

# VIEWPOINT

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## THE OBSERVER

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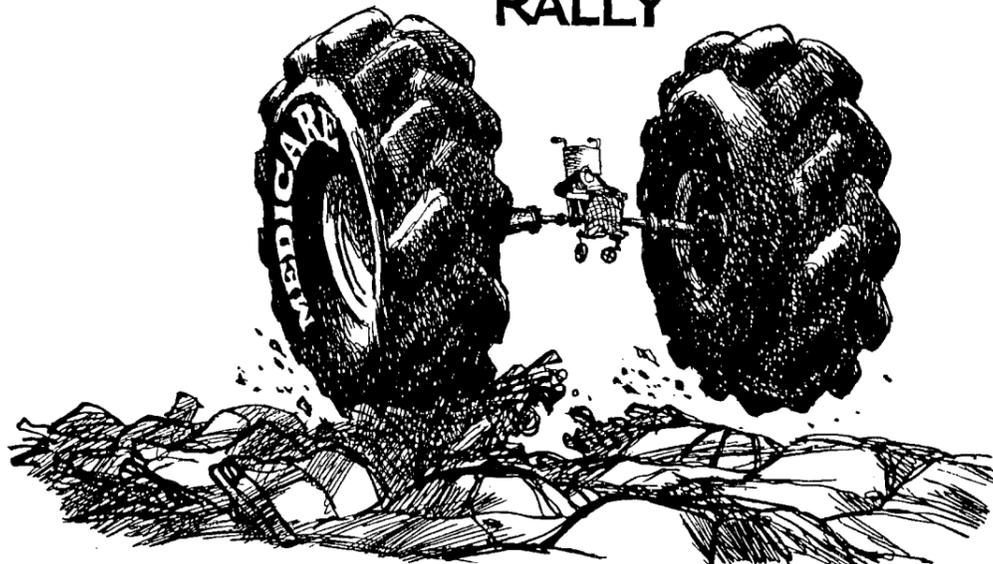
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## MONSTER WHEELCHAIR RALLY



### ■ AND IN THIS CORNER...

## Is Notre Dame merely a football fun factory?

Enough of my hedging. Let me introduce myself properly. I am a graduate student at Notre Dame, and I can only afford to go here thanks to a scholarship whose funding is provided through the campus bookstore receipts (keep this in mind if I seem to complain too much: I am not ungrateful to be here).

I'm originally from Upstate New York — no, not Buffalo. Most people apparently don't realize that there is something between Buffalo and New York City besides the Syracuse football dome. There are millions of acres of rural land dotted with small towns, not unlike many parts of the Midwest.

I got my B.S. from a small liberal arts college called Bard in Upstate. It's not surprising that not many people have heard of it. Most of the one thousand students there come from new York City, Connecticut or New Jersey, so, as you might imagine, it's much different than Notre Dame. This is one reason why it's been a little difficult for me to adjust to the "Domers" way of life. Let me explain.

Bard does not have a football team. Whereas Notre Dame seems to be known only for football, Bard is known for being radical and intellectual. There are sports teams there, but Bard does not offer sports scholarships, and subsequently sports are not very important or popular (or played well, for that matter).

How is it possible for college students to live through an academic year without a football game? The answer is quite simple: Parties. There are lots and lots of parties at Bard, and not many of them are related at all to what at Notre Dame is evidently called "the dorm family."

While Bard freshmen are housed collectively, everyone else enters a "room

draw" based on seniority. Despite this, dorms often acquire peculiar characteristics from the various personalities who live there, thus retaining some semblance of a familial unit. However, interpersonal relationships are chosen, not forced.

This difference between dorm settings strikes me as a crucial one. At Bard the student quickly learns how to meet people he or she has never encountered before, whether of different race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual preference. Unlike Notre Dame, which seems to demand that its students obey it as a surrogate parent, Bard insists that its students learn how to deal with problems themselves with minimal outside guidance.

## Matt Apple

This is not to say that Bard doesn't care about its students. But there is a difference between being

protective and being supportive. From what I have seen so far at Notre Dame, undergraduate students here are allowed few privileges and responsibilities outside of their academic duties.

Instead, students are trapped in the same dorm year after year, funneled along the same sidewalks every day to classes which will perpetuate the endless cycle of the drab American workplace, subjected to moral brainwashing and stultifying homogeneity, while the arena is elevated as the only acceptable outlet for aggression and expression in the form of hero worship and Nuremberg Rally-archetypal chants.

To cut to the chase, my main problems with Notre Dame society are football, bureaucracy, beer and religion. And please, for Christ's sake, don't take any of this personally. I'm talking generalities here. I have met many friendly, intelligent people here; it's the overall

mentality which irks me. My difficulty assimilating the culture here stems from living outside Main Street, USA for four years, and now that I find myself living so close to the "normal" mindset, I discover many harmful things in it.

Again, I'm not writing this to vilify Notre Dame students whose parents evidently chose long ago to shelter them from undesirable aspects of the outside world. For the most part, many students here seem to have never experienced life outside this oppressive Catholic atmosphere, and I find that really sad, almost scary. College should be a time of experimentation and discovery, not indoctrination and intellectual cowardice. Heightened social awareness, consciousness-raising, if you will.

Yes, I'm a self-professed egotistical anarchist. Who likes beer. B-E-E-R. It's good for the body, good for the soul. G-O-O-D.

That said, I can now turn to the topic at hand ("I told you that to tell you this..."), namely Interhall football. Now, I like sports: there's nothing wrong with sports, per se, provided the goal is enjoyment, pleasure, personal satisfaction or contentment. Me, I like to win, but if I don't it's no big deal. It's just a game. They're all just games.

Combining sports, namely football, with the "We Are Family" dorm attitude on campus results in a model of American foreign policy, the "us" versus "them" Big Brother attitude the U.S. has been forcing down the collective throats of all of its rightfully resentful neighbors.

Only in America are students taught to view their fellows as competitors. Only in America are we taught that the only way to enjoy life is to beat the hell out of somebody. "No!" you say, "you've gone too far!" Then why is everyone so up in arms about an "off-campus" sports team? An undergraduate who moves off-campus in preparation for living independently in the real world should be forbidden to participate in recreation sports because he has somehow "be-

trayed" his former dorm?

All of these complaints about students playing against their former dormmates — these guys are "traitors" for some "dorm spirit" reason — does no one find this ridiculous except me? It's just a game. Repeat after me. It's-just-a-game. Who cares who wins- recreation sports are just diversions to break up the monotony of classwork.

I blame the dorm mentality here; I've been told that dorms take the place of frats, since there are none here. There were no frats at Bard, and we didn't need to be stuck in the same dorm every year to have fun. We didn't need a dorm family in order to have friends, either.

I concede the importance of freshmen dorms to ease the transition into college life, but to make everybody stay put is completely unnecessary. Creating false families and alliances, false enemies and rivalries — how is a student supposed to mature as a person with all of this smoke-and-mirror societal fabrication?

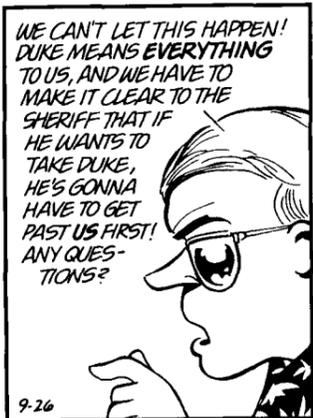
You could make the argument that it is important to prepare students for roles in American society. The American Way, you might say, is based upon rivalries and competition, pitting families and communities against one another in the modern, free market capitalist, eat-or-be-eaten fact of life.

Maybe it's wrong. Maybe there are already too many robots and zombies out there, and maybe there are already too many university factories churning out more. Maybe Notre Dame doesn't have to be a factory.

And maybe it's just okay to want to play football for the hell of it and damn the consequences. or does everyone think football is the most important thing in this life? NEXT WEEK: Loans, Beer, and You.

Matthew Apple is a creative writing grad student at Notre Dame currently researching his next column. contact him at matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu for snide and witty banter.

### ■ DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU

### ■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Going to Church doesn't make you a Christian anymore than going to the garage makes you a car."

—Dr. Laurence J. Peter