

# PC seen as threat

by David Upham

In the March 14th edition of the Campus, Daniel O'Neil wrote about the dangers posed by the increasing intolerance at Middlebury College towards opinions that are not "politically correct." In the March 21st edition, two letters were published attacking his opinions. In particular, they defend the legitimacy of the college's policy prohibiting "negative comments concerning sexual orientation." I would like to respond that policies such as these constitute real threats to the free exchange of ideas which is essential to liberal education.

Obviously, the college can legitimately impose restraints on speech. The college can restrict speech in regard to the circumstances of speaking, but certainly not in regard to the ideas expressed. The PC movement does just that. It classifies certain opinions as politically incorrect and prohibits them.

The college has threatened to punish any student who expresses a negative opinion concerning homosexuality. This coercion of thought and discussion stifles the intellect and turns education into indoctrination.

Prohibiting the expression of certain ideas does not "cause us to think about our society," as Jeffrey Spencer writes. It does exactly the opposite.

The college harassment policy is particularly extremist in regard to its ban on speech opposed to homosexuality. In the pursuit of "diversity," it prohibits the expression of the religious tenets of Roman Catholicism and of religions that regard homosexual acts as immoral. Moreover, it prohibits the free discussion of a major question within psychology: whether the homosexual orientation constitutes a mental disorder.

It is said that the expression of certain opinions can be prohibited because such opinions are "offensive." (Melissa Ryan and Cynthia Sillinger even refer to such opinions as "immoral.") But any opinion is offensive to those who disagree with it. Such people, however, must respond with persuasion, not coercion. If a person is sure that homosexuality is perfectly legitimate, then he should not be afraid of rational argument.

Rather, he should welcome the opportunity to persuade others. At any educational institution, such an atmosphere of intellectual freedom is essential.

I must add that I am completely in favor of campus policies designed to protect students from intimidation and violence. The college must not, however, classify certain offences as especially abhorrent because of the politically incorrect opinions of the offenders. In effect, such policies would punish the offenders for their beliefs. Furthermore, such policies deny equal protection to students who are harassed for any reason other than the political incorrectness on the part of the offender. Someone being harassed on account of his eye color is no less victimized than someone being harassed on account of his sexual orientation.

What the current college policy regarding harassment amounts to is coercion of the mind. Although I know of no students who have been punished for expressing their opposition to homosexuality, I see no reason why such punishment could not occur. As Daniel O'Neil pointed out in his letter, there are many within the Middlebury community who would like to further suppress freedom of speech at the college. They seem eager to introduce mandatory classes of political indoctrination, such as "Cherishing the Earth." Moreover, I have noticed that in many of my classes, many professors and students—usually those who refer to themselves as "open-minded"—choose to intimidate and ridicule, rather than attempt to persuade, those who hold opinions which are less than politically correct.

All of this amounts to a threat to liberal education. In respect to other institutions, Middlebury remains fairly free of intellectual coercion. Nevertheless, the suppression of politically incorrect opinions seems to be the wave of the future. Everyone at the college who cares about intellectual freedom and who recognizes the importance of the free exchange of ideas in an educational institution, must resist the tendencies of the current phenomenon known as political correctness.

## New World Order

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exception of perfunctory annual meetings, the Committee met only three times recently.

A standing UN force would differ from the present multilateral coalition in that costs and sacrifices would be fairly shared among participating members; the US cannot and should not continue to be the policeman of the world. There is a distinct possibility that such a force could be financed from savings resulting from armament reductions worldwide. It could include an equipped army made up of various national contingents ready to prevent or stop new aggression at the request of the Security Council if economic sanctions prove inadequate to solve a problem. It also could include a strongly armed and adequately trained and equipped

brigade to be flown to trouble spots to prevent hostilities or to free hostages. It could be set up by a special fund and feature a UN Staff College established to train officers for UN duties.

In view of perceived US military superiority, the permanent force's commander might well be an American. But, at present, the Pentagon appears reluctant to support such a force or to be directed by the UN or consider the possibility that the commander-in-chief would not be an American. But this problem may be surmountable.

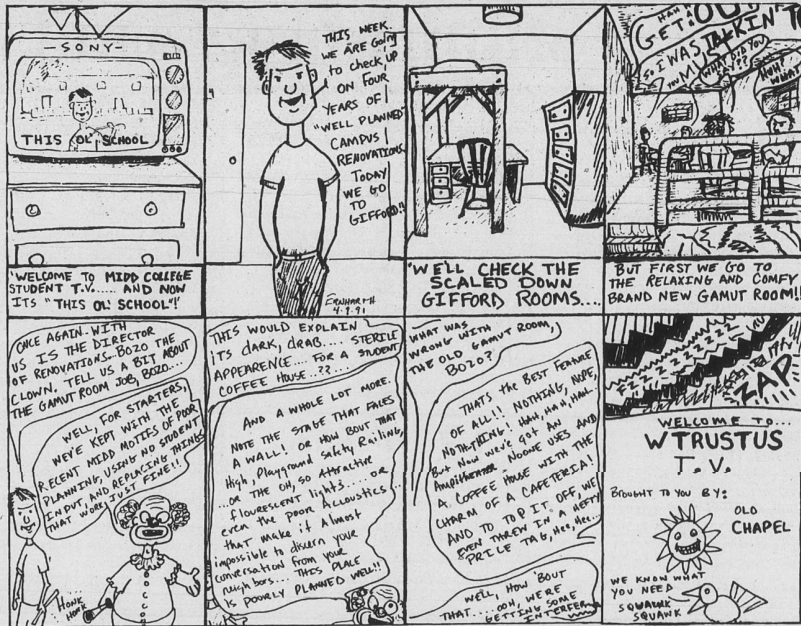
Current Nobel Prize-winning UN peacekeeping activities should be strengthened, having proved effective in verifying compliance of cease-fires, supervising troop withdrawals, and patrolling buffer zones.

However the United Na-

tions chooses to approach it, the maintenance of world peace leading to a New World Order must depend on several other urgent key initiatives:

- the rule of law and the respect by all nations of World Court decisions, including the United States, which has not always accepted the jurisdiction of the Court. New commitment should be made by the member states;
- creation within the UN of an international tribunal to judge individuals accused of terrorism, drug trafficking across international frontiers, war crimes and other international offenses;
- a strengthening of the responsibility of the UN Secretary-General with regard to mediation and good offices. These activities have been carried out on a shoestring. Yet recently the ongoing efforts of Secretary-General have helped achieve remarkable results—the end of

- the Afghanistan-Soviet war, the Iran-Iraq cease-fire and agreements or near-agreements concerning the independence of Namibia, Western Sahara and the future of Kampuchea;
- reform of the Security Council with regard to its membership and use of the veto. Some proposals may have to be considered reflecting the balance of world power as it now stands;
- an international treaty drastically restricting arms exports by individuals and governments and a mechanism to enforce it;
- the strengthening of existing verification procedures against nuclear weapon proliferation, a further reduction in long-range nuclear missiles and conventional forces, and agreement on a test ban;
- full ratification of the Montreal Convention on controlling chemical weapons and biological warfare.



# Alcohol policy—Hey guys, don't panic

by Derek Harwell

I thank the Campus for expressing its opinions on the goals of the "21 committee." It is my understanding that the editorial entitled "An Alcohol Policy or an Iron Fist" from the March 21, 1991 issue was intended as a motivating piece to inspire students to become more active and to speak their mind on the formation of our alcohol policy. The editorial seems untimely, however, since the committee has yet to approach any sort of a policy, much less one with "unmutilated irreparable damages." Perhaps the editorial payed unnecessary heed to the notion that we were dangerously close to an "Iron Fist" alcohol policy.

Since the publication of this editorial, as a member of the Committee I have received much feedback, not in a positive sense, but rather in the form of paranoia. "I heard that you guys are going to ban live bands in the houses"; "I heard that you guys are going to ban kegs"; "I heard that you guys are going to make the first year residence dorms dry."

This committee has pres-

ently done no more than begin to examine the consequences of such actions. It is time that the hysteria, brought on by mindless rumors and statements, ends and that everyone understands the real goals of the committee.

## It is time that the hysteria, brought on by mindless rumors... ends.

This is the third group known as the "21 Committee"; the first was formed in 1985 and the second in 1988. It was originally created to anticipate and prepare for the changes that would come about with the rise in the legal drinking age from 18 to 21. It was felt that, since Middlebury has undergone considerable change in recent years, the re-establishment of the committee would be appropriate. The goal of the new committee was to review the ability of our present alcohol policy to meet the needs of a changing Middlebury community.

The most important and exciting aspect of this committee lies within its structure. The

majority of the committee consists of students who are well aware of their peers' wants and needs in terms of college social life. One of the primary goals of this committee is to remain open-minded. We want as much positive input as possible and we do not want to formulate any decision based solely on the input of a few committee members. We have planned a number of possible meetings which we would like to make open to those who are interested. Our tentative agenda includes meetings with local law enforcement officers, attorneys who are familiar with college alcohol policies, Henry Wechsler (a psychologist who has done numer-

ous studies on alcohol use at the college level), and a conference with similar schools (Colby, Amherst, etc.).

At present, the Committee has had an organizational meeting and has met with residents of Chipman Park. We are still in the preliminary phase of gathering information, not on the verge of an "Iron Fist" policy. I hope students will respond with positive input and not with paranoia and rumors. For more information, "21 Committee" members have been invited to the S.G.A. meeting scheduled for Sunday April 14, 1991 in order to further discuss the issue. Anyone with ideas about the new policy should plan to attend.

## Raven

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So I asked him if I could sit in and hear their deliberations of the proposal. Not say anything, just listen. Just before he closed the door in my face he again said "No."

So I left. What else could I do? I assumed they would give me some kind of response, so I waited until this Monday, the first day of room draw. No phone mail, no letters in my box. I again tried to get around Dean Emerson's secretary, who incidentally deserves a healthy raise for the job she does. The only thing I could get out of her was that a written response to my proposal would be mailed to me tomorrow, Tuesday, one day after room draw had begun.

I went to crash the Community Council meeting that (Monday) evening, to get hold of Dean Emerson, but he dived into the room while I had my back turned. So I went into the room and spoke with a student on the Council who told me my proposal had been rejected. She said "maybe next year" and that only academic houses like the Afro-American Alliance House would be created this year. Hmm.

I tried again to be heard by the Council and they said that I had to be on the agenda to be

heard. Had the Community Council informed me of their decision earlier, I could have drawn a house with people from the rugby teams. Unfortunately for me, they stalled just long enough to prevent that from happening because the deadline for block draw applications had just passed.

Had the proposal been rejected in any kind of reasonable or decent manner, I would have been disappointed. But as it was, the proposal received a collective filibuster involving intentional deceit. I am not disappointed, nor am I surprised. I am disillusioned and have realized that I was a fool for ever believing that Middlebury College Inc. would give any opinion a fair shake which was not in complete accord with the "mission of the college," i.e., their long-term plan for reshaping this place regardless of student consent.

When I was a freshman I wondered if by my senior spring I would be sick of Middlebury College. As it is, due to the dozens of ridiculous farces of "justice" and "procedure" I have witnessed, I already despise Middlebury College Inc. and I still have over a year to go before I graduate. Perhaps if I had tried to form a "Biology of Molecules" House I would have had better luck.