

GOP uses the media well

Cries of liberal bias untrue

(U-WIRE) PHILADELPHIA — I am so sick and bloody tired of hearing about this so-called liberal media. It's gotten to the point where Bush could be found in a love tryst with Saddam and Screech from "Saved by the Bell" and the second the story ran, the response would be, "Oh, there goes that liberal media again, distorting the facts..."

Constant repetitions of this useful myth make it seem like there is a giant liberal headquarters (probably in San Francisco) where the most powerful liberals in the world sit around thinking of new ways to sully the good names of conservatives everywhere. This perspective is just as inane as saying, "Well, you know, the Jews run the media." I wish the Jews ran the media; there'd probably be better stuff on TV.

In case you missed it, here are some big-time names in the media who are decidedly not liberal: George Will, Bob Novak, Pat Buchanan, William Kristol, Fred Barnes, Paul Gigot, Charles Krauthammer, John McLaughlin, Rush Limbaugh, Oliver North, Ann Coulter, William Buckley Jr., Bill O'Reilly, Alan Keyes and Tucker Carlson.

All of the preceding are rabid conservative ideologues, and I challenge anyone to point out an equal number of major-market seriously dedicated liberal media hounds.

The truth is that the allegations of a "liberal media" by the right are more than a reactionary measure; it's actually an effective strategy. Eric Alterman, from his book *What Liberal Media? "Conservatives know that if the press is effectively intimidated, either by the accusation of liberal bias or by a reporter's own mistaken belief in the charge's validity, the institutions that conservatives revere — the military, corporate America, organized religion and the powerful conservative groups themselves — will be able to escape scrutiny and increase their influence. Working the refs works..."*

The effects of this "constant drumbeat of groundless accusation" are evident to anyone who watches a panel show. The "liberal" side of the table feels compelled to agree with their counterparts on at least one or two issues through the course of the show, lest they fail to prove their objectivity and get cast as just another cog in the liberal wheel. Conservatives feel no such compulsion.

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The wool has been pulled over our eyes so completely that the press has become sedated. Far from seeing a liberal media, I see a media that has forgotten how to ask the tough questions and has forgotten that the words "no comment" rarely ever mean that. Reporting, never meant to be a cushy job, has become just that.

Bill O'Reilly, for example, gets a kick out of casting himself as the common man: "I understand working class Americans. I'm as lower-middle class as they come." O'Reilly's contract is an estimated \$20 million and he drives a Lexus.

For all accounts of a rampant liberal slant, when it mattered the most (the 2000 election) the liberal media fell asleep at the wheel.

Perhaps it is too long gone to remember the near-ringing endorsements that then-Governor Bush got from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and our own dear *Inquirer* every time he got in front of cameras and made a speech without falling down or forgetting how to read (here, we see the true effects of the "soft bigotry of low expectations"). He waffled on cocaine use, and it was a non-issue. The combined three DUI convictions that he and Cheney split were dismissed as the products of a wild youth, as if that makes it less of a crime (neither, by the way, was close to his youth at the time). And let's not forget the most unforgivable aspect of his character: This is the man who traded Sammy Sosa! That move, I think, was a tribute to his business sense.

His vice president's former company made millions in deals with Iraq, his ties to corporate America have never been stronger and right this second as you read this article, a pair of jack-booted thugs could march in, rough you up and throw you into a cell indefinitely without ever telling you or your family why.

Where, I ask, is the liberal media on all that? In an age where the one thing people can agree on is the over-sensationalizing of the news, the fact that all those stories failed to grab attention for long is nothing short of remarkable.

I think that the much-maligned liberal media put Bush in the White House; perhaps as a reaction to constant allegations of liberal bias, perhaps because the Bush campaign actually did have better food than Gore's (people who wonder about these things have all kinds of theories). But whatever the reason, Bush got an unquestionably easy ride from the press, and he took it all the way to the top.

Eliot Sherman is a columnist at the University of Pennsylvania.

Misplaced Aggression

Ashcroft wasting time and money on trivial issues

Apparently frustrated with the miserable failure of the war on drugs, Attorney General John Ashcroft and Drug Enforcement Agency Administrator John B. Brown turned their ill-informed aggression toward legitimate businesses in a nationally televised address on CNN last week. Citing ambiguous federal law, Ashcroft, Brown and others announced the indictment of more than 50 sellers of tobacco pipes, or as Ashcroft might say, illegal drug paraphernalia distributors.



GEORGE DEUTSCH

What should enrage freedom-loving Americans is not the crack-down on drug paraphernalia, but how broadly "paraphernalia" is being defined. According to www.DEA.gov, the government cites Title 21 U.S. Code Service Section 863, a 1996 law concerning what constitutes paraphernalia. Among the many vague stipulations considered about a product under this law are "circumstantial evidence of the ratio of sales of the items to the total sales of the business, the existence and scope of legitimate uses in the community and expert testimony concerning its use, ... (and any) other logically relevant factors." Well, that clarifies everything.

The fact that the federal government itself is determining the "existence and scope of legitimate uses" of these products and what factors are considered "logically relevant" is disheartening, as no government agency could ever make these decisions objectively, assuming the agency even understood the obscure jargon of this law. This is the type of stupidity of thought that tax-paying citizens should hold their representatives accountable for.

Equally disappointing is that the two nationwide crackdowns, which the DEA smugly refer to as Operations Pipe Dream and Headhunter, come as this nation is going up and down the colors of the terror alert ladder and preparing for a possible war with Iraq. Given the tense nature of the current climate, not only is an attack on alleged marijuana pipes and their distributors by the federal government laughable, it is downright embarrassing. Though exact figures were never revealed by Ashcroft, the fact that these are U.S. tax dollars at work is clearly a shame.

National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws Director Keith Stroup rightly identified Ashcroft as a man with a personal agenda possibly vying for future political advancement. Just like Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) used video game violence to propel himself up the political ladder, Ashcroft is taking on pipes.

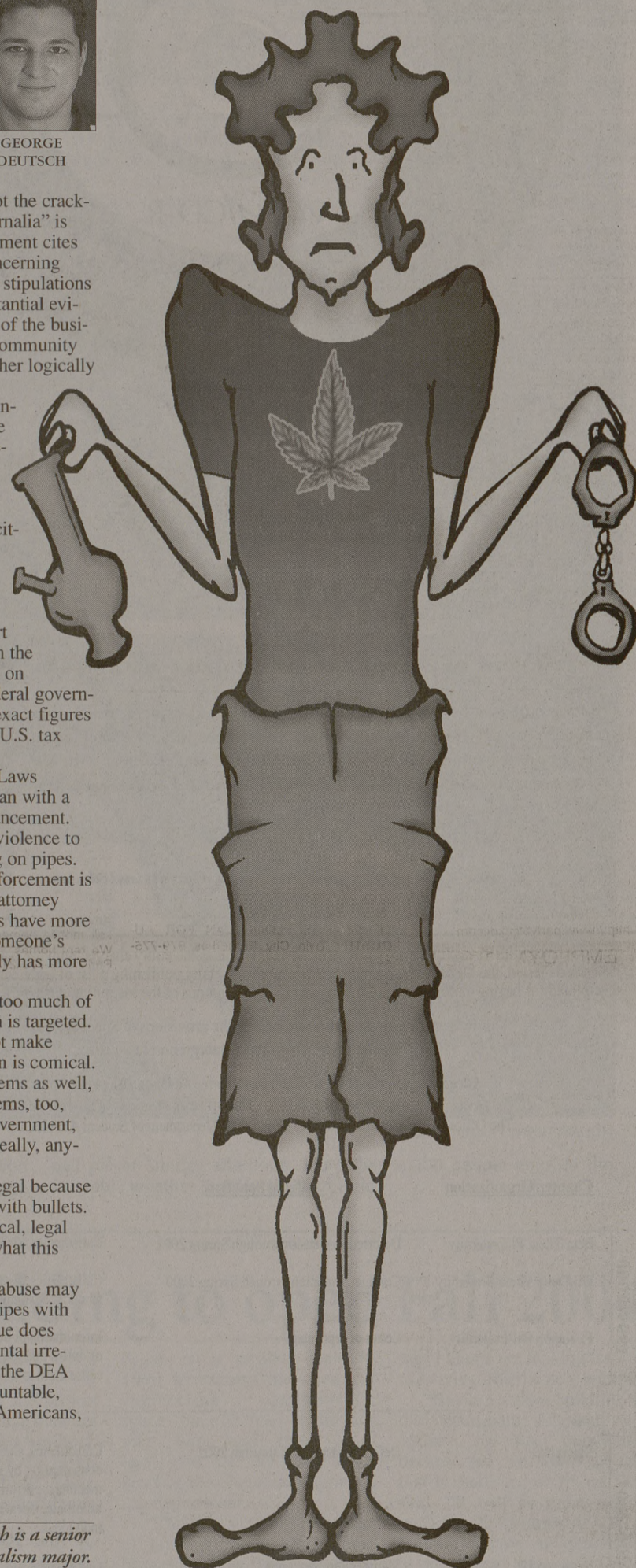
According to news.com, Stroup said, "This latest enforcement is primarily an expression of extremism of this particular attorney general. President Bush and most of his serious advisers have more (important) work to focus on right now than whether someone's selling rolling papers and roach clips." Ashcroft probably has more important work to focus on, too.

But when incarcerating actual drug dealers presents too much of a challenge, the easy-to-catch, law-abiding businessman is targeted. Just because marijuana can be put into a pipe should not make pipes illegal and their dealers criminals; such an assertion is comical. Pipes and bongs can be made from simple household items as well, such as two-liter bottles, soda cans and tinfoil. These items, too, must apparently be confiscated and destroyed by the government, as they can be broadly defined as drug paraphernalia. Really, anything can.

According to this line of thought, guns should be illegal because they can be used as instruments of crime when loaded with bullets. One must totally disregard the fact that they have practical, legal uses. And as ridiculous as all this sounds, it is exactly what this nation's government is implying.

In reality, a pipe in its own right hurts no one. Drug abuse may very well be a problem in this country, but destroying pipes with legal uses will do nothing to curb that problem. The issue does bring to light another, much bigger, problem; governmental irresponsibility. Unless U.S. citizens hold agencies such as the DEA and individuals such as Attorney General Ashcroft accountable, they will continue to persecute and prosecute innocent Americans, defining federal law as they see fit.

George Deutsch is a senior journalism major. Graphic by Leigh Richardson.



MAIL CALL

Antiwar protesters are not anti-American protesters

In response to Mail Call on March 6:

Many Americans have taken the misguided and reckless opinion of the Bush Administration in which this war is a protective and moral imperative and many have not. Those who have stood up against such hubris are not, by any means, Anti-American as the Limbaughs, O'Reilleys and Matthew Maddoxes of this world constantly claim. These are the people who do not have a programmed reaction to any and everything this administration does.

These are people who have the courage to stand up against what they feel is wrong and the intellectual depth to understand the importance of global coalitions and diplomacy. It is not a protest of our troops or our military who are simply following orders, we support them in everything they do for our country, it is speaking out against the inept leadership of George W. Bush on the issue of this war.

We have seen these protests from California to New York and Barcelona to Beijing, who are we to ignore the world and just do whatever we want. We are standing up and saying we choose life over death, stability over uncertainty, diplomacy over force, we choose peace over the Bush Doctrine. We must remember we are only a super power until all the other countries have nuclear weapons which is not far away.

Keep speaking out and write your congressman. This war probably cannot be stopped but remember in the 2004 presidential election who is responsible for sending all of our young troops over there to fight a war because of a gut feeling.

*Justin Hill
Class of 2004*

United States' human rights record just as questionable as nations like Libya

In response to Jerad Najvar's March 6 column:

It is with great pride that I reflect on those Aggies who have appropriately taken it upon themselves to lead support for the United States war effort.

Jerad Najvar is correct, Washington did warn against permanent alliances. Of course, such a warning was premised upon the need to avoid war, as Washington was quite wary of the conflicts that had constantly faced Europe in the latter 18th century, but taken out of context, it makes a strong case for U.S. detachment from the need for international consensus.

How indeed can the United States participate in an organization where Libya and Syria are guardians of global human rights? Mr. Najvar correctly cites the Human Rights watch criticism of these regimes, although he also fails to mention that the same organization has often criticized the U.S. criminal justice system. In particular, it's continued emphasis on executions, which places it in the company of other esteemed nations like Libya and Syria.

In any event, such similarities can be easily dismissed because of their inconsistency with the strong argument in favor of war.

*Nicolas Rangel Jr.
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