

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Irishman sheds light on homeland conflict

Dear Editor:

As one of the very few Irish people on campus, I have been extremely interested to read the various opinions on the North of Ireland, as aired in the Viewpoint section of the Observer. In fact it is quite heartening to see people take an interest in the conflict that has had such an enormous effect on my life. However I am sorry to say that a number of the articles served only to restate biased propaganda which has merely one objective: the demonization of the nationalist cause.

It has been one of the greatest successes of the British propaganda machine that it has managed to convey to the entire world, and believe it or not Ireland as well, the opinion that the conflict is between two fanatical religious groups fighting over some unimportant biblical issues. In fact, the British presence is the core of the problem. They convey the perception of a religious war to exonerate themselves from blame.

The undeniable historical truth is that Protestants have been continuously at the forefront of Irish insurrection against the British, from Wolfe Tone in the late eighteenth century to John Mitchell in 1840's to Charles Stewart

Parnell.

The central issue, which is as important now as it was back at the time of the Presbyterian led United Irishmen's revolt in 1790's, is "Should the people of Ireland govern themselves?" And by 'People of Ireland' I mean every single person, man and woman, Catholic, Protestant and dissenter, who is a native of any part of the island.

This question arose yet again at the end of the First World War. This time the British government reneged on a Bill of Parliament which was already passed to give Home rule to Ireland. (Note up until this time all of Ireland was controlled by Britain). It reneged for the simple reason of political expediency. The Conservative party in Britain realized if they could count on the Pro-unionist support in the North Eastern area of Ireland they would have a majority in Parliament.

As a pay-off six counties of Ireland were not given the home rule demanded by the majority of the people of Ireland. These six North Eastern counties were specifically selected so that a pro unionist majority existed, which was Protestant.

Over the years from 1921 to 1969 var-

ious techniques were used to discriminate against the Catholic people of this area. This included gerrymandering, and institutionalized discrimination in housing, work, education and voting rights. From this unjust society sprung the Civil rights movement of the late 60's. From this the IRA rose. In the mid 60's they had approximately twenty activists and virtually no arms of any note. A fact that is constantly overlooked is that for such an organization to develop into the most powerful guerrilla group in the world, with a huge arsenal, they had to have had the support of a large section of the public. The sole thing a guerrilla group needs to survive is public support, most importantly to provide 'safe houses' and personnel.

Growing up in Northern Ireland has been a great and sometimes terrifying experience. However it has taught me never to take so called 'facts' for granted. I have come to learn that most information directed at me has been tainted either consciously or subconsciously to demonize those people wishing to change the status quo.

I consider the prospect of Gerry Adams talking at this college a great

opportunity for all students to hear another view on Northern Ireland. Not the one of murderous psychopaths generated by the British media, nor the one of bigoted self-interest, but one of peace. The party he leads has more councilors on the Belfast City council than any other party. One in every three nationalists in the North of Ireland continually vote for Sinn Fein despite the popular media categorization of such voters as apologists for murder. Adams does not condone the killing of any person, as it is morally reprehensible, although he like myself can understand why some people turned to arms.

Since 1983, not August 1994, he has been working on bringing a peaceful solution to the conflict, by ensuring the seeds of such regrettable violent unrest are removed for good. By doing so he wishes to remove all guns from Irish politics. He has in my opinion done a great deal. To use an Edward deBono analogy, let's stop digging the same hole just because we have so much invested in it, and let's have the courage to climb out and dig new holes, for it is there where the treasure may lie.

TERRY MCGIVERN
Alumni Hall

AND IN THIS CORNER...

Weird things that make South Bend our home

No clever intro to this one. And no "top ten lists" for me; I'm tired of those.

* **"The Sabbath."** Nothing around here is open on Sunday. Even the buses don't run, which is really annoying. A remnant of the "blue laws," I assume, along with the prohibition of alcohol sales, which are designed to make everyone observe "the Lord's Day." Regardless of the religious intolerance inherent in this rule, I have to wonder why Indiana still allows the Colts to play on Sunday. The players and coaches, the refs, the vendors, the rent-a-cops, all work in blatant defiance of the Lord's Will. Of course, if there was no football on Sunday in Indiana, I don't suppose the rest of us would enjoy our day of rest.

* **Motor vehicle oddness.** I have heard that in Indiana there are no emissions tests for poisonous gases in exhaust fumes, or that each county is allowed to decide for itself (which amounts to the same thing). Apparently there are also no vehicle inspections for headlights, brakes, etc. I'd estimate that about 1 in 10 cars and trucks here would be illegal to drive in New York.

As far as obeying traffic laws, I have yet to see anyone actually stop at a stop sign. Drivers gun their accelerator pedals, snorting derision at arrogant pedestrians who dare to walk across intersections. Less than half ever bother signaling to turn. Some guy in a Jeep Wrangler has almost run me over twice at the corner of Notre Dame and Angela by zooming around his right turns. There was a pretty good accident there a few weeks ago, one of the cars going so fast that the other one had done a 180 after losing most of its front end. The fat guy in the Bears sweatshirt was trying to sell the survivors ND/USC tickets for two hundred bucks.

* **Five percent.** The first time I saw that billboard — "Keeping Your Taxes Low: Indiana Hooray" — I couldn't believe it was for real. I heard that a Republican gubernatorial candidate proclaimed his intent to eliminate sales tax for one whole month if elected. In any east coast state this guy would be laughed out of politics. I didn't realize Indiana had so much money burning a hole in its pockets: evidently the profits from the state lotto are used to reduce the cost of license plates. Now there's a worthy cause.

* **The Cult of Lou-seriality.** Advertising "Lou masks" on television is tacky, but admittedly the profits do go to charity. This only follows the capitalist credo decrying "money for nothing." There must be a number of football fans out there who normally wouldn't give charity even a wooden nickel but would fall over each other trying to get their drunken hands on a mask depicting their football god.

This neck-brace is something else. This is really something else. Lou Holtz puts his neckbrace up for sale at an auction. I assume the proceeds go to charity, though I've heard nothing about the beneficiary's identity. Still, what kind of loony would want to buy a neck-

brace? What the hell would you do with one anyway? Why this man merits such fanatical reverence is beyond me. I thought idolatry was considered "pagan" by the Church.

* **Notre Dame 1812.** Someone told me that the playing of the 1812 Overture and accompanying student choreography was "tradition" at ND football games. Who in the world knows why Tchaikovsky has anything to do with Notre Dame, and why the students *sieg heil* over and over on national television. It looks just like a scene out of Pink Floyd's the Wall. Add a bunch of Lou masks and it would be identical.

* **Working 9-4.** Nobody here seems to work an eight-hour day. Banks close at 4 during the week, the post office closes at 4:30, and neither are open on Saturday. Of course, this was also the case in Michigan, so maybe it's a mid-western thing. If the banks and post office in my little ultra-right wing rural town can be open 8-12 Saturdays, I don't see why they can't do the same here.

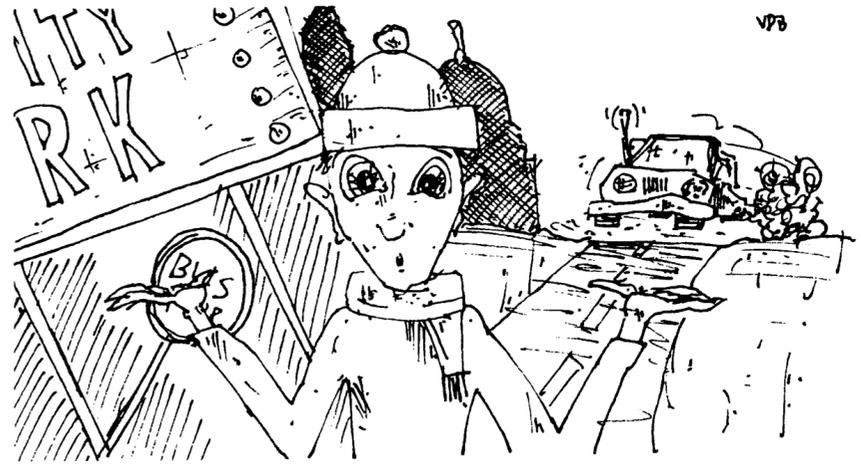
* **The air waves.** I can't find any decent radio stations. Not that I like radio in general, but the stations around here are exceptionally pathetic. And what's up with these local TV stations? We've got the religious nuts and the farm report anchorman, both speaking in drawls as if they're Southerners. And, of course, the Lou Holtz Show, which runs every day every five hours or so. I just can't get enough of the man.

* **The weather.** I don't mind cold weather, but this constant 20 mph wind sucks. This isn't really a weird factor, since Indiana has no control over its weather. Just a whiny complaint from someone who misses mountains and valleys. And where's the snow? I expect a foot by Thanksgiving, dammit, and a constant two feet on the ground December through April. That would be cool.

* **Saving the Best for Last — the University Park Mall.** Oh, what to say about this jewel of South Bend. The first indication of this oddity is the upbeat sign that greets your entrance to its law-abiding corridors:

"Welcome to University Park Mall. To enhance everyone's shopping enjoyment, management prohibits: loitering, horseplay, vandalism, loud or offensive language, portable radios, sitting on planters and boisterous behavior! Violators will be shot" —uh, I mean, "Violators will be removed from the mall."

Let's analyze this sign.
Loitering. "To wander about aimlessly...to move in a slow or idle manner." Seems to me that store owners would want their customers to wander about aimlessly, since customers who lose sense of time usually spend the most money. If this was not the case, stores



would all have clocks on their walls and wouldn't play elevator music.

* **Horseplay.** I've seen this one before in other malls. Basically, little kids can't be little kids. "Good children are seen and not heard."

* **Vandalism.** Duh. "We prohibit anything that is already considered illegal. No mugging or homicide allowed."

* **Loud or offensive language.** Offensive to whom? I find it offensive that you compare my shenanigans to that of a hairy and sweaty quadruped. Ever heard of the first Amendment?

* **Portable radios** Yep, those walkmen thingys are darned annoying to those of us who can't hear what someone else is listening to.

* **Sitting on planters** This is just plain strange. Were there really so many people who did this that it warranted a sign?

* **Boisterous behavior!** What the hell is this supposed to mean? Generally having fun or enjoying shopping? The exclamation point after this is very amusing, as if you hadn't gotten the point by now.

Basically, the owners of the mall don't want any teenagers or basketball players interrupting all the baby-stroller pushing young homogenous couples from blissfully drifting from uptight middle-class clothing store to uptight middle-class clothing store. Even more telling is another sign out front of the mall, naming a certain Mr. DeBartolo as proprietor. Might this be the same DeBartolo after whom is named a singularly ugly Notre Dame building? And, wonder of wonders, there's a bus from Notre Dame campus to University Park Mall, but none going from ND to Scottsdale Mall. Rumor has it that, since Scottsdale recently added a food court and an additional three movie theaters, the University Park Mall will be doing the same, "to compete."

Add this to the insinuation by the University to its undergraduates that South Bend is so completely crime-ridden that it's dangerous to walk off campus after dark, and add this to the fact that ND has been buying all the land around its borders and turning perfectly good houses into more empty lots, as well as fighting anyone who wants to build or even renovate along nearby avenues, and a distinct pattern emerges. Hmmm, maybe there are things about South Bend and Notre Dame that aren't so weird after all...

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