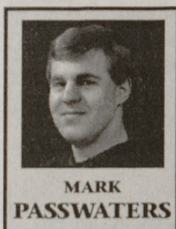


## Can J.C. be made P.C.?

Debate over Jesus statue in Wisconsin park escalates political correctness to ludicrous levels

In this day and age of political correctness, the First Amendment has become the ultimate battleground. Organized religion has found itself in the cross hairs of PC warriors in their battle for separation of church and state.



MARK PASSWATERS

While some of the arguments set forth by the advocates of political correctness have merit, most are totally absurd. The latest battleground between PC pundits and common sense is in Marshfield, Wis. It is no shock that the line in the snow has been drawn on something so ludicrous.

Marshfield has had a statue of Jesus Christ in Paschak Wayside Park since 1959. The statue stood without incident until two years ago when the Madison, Wis. based group Freedom from Religion Foundation sued the town. The foundation demanded the town tear down the statue, claiming that its presence in a public place was an oppressive symbol that coerced people into believing in Christianity. The town, not wanting to destroy a local landmark, allowed a private group to buy the statue and the land around it.

With the assistance of groups such as Rutherford Institute, American Center for Law and Justice (ACLI) and the Liberty Counsel the town was able to prove that the sale of the land was perfectly legal. Since it was on private land, the argument continued, the statue was then protected by freedom of speech, also in the First Amendment. The case was thrown out of U.S. District Court in April 1999.

The Freedom from Religion Foundation is now suing the city again. Still claiming that the statue is coercive, they are demanding that the city put a wall around the statue in order to obstruct viewing of the statue. Once again, they are claiming that the city — or in this case the private group that owns the statue — is still violating the First Amendment's separation of church and state, in spite of the fact that the statue is on private ground.

If the foundation actually thinks it can win this case with such an argument, they should fire their lawyers. The First Amendment's "Establishment Clause" merely states that the government is not supposed to advocate or discriminate against any organized religion in any way.

In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, the Supreme Court elaborated on what is and is not allowable. Since the statue does not "foster an excessive government entanglement with religion," their case has no legal merit. Yet, they continue to moan and complain. Why? The answer is simple.

Under the auspices of political correctness, groups such as Freedom from Religion Foundation are able to pursue personal vendettas. For 40 years, this statue stood without complaint but suddenly became a symbol of religious oppression in 1998.

The Freedom from Religion Foundation is accusing the city of Marshfield of trying to control how people think. In truth, their actions are an implicit accusation that the public does not know what is good for itself. In other words, groups such as the Freedom from Religion Foundation are the ones guilty of thought control.

For four decades, no single person had ever complained to the city about the coercive nature of the Jesus statue. It had not been seen as a political tool in order to steal the minds of the masses. Then, out of the blue, the foundation and its president, Anne Nicole Gaylor, ride to the rescue to save the people from themselves.

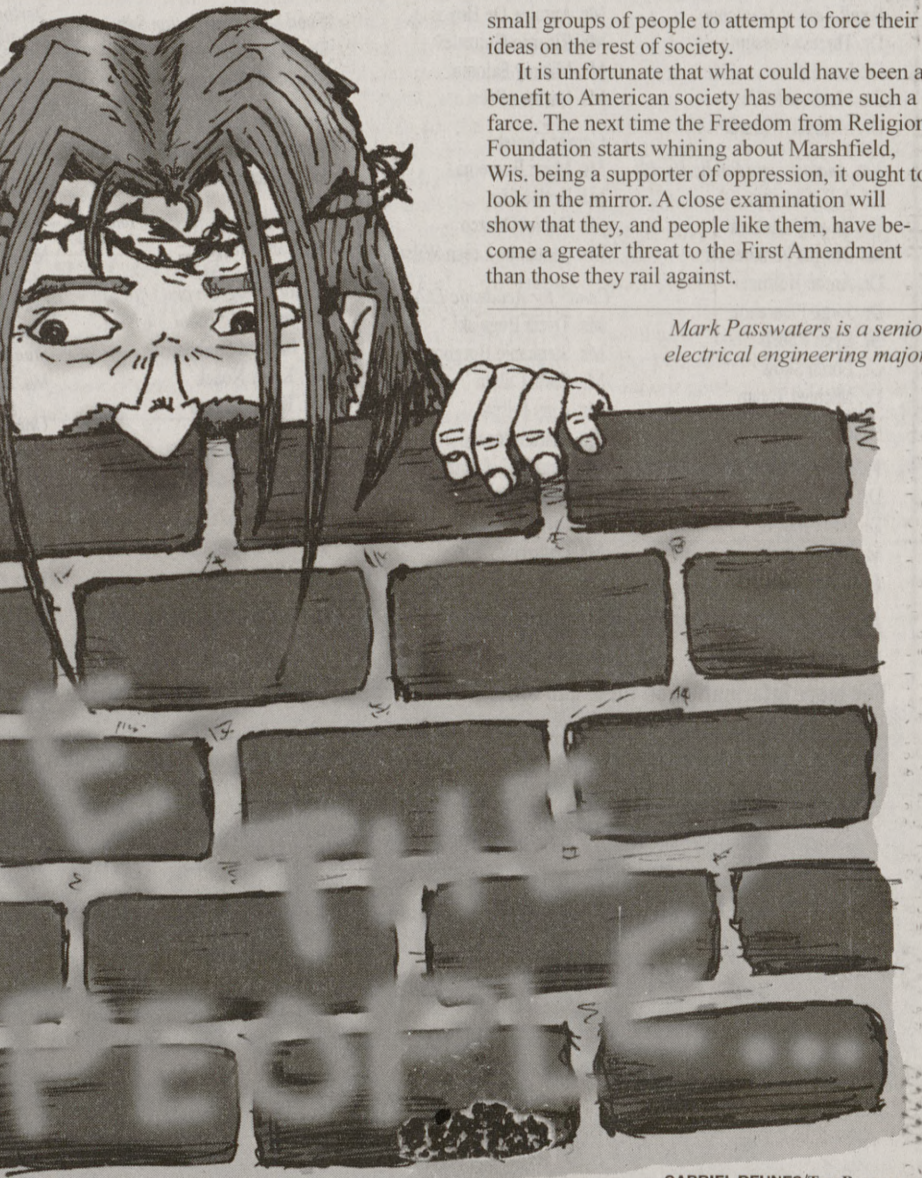
Why the people of Marshfield — or anyone, for that matter — required rescuing is still a question. Is the American public too dumb to know what is good for it?

The logic used by the foundation would seem to lead to that conclusion. Not only does this corrupted state of political correctness allow for a small group of people to dictate the course of society's debate, it allows them to grind their own personal axes.

ACLI chief counsel, Jay Sekolow was quoted by the Christian Persecution Report as saying that the removal of the statue "is not neutrality

toward religion. It is hostility." Such hostility toward religion under the guise of political correctness is not new. Other absurd suits include the suing of a minor league baseball team for having a discount night once a month for people who brought programs from their local church or temple to the game and attempts to bar high school students from praying on school grounds an hour before classes started.

Once upon a time, political correctness was used as a tool to weed out true problems in society. It has since devolved into a forum for

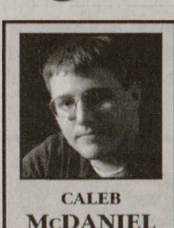


Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

GABRIEL REUNES/THE BATTALION

## Fox show degenerates marriage institute, highlights society's woes

At first, it sounded like the plot from an old episode of "News Radio" — something only Jimmy James could have cooked up. Girl meets multimillionaire for the first time, multimillionaire proposes to girl, multimillionaire and girl live happily ever after (the annulment.)



CALEB MCDANIEL

But the truth is stranger than this fiction. Fox Network's recent broadcast of "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire" proved just how low television broadcasting — and society in general — has sunk.

After a two-hour pageant which paraded women in bathing suits and wedding gowns before the ogling eyes of a filthy (rich) man, the special culminated in the legally binding marriage of Darva Conger to Rick Rockwell.

The show was the first time the newlyweds had met, and judging from the latest news reports, it was the last time they were seen together smiling.

Just a week after her "wedding," Conger publicly admitted she made a mistake and now wants to get an annulment. On their honeymoon Caribbean cruise, Conger says she barely spoke to her groom. According to the 34-year-old nurse, Rockwell was just not the sort of person "I would or-

dinarily have even a friendly relationship with."

But of course, nothing was ordinary about this "marriage." Thank goodness. The Conger-Rockwell wedding was a profoundly disturbing event that one can only hope will, like their marital bliss, be a short-lived phenomenon.

The fact that the union was a horrible perversion of what marriage should be almost goes without saying. For different and equally valid reasons, both liberal feminists and conservative family advocates have denounced the show as deplorable. "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire" portrayed women as objects for sale and weddings as cheap spectacles.

But marriage should not be a business venture or a flight of fancy. Brides and grooms should not be learning each other's names as they walk down the aisle (or onto the sound stage). Men should

not be able to take wives for test drives, and women should not pick husbands for their investment portfolios — both expecting an annulment or divorce if a friendship does not ensue.

But while much ado has been made about the show's commercialization of marriage, it is not too late to hope that most people take their vows a little more seriously than the likes of Rick Rockwell and Darva Conger do.

Of course, it is beyond dispute that the institution of marriage is in dire straits in modern society. After all, the Website taking requests to be on the show was so overwhelmed by applicants that it crashed after the premier.

And these days, when couples say "I do," it is becoming more justifiable to honestly ask, "Is that your final answer?"

But the special's incredibly high ratings are not necessarily evidence the viewers condoned the ceremony. In

truth, the mere fact there were wedding dresses on the show probably guaranteed the interest of anyone with estrogen, while the mere fact there were swimsuits probably got the attention of a fair amount of men.

Nevertheless, the surprise popularity of the show did say something revealing about American society. The show was the most grotesque example to date of a growing genre of television shows that includes broadcasting gems such as "Change of Heart," "The Real World," "Blind Date" and a litany of trashy talk shows.

The appeal of these runaway TV juggernauts is in the way they force people to make major, life-changing decisions in front of live studio audiences.

But is this what television has come to? Do people spend so much time in front of the tube that their connection with the outside world comes through distorted "real-life" dramas? And in a larger sense, has television bred such a cynical skepticism about "Andy Griffith" TV families that artificially created relationship shows have become the popular fare?

Unfortunately, "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire" has suggested these possibilities. There must be trouble in Mayberry.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

## Clinton's proposal for funding one side of Colombian conflict a bad idea

The Clinton Administration is pushing for a new drug war strategy that would include a \$1.6 billion aid package to help the Colombian government fight cocaine production in their country.



MARIANO CASTILLO

The money will purchase 30 Blackhawk and 33 Huey helicopters, as well as pay for anti-narcotics training. After all, it seems logical that the best way to keep drugs out of the United States is to cut off the supply at the source.

However, supporters of this proposal seem ignorant to the current situation in Colombia and the possibility that the money will further fuel their civil war, which is associated with drug trafficking and human rights abuses. The situation is extremely complicated and too risky for the United States to intercede unprepared.

Far-right paramilitaries, convinced that their government cannot contain the insurgent Revolutionary

Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have been accused of severe human rights abuses in their battle against the guerrillas.

The FARC, on the other hand, occupy a large portion of the Colombian countryside and fund their revolution mostly through drug trafficking.

Before committing any money to Colombia, supporters of this aid pack-

age need to understand the implications of such an act. Drug production may decrease, but the war between paramilitaries and guerrillas that the Colombian government is trying to control will reach new heights.

Recently, the Colombian government held peace talks with the guerrillas, which consequently has kept the paramilitaries at bay. These talks are shaky at best, and U.S. involvement will inadvertently escalate the war there.

By equipping the government with attack helicopters, the guerrillas will have no choice but to step up their own arsenal to maintain a balance as they attempt to iron out a peace bargain.

In short, the U.S. cannot give aid to Colombia without choosing a side in their civil war.

Even if Americans choose the "correct" side, and advance the drug war in Colombia, it will be at the expense of

the Colombian people whose land will be ravaged by guerrillas returning to war. That is only the beginning of the bad news

because the United States is not likely to watch a \$1.6 billion investment go up in smoke. Once the United States commits the money, the nation is also indirectly committing troops that may be necessary to aid a Colombian military that for decades has been unable to crush the FARC.

Clinton's aid package is flirtation with an international crisis. The risk of

getting involved in another nation's domestic war needs to be avoided at all costs. Vietnam serves as a painful reminder of this lesson.

The only voice of concern so far has been made by Human Rights Watch, urging the Clinton administration to make sure money does not go to military units that support tyrannical paramilitary groups. It is absurd to suggest that a clear line can be drawn between the right and far-right in Colombia.

While the Human Rights Watch plea has good intentions, they should realize that U.S. aid can escalate the Colombian situation to war, leading to a rise in human rights violations. Regardless of how many conditions are placed on the aid, the risks outweigh the benefits.

It is disheartening that the Clinton administration can be so naive as to believe that money will end the drug trade between Colombia and the United States.

Before promising any aid to the Colombian government, the Clinton administration needs to stop and consider the consequences.

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.

### MAIL CALL

#### "D" grade system change beneficial

In response to Melissa Bedsole's Feb. 22 column.

Bedsole needs to find out the true facts before she attempts to print a story. When discussing the recent change in the Grapevine-Collyville grading system to eliminate the letter grade "D,"

Bedsole states that the only reason for this change is that "the school district is trying to improve the chances for football player Cody Spencer to receive a scholarship to a division 1 school." This is not true.

The change in the grading system was made for all current and future students. In addition, signing day for scholarships had already passed by the time the grading system was changed.

Grapevine-Collyville school district is one of the rare schools left in the state that had the letter "D" in their system. Kids were losing scholarships due to the fact that at other schools a 70-74 is considered a "C" but at Grapevine it is recorded as a "D."

One thing Bedsole needs to understand is that Spencer is a typical 17 year-old high school boy that has one thing on his mind, football.

Quite a few high school players just get by in their grades in order to stay eligible, but in college they find out that they have to step it up a notch.

Bedsole also states that "Spencer is being set up for failure." Statistics have proven that a great number of high school boys do not excel in their grades in high school but do very well in college.

I think this will be true in Spencer's case as well. He will see that it takes hard work and discipline to make it in college and he will persevere in spite of his critics.

Travis Mayer Class of '99

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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