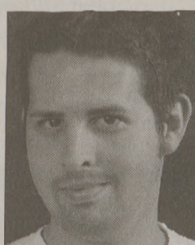


Selling stem cell research

Death of former President Reagan should encourage efforts to use stem cells

"In religion and politics," Mark Twain once said, "People's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at secondhand, and without examination." In the week following the national mourning of former President Ronald Reagan's death, his battle with Alzheimer's should spur the nation to examine a topic that deals with religion and politics — stem cell research.



MIKE WALTERS

Stem cells are set apart when compared to other human cells in that they have the ability to produce cells for any body tissue or organs, and can copy themselves indefinitely. Scientists believe they could someday be used to treat or cure diseases and repair the body, including Alzheimer's — a disease that causes memory loss, confusion, mood changes, hallucinations and speech problems.

While it seems obvious that such "miracle cells" should be studied intensely, there's a speed bump involved — to research stem cells, they must first be extracted from early human embryos, which destroy these embryos in the process. As such, many believe that crosses a moral boundary due to their beliefs on abortion.

Unfortunately, when the issue came up at the White House a few years ago, Bush avoided taking a clear stand on the morality of such research and instead compromised by limiting federal funding for it in August 2001.

Despite whatever politicking Bush has engaged in on the subject, as president he must take an uncompromising stand on the issue and he must recognize that the government has no right to interfere in scientific progress when it comes to stem cells.

The embryos used in this study are only a few days old and exist merely as a clump of cells. These embryos are donated

to scientists by couples who undergo prenatal genetic screening and deem them to be genetically defective for use in artificial insemination. Ordinarily they would be discarded, yet no one hears complaints about this. Only when scientists wish to extract stem cells before their destruction do some Americans cry murder.

There is, however, no rational explanation for this distinction. While an embryo has the potential to become a human being given specific circumstances, a chunk of iron on a mine floor could also at some point become an automobile. Potential and reality are two separate things.

"... the government has no right to interfere with scientific progress when it comes to stem cells."

However, many opponents of stem cell research do not accept this argument, claiming that the extraction process is an act of murder regardless of the embryo's lack of development. They often call upon religious beliefs, citing text from the Bible in Jeremiah 1:5 that God said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." These opponents, rejecting the possibility that the passage merely refers to the religious notion of an omniscient deity, is taken literally and assumes that human life exists in the womb even before the fetus is formed. Yet such an assertion is ridiculous — accepting this belief would lead one to cry murder at any instance in which the initiation of the

sexual act is blocked because it may have led to conception of human life. Suddenly "Not tonight, I have a headache" would become not a frustration but a sin.

Even this argument is moot, however — an act deemed to be a sin because of personal religious beliefs, be it by an individual or millions of people, does not make it truth. Further, even if it is held to be an official sin by an official church, it does not make it a crime under objective law. The American government does not have the right to legislate morality.

Certainly, if it could be concretely proven that a three-day-old fetus is a man with all the rights due him, stem-cell research would be illegal and immoral. However, no such objective statement can be made.

In the absence of such proof, the government cannot defer to the beliefs of any minority or majority. Further, it should never make such an unreasonable mistake in a case when doing so stands in the way of research that could prolong and enrich human life.

Though Nancy Reagan has been calling for a review to this decision for years, recently hundreds of Congress members are publicly backing Mrs. Reagan's call. The idea that such a great leader as Reagan spent his final years without even remembering his presidency is tragic, and no less so for anyone else struggling with his disease. Though science will one day cure it, these restrictions are needlessly holding that day back. Bush's restrictions must be lifted immediately.

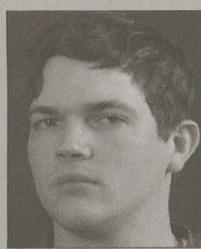
Mike Walters is a senior psychology major. Graphic by Gracie Arenas



Giving the Iraqis what they want

Saddam must be handed over to Iraqi government with June 30 transfer of power

As the June 30 deadline for the transfer of power in Iraq looms dangerously close and the stability of an Iraqi government seems like a fantasy, there may be one opportunity to allow an interim regime to establish itself as a legitimate force with the Iraqi people.



DAVID SHOEMAKER

That opportunity is a trial of Saddam Hussein on the Iraqi people's own terms. The United States should hand Saddam over on the 30th with the keys to Baghdad and let the new Iraqi government pass its first test.

But currently, America is taking all the heat for holding Saddam and looks like it is waffling on its pledge to give him to Iraqi authorities for a trial. According to an article from the BBC, President Bush has stated that Saddam will not be handed over until "appropriate security" is in place first.

If that is going to be the standard required for a transfer, then it may be a long time until Iraq will be ready to take him. And the longer America holds him after June 30, the more heat

will come from international groups like the Red Cross and Iraqis who want a stab at justice or revenge regarding Saddam.

The Red Cross has stated that since the United States had designated Saddam a POW, he could not be held once hostilities were over.

Although there are still hostilities ongoing in Iraq, they are no longer from Saddam's government, but from nihilist Baathists and fanatical Islamists who only wish to see the new Iraqi regime and the United States fail.

So the simplest way out of this brewing mess is to turn Saddam over to the Iraqis with the autonomy. Although there may be security issues with an escape by Saddam, there are also reasons mitigating against his escape.

There are lots of people in Iraq who would like to see Saddam dead. Islamists who fight

alongside Baathists against U.S. infantry would probably have no qualms about killing Saddam if he came across their path, and he did things to plenty of average Iraqis to make them angry enough to kill him as well. Saddam may have been hiding in his hole as much from his own people as from U.S. troops hunting him.

"So the simplest way out of this brewing mess is to turn Saddam over to the Iraqis with the autonomy."

So if he wants to live, Saddam's best chance, although it is still very slim, would be to hope an Iraqi court would not sentence him to death for his crimes. And he has committed many crimes that will be very easily tied to him. According to the BBC, he could be tried for a number of activities, from using poison gas on Kurds to starting two wars which his country has lost.

But the key thing is that the Iraqi government will be the one trying Saddam, and it would like to do so as soon as possible. It would be a huge boon to its legitimacy. It could

pass judgment on Saddam in a way that fits with the desires of those harmed the most by his tyranny—the Iraqi people.

The new Iraqi government could finally close the book on a Baathist/Saddam return by making him a criminal enemy of the new republic. The government could also prove that it stands for the Iraqi people in a most basic fashion, by ridding them of a man who dominated and ruined their country for over 20 years. The government would also be able to garner support from beyond the United States for prosecuting Saddam as well.

Bush should not deny the new Iraqi government the opportunity to test its mettle by trying Saddam. In fact, by failing to aid them in that effort by handing over Saddam on June 30, the United States may be dooming the new regime to eventual failure.

David Shoemaker is a senior management major.

MAIL CALL

Groups other than YCT also using shock value

In response to Nicholas Davis' June 10 column:

In today's culture, shock value is needed to get points across. It is used commonly on this campus from as high up as the administration, to any number of student organizations.

YCT is not the only organization on campus that utilizes shock value regularly. For the past three years, the V-Day group has offered such great games as "Pin the Clit," "Dress Your Own Vagina" and "Best Moan" in addition to the performance of Vagina Monologues in the middle of February. There is GLBTA & Allies that host "Coming Out" Week and there is that anti-abortion group that displays pictures of aborted fetuses for everyone to see. Every time I walk across campus and see all that stuff, it shocks me.

So Mr. Davis, next time you write about

shock value and who uses it, perhaps you should be more "diverse" and include other organizations that strive to make us aware of what they think is "right."

I am thankful that we have organizations like YCT on this campus that try and keep us from going "amok," and if it takes the shock value to do it, then so be it. Everyone else is doing it.

Eric Brown Class of 2004

Food Services' options in summer too limited

Food Services is attempting to balance its budget at the expense of the health of the students. They have chosen to provide a healthy, well-balanced meal containing vegetables and healthy drink options at only one meal — lunch — at the Commons Dining Center. Those who live on campus and are unable, due to class or work schedules, to go to the Commons for

lunch, are forced to eat either high-fat, greasy food, or sandwiches for lunch and supper. This lack of variety is redundant at best and nauseating when repeated for several weeks. Such a repetitive diet, which lacks both healthy beverages such as milk or fruit juice and any vegetables, cannot be healthy.

On the weekend, the situation is even more appalling. No breakfast is available, on the only days when some students have the time to eat breakfast, and the only options for lunch are an unhealthy selection of fried foods found at the Golf Course Snack Bar or an overpriced, high-sodium, often high-fat "meal" from one of the convenience stores. The options for dinner are not much better. Instead of the fatty options found at the Golf Course Snack Bar, one has the choice of the fatty options found at Stone Willie's Pizza in the Commons.

This lack of regard for the sensibilities and health of the students is disgusting and unjust. We pay a significant fee in exchange for healthy food and convenience. This summer, Food Services is pro-

viding neither. This lack of concern is offensive to those of us for whom the cost of meals represents a substantial portion of our income. While I understand the financial implications of providing food, I feel that a food services department at a

first-class university should behave more responsibly with regard to the health and needs of its patrons.

Anne Price Class of 2003

