

It was the responsibility of the administration, when it discovered a flaw in the relationship between a sovereign and students, to remedy the situation and prevent it from happening again. When a person believes himself or herself to be the victim of sexual harassment, the first inclination usually is not to reveal what has happened. Unfortunately, admission is the primary step towards ensuring that the same thing does not happen to someone else in the future. When that person chooses to remain silent, he or she indirectly chooses not to take a step towards future prevention.

In the same manner, an institution that is concerned that its members know they are protected by the procedures of that institution must acknowledge when its procedures work, if indeed they do.

When Middlebury College participated in a collusion to conceal the events surrounding Paul Cubeta's retirement, it was not sending out the message that it was confident in its ability to remedy the situation. When the college did not take the initiative from the outset last fall—or before—it only delayed, and perhaps inhibited the surfacing of the issue. Not only could the college community have learned from the experiences of the individuals involved (while remaining ignorant of those individuals' identities), but trust in the college's ability to protect could only have been enhanced.

The Justice Department investigation, the tuition protest, the DU incident, John Zaccaro. Middlebury College has been no stranger to bad publicity in the recent past. It would be terrible to think that the most recent example of information withheld from people who have the right to know is an effort to stay off the six o'clock news. Olin Robison insists that "Middlebury College will not fall behind." To think that the administration would protect the reputation of this school before protecting its members is frightening. We fear for an emerging trend.

Wendy Bagwell
Paul Gould

OPINIONS

Frankly speaking...

By Rob Gray

Recently the U.S. Senate proposed to eliminate the privilege of free constituent mailings for Senators so that the money appropriated for this program could be used in the war on drugs. The free mailing privilege, called franking, provides an opportunity for direct communication between Congressmen and constituents through newsletters. Unfortunately, franking also limits the democratic process by giving undue advantage to incumbents in reelection campaigns. The Senate's move to limit the use of the frank should be applauded, not because it is sending more money to the war on drugs, but because the abuse of free mailings is a danger to the equity of the American electoral system.

The cost of official Congressional mail has risen sharply since the early 1970s. In 1971 Congress appropriated about \$11 million for franked mail. That figure rose to a high of \$117 million in 1984. This increase is partially due to increased mailing rates but is more a result of Congressional exploitation of the opportunity for free campaign advertising via

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franked mail. Congressmen avoid paying for direct mail through these taxpayer-financed mailings, essentially receiving an extra \$200,000 that opponents do not. There are House rules which limit newsletter

distribution as elections near, but they have had little effect in curtailing the abuse of free mail.

The variance in volume of franked mail between election years and non-election years is quite pronounced. The mail in non-election years probably represents the amount necessary to properly communicate with constituents; the vast increases during election years serve only to aid reelection efforts.

As the amount of franked mail has increased, so has the incumbency rate in the Congress. The incumbency rate in the House jumped from 87.7% in 1974 to 98.0% in 1986. During this same period the volume of Congressional mailings rose from 321 million pieces to 758.7 million pieces. While free mailings have not singlehandedly caused this rise in the incumbency rate, they have had an effect. Getting elected to Congress in the 1980s often comes down to how much money a candidate can raise; the frank gives a distinct financial advantage to incumbents.

The Congressional franking privilege truly has advantages and disadvantages. It is a valuable tool for constituent communication and education on the one hand, while on the other hand it is also unfair to those same constituents since it limits the potential success of a challenger. The frank should not be severely restricted because it helps to establish communication between the constituent and the Congressman. However it is necessary to either provide challengers with funds or free mailings to combat the frank, or to force Congress to keep their use of it at a constant level whether it is an election year or not, based on the number of constituents in their district. Perhaps this will have a positive effect in reducing the incumbency rate, and in increasing the fairness of Congressional elections.

Cease and Desist

To the Editor:

As an alumnus and a former English major, I think it is time The Campus took its own advice regarding the retirement of Paul Cubeta and heeded the words of James Maddox. If The Campus needs its questions answered, why does it not take the route Mr. Maddox suggests, and make its inquiries in a private conversation instead of the public forum The Campus represents? This letter is not intended to condone or excuse the events that precipitated Mr. Cubeta's retirement, nor is it meant to exonerate the administration of any guilt from mishandling the story; it is, however, a call to The Campus to put to rest a painful chapter in the history of Middlebury and The Bread Loaf School of English.

It seems as though The Campus knows the answer to its questions, and only seeks to have the administration publicly acknowledge the

truth. The only party creating an atmosphere "conducive to rumor" is The Campus. If you know the facts, as it appears you do, publish them and take credit for the "scoop" we all know the story represents. I quote from The Campus's editorial of October 13 when I say "this issue is one that merits the utmost sensitivity and compassion, for all involved. Further, those parties should be protected from further harm." I recognize that there are many who may still need their questions answered. Mr. Maddox was correct when he stated that some members of the community would find these questions "painful and intrusive." Out of common courtesy for those involved in the incident, I would hope that these questions could be answered in a private forum with the Deans, not in the pages of The Campus.

Kurt Broderson '89

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