

Quoth the Raven...

by Bruce Bender

The mottled gray sky hung like damp linen over the infield as the horses stamped and hoofed through their warm-ups. The regular sports columnist, Herb Lindsey, had suffered a schizoid embolism only yesterday and I had been sent to cover the Kentucky Derby in his stead. I do not know why they drew my name out of the barrel—I normally wrote recipes in the food section, and knew nothing whatsoever of the races. Between Herb's embolism and the musty feeling in the pit of my belly, it seemed the day would be enshrouded in weirdness and confusion.

I arrived before dawn and made a beline to the infield where the action would be. The smell of dung mingling with the bluegrass mists of madow reminded me of some meadow found in days of yore, of wandering footpaths leading to a stream flanked by deep rushes. This peaceful vision was not to be, however, as I was surrounded by sweaty people and skeletal scaffoldings supporting television cameras—the eyeballs of the world.

The main event was not to begin until three that afternoon leaving plenty of time for me to get acquainted with the sport. Seven races would be held beforehand like an endless procession of local bands warming up the crowd for the big event, so I hauled the first scuba of Old Milwaukee out of my cooler and got ready for the races.

Three scubas later the first race was run, the cameras in the infield spinning in lazy pirouettes as eight monstrous beasts tried to run out from under their jockeys. Through the crowds of people and horses I had no idea who had won, or even who had run. It was all so confusing next to the Betty Crockers and stuffed hot dog winders I was used to.

A guy on my left identified himself as a writer from The Sporting News—he must have noticed my bewilderment and said not to worry, it would all be clear in time. I took a hefty draught from the bottle he offered me, he said beer was not strong enough to make sense of this mess—then he left.

I stayed pressed to the fence bordering the track waiting for the next race, all the time growing increasingly conscious of the crowd's crushing weight behind me. I had run out of scubas, and wondered if this fact would impair my impression of the races. I was dripping sweat between the humid day and the hordes at my back when the bell finally sounded starting the second race. I was positioned on the first turn, peering down the starting stretch seeking horses amidst the sea of bobbing heads in a coordinated pirouette with the cameras above. The din of thundering hooves was increasing, but the horses were still out of sight behind the crowds. Suddenly they burst into

(continued on page 25)

Why was the staff not consulted about layoffs?

by Bob Buckeye

Editor's Note: The author is a Starr Library archivist.

In recent months, staff have had to live with the anxiety caused by rumors of layoffs at the College, and last week in a letter sent to all students and faculty, but not to all staff, those rumors became reality.

The announcement of forthcoming layoffs on the eve of the College's May Day celebration is not without irony. May Day, first celebrated in 1889 as an international workers' strike for the eight-hour-day, is historically a workers' holiday and was meant, as Spring itself suggests,

to symbolize new life, renewal, growth. The principal goddesses of May Day for these early celebrations were Hope and New

least where staff issues were involved, staff would have something to say about them. What can we say about that hope now?

"Unconscionable" was the word that the staff, students and faculty I talked to used to describe the manner in which this announcement was made.

Life.

We are in need of them now. A few years ago a Staff Council formed at the College with the belief that the staff at last would be full participants in the Middlebury community, and that at

Our elected representatives were neither consulted nor informed about deliberations leading to the announced layoffs. The announcement came secondhand to most staff, although even for a sale at the College Store, all

staff heard directly. "Unconscionable" was the word that the staff, students and faculty I talked to used to describe the manner in which this announcement was made.

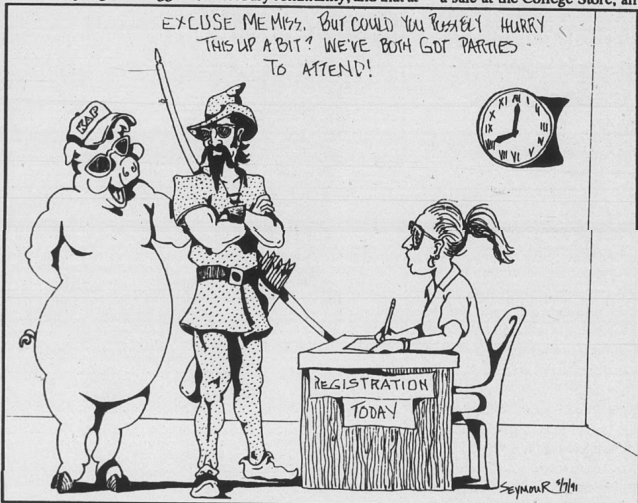
Is there any way to measure how it feels to have no say in what happens to your life? To realize that you do not merit sufficient respect for direct address?

The morning of May Day I listened to the Staff Council addressing the issue, and they spoke with intelligence, courage and compassion. What they returned to again and again in anger and sorrow on the day the College celebrates community was their belief—and it is a belief which led some of them to choose to work for the College—that the College is indeed a community, not some faceless multinational concern. This was indeed, as the College did not seem to recognize, very much an issue of the entire community, of what we are to one another.

Other. This is also what hurts, for those of us, like myself, whose lives were transformed by schools. Among other things, school is an ongoing discussion of how we might best live together. We cannot talk of Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Shakespeare, Isis on one hand, and follow practices in conflict with what we read in books or hear in the lecture hall, on the other, without great loss.

I do not know what I will say to my neighbor who works at the College if she is let go and I am not (or if I am let go and she is not). Can I say to her that when issues of staff are concerned we are not important enough to talk about them? That the College speaks of community except where issues of community are at stake?

We cannot understand education, Walter Benjamin reminds us, unless we also understand what educates us, and maybe we might begin there.



Upham misunderstands PC

by Hugh Coyle

Editor's Note: The author is the Administrative Director of the Bread Loaf School of English.

Recent discussions concerning "political correctness," har-

assment, and freedom of speech on campus have done nothing if not shown that some members of the student body are entertaining a paranoid notion of administrative fascism running rampant at Middlebury College. "PC-ness" has been trotted out as being responsible for everything from the raising of the drinking age in Vermont to the dissolution of the fraternities here at Middlebury. Vague and elusive in its depiction by those who are quick to tar and feather the idea, political correctness has become the scapegoat of the year.

Political correctness... embodies a greater sensitivity to diversity and a more inclusive distribution of societal power.

assment, and freedom of speech on campus have done nothing if not shown that some members of the student body are entertaining a paranoid notion of administrative fascism running rampant at Middlebury College. "PC-ness" has been trotted out as being responsible for everything from the raising of the drinking age in Vermont to the dissolution of the fraternities here at Middlebury. Vague and elusive in its depiction by those who are quick to tar and feather the idea, political correctness has become the scapegoat of the year.

In their portrayals of this beast, students have resorted to incredible exaggeration and unfounded hypothesizing in regards to actual practice. Some have even demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the ideas behind political correctness, but inasmuch as it is everyone's favorite target these days, these students feel safe in their ignorance, shielded as they are by the general public's own hostile misappropriation of the term. If you want to push people's panic buttons, just mention "political correctness."

David Upham's most recent

article in the Campus uses a similar tactic to defend his own beliefs about homosexuals. Upham continues to claim that Middlebury is stifling discourse on notions such as this even as he mentions a course which has

Well, that freedom has been preserved, and freedom of speech along with it. But let's turn the tables for a moment, shall we? Let us take what Upham claims is being prohibited here at Middlebury—the "expression of the religious tenets of Roman Catholicism and of religions that regard homosexual acts as immoral"—and substitute it for "political correctness."

It is not hard to do; Upham himself gives us a classic example of the type of environment which results from such a

(continued on page 25)

T-shirt

(continued from page 23)

for a second, and starting to get huffy, "You've picked the wrong subject to take up with me. It just so happens that I know people who have been affected by rape." Then how, I asked him, in light of having rape touch his life in a personal way, could he possibly think that rape was a laughing matter???

At this point, we had advanced in line, and were standing in front of the ID checker. Sensing the conversation nearing its end, I invited him to participate in the march that night, to protest violence against women. He had to write a paper, he said. But he'd think about the t-shirt. A few minutes later, I was sitting down with my tray, when he came into the room with a friend, joking, "Jesus! Did you see that f—king old lady on the staircase...?" Upon

guessing you're alarmed again, I guess if you say something, if you take a stand against something you find violent and offensive, you must be an old lady. Someone young and attractive would find the shirt "funny," "witty," "humorous." Someone young and attractive wouldn't find the shirt offensive. Someone young and attractive would just "lighten up."

To lighten up is to shut up, and I'm not going to do either one. I realize it's not presently in vogue to stand up against the crowd, especially when you're talking about violence against women. You're called an angry feminist, a radical lesbian, or a "f—king old lady." Most times it's a lot easier to just lighten up. But think about it. I'm not talking about not knowing whether a female student on this campus prefers to be called a girl or a woman. I'm not talking about an individual's right to an opinion or free speech. I'm talking about rape. I'm talking about

to violence against women. A t-shirt that offers inclusion to both sexes ("co-ed naked lacrosse"); but an inclusion that, for the woman, has a high price attached. A t-shirt that says rape is OK, it's funny, it's cool—you just have to be skilled enough to do it quick, before the woman you're raping can say no. IT TAKES A QUICK STICK TO BEAT A TIGHT CREASE. I don't think we can afford to laugh.

It's been a long year, with a lot of discussion and controversy about sexism, equality, sexual harassment and the right to free speech. Everyone is tired; maybe it seems like the easiest thing to do is to lighten up, and just get through exams. I urge you to do otherwise. RAPE IS NOT FUNNY. I am surprised and outraged that representatives of the Middlebury Lacrosse teams think that it is, and are allowing their name to be associated with such an endorse-

ment. If you're wearing one of these shirts around, take it off, throw it away. If you know someone who wears one, demand to know why. Give that person the facts about rape and sexual violence. If you see the shirt around campus, if you're hanging out and someone tells a "joke" about sexual violence, SAY SOMETHING. Refuse to let yourself be coerced into laughing and accepting it. Rape and jokes about rape are unacceptable. It is our responsibility to make them unacceptable.

When a community can take matters of such vital importance so lightly, there is something quite wrong. It is more than disturbing. It is horrifying. As long as rape is a funny joke on this campus, as long as people are afraid not to laugh, Middlebury College will never be the safe, supportive, intellectual environment it claims to be. STOP LAUGHING AND SAY SOMETHING. DO SOMETHING.

Who is to blame for poor voter turnout?

by Delbert Chew

I have never written to The Campus before, and probably will not make it a habit. I am making this exception though, just to rock the boat, create a stir and for the heck of it. Because of the nature of recent events, namely the Student Government elections for class representatives, I believe that such a letter as this is warranted. I am told that 4 out of 5 students did not vote. Most of them, and I dare say a fair number of those who did vote, never knew in advance as to when, where, or how to vote. One wonders, would a simple campus-wide message have been too much to ask for?

A fine job was done in publicizing and encouraging candidacies, urging all to take part in the SGA. It is a pity too many never had a chance to exercise their right to vote. At one of the informational meetings, I almost perceived, perhaps mistakenly, a sense of de-emphasis on the role of class representatives and

even discouragement of campaigning. Small wonder that little effort was made to get students to come out and vote. Even if a ludicrously small turnout is reflective of what the student body at large thinks, and this is highly debatable, what is perhaps more important is that one must feel that one has had a say in the matter.

Without the initial participation in the form of voting, there would understandably be an apathetic regard, or disregard, for the SGA. The already intangible link between the SGA and the student body would most certainly be tenuously strained. Unfortunately, even though promises of change and optimism abound, whether an improved election process actually encourages voting, and subsequently allows for a more effective SGA and representation to be effected, is arguable. Maybe this is just one of those things that will have to remain so, at least for a while to come.