

From a galaxy far, far away?

Vice President Al Gore, *Star Wars*' C-3PO appear to share some strange characteristics



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

Al Gore, Vice President of the United States, is certain to be very excited this upcoming May 21.

His excitement will have nothing to do with the situation surrounding his superior, Bill Clinton. This is the day the new *Star Wars* movie, supposedly titled *The Phantom Menace*, will be released.

It is not public knowledge whether Gore is a big fan of *Star Wars*, but it is a fine opportunity for him to see his kinfolk. After all, if the past six years have proven anything, it is that C-3PO is certainly a relative of his.

That is right, Al Gore is a droid. It has been fairly well hidden, but can be seen upon closer inspection. While no NFL referee would pick up on it, all the average American needs to do is watch him.

He is stiff, lacks any shred of charisma, and is annoying to listen to when he speaks for any length of time. It would seem that none of this is lost on Al himself, who has recently made great efforts to show that he is not really less entertaining than a brick. This has been done by arranging for the Vice President to give strong speeches showing his moral outrage on a variety of subjects.

The problem with the Vice President showing that he is mad as hell and not going to take it anymore is the reception that he has received.

People realize Gore really is not all that mad, but is trying to prove to the people that he does not possess one emotion — he has none whatsoever.

Unfortunately, this makes him seem even less natural, more calculating and

more robotic. The Secret Service must be terrified he will blow a fuse during one of those speeches and someone will have to cart him off the stage.

Examining the evidence, it is easy to decide that Albert Gore Jr. is a creation of George Lucas' studios that has somehow fled from home. This is not impossible — remember *Short Circuit*?

Please note the following similarities between our second in command and Luke Skywalker's droid who is fluent in over six million forms of communication: C-3PO frequently complains about the treatment he receives from other sources. Since Al Gore is Vice President, one of the few things that he can do is complain about the treatment he receives from other sources.

Nobody really wants to listen to C-3PO, even when he has a point. Nobody has really listened to what Al Gore says, so nobody knows if he has a point.

Both have companions that might be more useful than they are. C-3PO has R2-D2, and Al has Tipper. Tipper is far prettier and helps out more charitable causes, but Artoo is more mechanically adept. Could Tipper fix an X-Wing? Probably not.

One thing that R2 and Tipper have in common is that both have the uncanny ability to see something positive in their companions that nobody else has been able to spot.

Both Al Gore and C-3PO have spent significant amounts of time with people wearing brown robes. Gore went to a fundraiser hosted by Buddhist Monks; C-3PO was kidnapped by Jawas. In another coincidence, both of these situations ended up with money changing hands in a shady deal.

Gore's benefactors certainly did better, as they were only investigated by the Justice Department. C-3PO's "hosts" were

executed by Stormtroopers.

Both communicate with individuals speaking other languages on the orders of those above them.

Al Gore calls foreign nationals at the request of the Democratic National Committee in order to raise money for the party; C-3PO communicates with aliens at the request of Luke Skywalker and Han Solo in order to find out where they are. Both of these actions are critical to their survival.

Both fear that their final undoing will come in some dark, cold, faraway locale. C-3PO frets that he will end up in the Spice Mines of Kessel; Al Gore fears he will end up in the middle of the pack in the New Hampshire primary.

C-3PO takes his marching orders from a young boy from the middle of nowhere who grew up to become the most powerful man in the galaxy in spite of growing up without a father.

Al Gore takes his marching orders from a young boy from the middle of nowhere who became the most powerful perjurer on the face of the planet in spite of growing up without a father.

These are just a few of the many parallels that can be drawn between Vice President Gore and C-3PO. If all this becomes public knowledge, the Republicans may find cause to demand an Independent Counsel, a request that most certainly will be denied by Attorney General Janet Reno (who, by the way, looks a great deal like the Emperor).

But even if it does not, one thing remains certain for both droids, Al Gore and C-3PO:

They just don't understand human behavior.

Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student



MARK PASSWATERS

American policy, relations with Cuba needs overhaul

On Jan. 5, President Clinton announced the easing of sanctions against Cuba.



BRENDAN GUY

It is now possible for Americans to send up to \$1,200 to Cuban nationals, the Baltimore Orioles will be permitted to play two exhibition games against the Cuban national team and some types of food can be sold to non-government institutions.

These reforms, however, mean almost nothing as long as the 39-year embargo against Cuba continues.

Why has the United States targeted Cuba so relentlessly? Admittedly, even by communist standards, the Castro regime is an ugly one, with anywhere from sixty to one-hundred thousand of its citizens incarcerated and many others living in abject poverty.

Unfortunately, the embargo has clearly failed as a tool against Castro. There is just no other way to judge a policy that has been in place since the Eisenhower administration with no signs of success.

Even the collapse of the Soviet Union, which cost Cuba billions in foreign aid, and the tightening of the embargo with the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which permits legal action to be taken against foreign companies that do business with Cuba, have brought negligible results.

Fidel Castro is clearly not being hurt by the embargo; if anything, it helps bolster his regime by giving him a convenient scapegoat to blame for Cuba's suffering. The only ones hurt by the embargo are the people of Cuba.

The irony is by isolating Cuba from the western world, the United

States has thrown away its most potent weapon against communism. Victory in the Cold War came not through the strength of western guns but through the strength of western ideals.

By establishing trade relations with the Soviet Union, the United States was able to infect the communist bloc with western values and turn the people against their governments, which lead to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today, this same policy is being used to pull both China and Vietnam away from totalitarianism and towards democracy.

Through trade, the United States could clearly demonstrate the material benefits of capitalism and the spiritual benefits of living in a free society. This would show the Cuban people that it is Fidel Castro, not the United States, who is their enemy, causing the same forces to be unleashed in Cuba that destroyed the Soviet empire.

But for some insane reason, American policy makers have denied the Cuban people the chance given to the Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese people: the chance to see that capitalism and democracy truly are better than communism and totalitarianism. And Americans wonder why Cuba is still communistic.

Beyond the desire to free Cuba from communist control, there is another important consideration as to why the embargo should be lifted: the effect it has on American relations with the rest of Latin America.

World opinion is obviously against the United States on this issue, as is clearly demonstrated by the drubbing the United States gets on every United Nations vote about ending the embargo. But it is in Latin America where this issue could truly hurt American interests.

American trade with Latin America is expected to exceed our trade with Europe by 2010 and to exceed our trade with Europe and Japan combined by 2015. Obviously, it is going to be vital for the United States to be on good terms with its most important trading partners.

Unfortunately, this is a difficult goal to achieve when the United States is waging a virtual war on a Latin American country. Many of our southern neighbors have memories of American intervention in their countries, and, due to these experiences, they are not likely to be sympathetic to American harassment of Cuba.

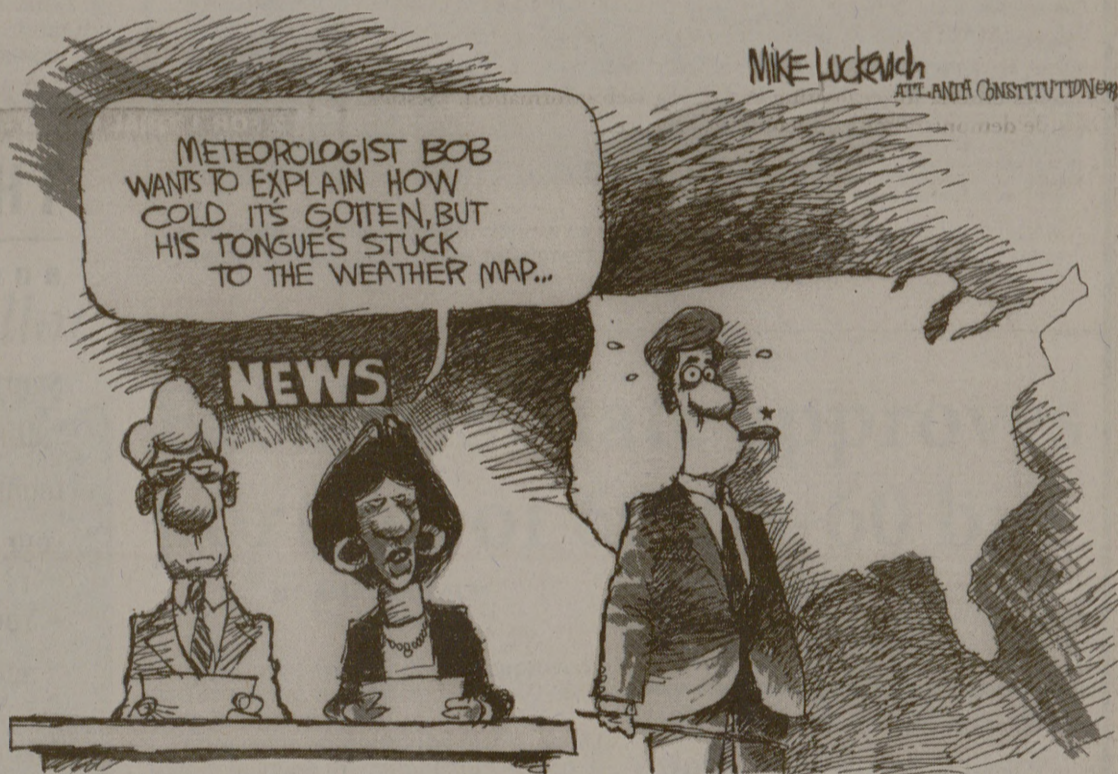
Fidel Castro is an expert at playing the anti-American card. He has used it for over 40 years to both gain and maintain power in Cuba, and he is proving just as capable at using it to rally the nations of Latin America against the United States.

By maintaining this embargo, it is the United States, not Cuba, that comes off as a threat to the nations of the western hemisphere. Lifting the embargo would go a long way towards proving to our neighbors that the United States wants to be their friend, not their master.

A common definition of insanity is repeating the exact same action and expecting to get a different result out of it. By that standard, American policy towards Cuba has been insane since 1960.

The embargo has clearly failed; the only effect from continuing it will be to bring even greater suffering to the Cuban people and to further damage the international standing of the United States. It is time to take a sane approach to US-Cuban relations.

Brendan Guy is a senior political science major



State of the union not so bad

With day after day of news coverage being devoted to the sor-

did details of the Clinton trial, it is easy to believe the United States is in bad shape.

The president of the country is facing removal, the leading lawmakers are splitting hairs over Puritanical values and the American people are caught in between.

Sounds like a good time to bemoan about the state of affairs in America, right? Seems like a good time to be embarrassed to be an American, right? Wrong. Compared to most of the other countries, America is still a paradise of that many would kill to enjoy.

Yes, America is facing problems right now. But Americans still enjoy level of freedom and lifestyle that is the envy of many other countries. Ask someone who has spent an extended amount of time in a third-world country, and chances are they will say the same thing.

Americans should be thankful for everything they have. Americans are not afraid to drink to the water that flows from their faucets and are able to breathe the air without having to filter it through a handkerchief. It is easy to forget that in many countries that type of freedom is simply a far-flung dream.

Many towns and villages in the third-world still do not have running water, and those that do must boil water before using it because sewage lines and water lines often mix.

Even worse, the air is often heavily polluted by automobiles that use kerosene or leaded fu-



MANISHA PAREKH

els and factories belching smoke and fumes into the air. Environmental policy, in many countries, is merely an idea on paper, not in practice.

While Americans will always complain about their elected leaders, the fact that the American electorate actually chose the people in power is not something that should be taken for granted.

Many countries hold "free elections" in name alone. In practice, many party leaders coerce or threaten voters into casting their ballots for a certain candidate; that is, of course, if the ballot boxes themselves were not stuffed or "lost" somewhere.

Here, Americans can always resort to voting leaders out of office when they are displeased; citizens of many other countries can only dream having that kind of power.

Americans also enjoy small freedoms that are often passed over in the hustle of everyday life. Americans can rest easy at night knowing that if Lady Luck should deal them a bad hand, there is welfare, disability pay and a variety of social programs to help cushion the fall.

Thanks to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Americans can place their money in banks without worrying about losing their life savings should the bank fail.

Children who cannot get a good meal at home can receive a nutritious meal at school thanks to the school lunch program.

And the list of freedoms and privileges goes on and on.

So what is the state of union? When compared to the majority of the world, it would appear that the union is in very good shape.

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MAIL CALL

Quick picks not a religious quick fix

I would like to say two things to religious people that support the lottery by purchasing tickets.

First of all, the lottery gives hope to sinners who had no hope except to repent of their sinful ways and turn to God. Sinners are putting off the decision to turn to God hoping they will hit the big one on Wednesday or Saturday. I call

the lottery Satan's hope because it has opposed evangelism, social change, character development and virtue.

Secondly, playing the lottery is poor stewardship and those guilty of poor stewardship need not expect the financial blessings of God. Either you faith is in God's blessings or it is in a chance to be struck by lightning.

C. Gregory Dukes
Mooresville, IN

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