A Place for All

What is the purpose of a campus newspaper? Should it be the official voice of the university? Should it be weighed down with a strict political agenda?

We don’t think so. We feel that a campus newspaper should provide a place for people to discuss, debate and dialogue about issues affecting the university community. As the paper of a church affiliated university, another dimension can be added to The Weather Vane’s mission. It should be a place where people can share their views on current issues facing the church.

This semester has been chock full of ground shaking events, events that have tested EMU’s strength and mission as a church affiliated university. As the paper of the constituency, explicitly expressed in one letter that is published in this edition, is that The Weather Vane has become, “a place for some ‘disgruntled’ faculty to air their ‘dirty laundry.’” Where else should church and university community members be able to express their concerns with church doctrines in an attempt to better discern the way of God? Or shouldn’t they?

While The Weather Vane is first and foremost a student publication, it is also a place for all community members, including faculty, to express themselves in a professional, academic manner.

During our time at EMU we, as students, are inextricably linked with the faculty. Our interactions with them take place in classrooms, hallways, around campus. Keep the discussion going.

We thank everyone: students, faculty and staff, community members and administrators, who have taken part in the discursions on the opinion pages of The Weather Vane this semester.

We hope that this publication will continue to play the role of an open medium for dialogue during the new year and that it will serve as a model to help develop other spaces for conversation around campus. Keep the discussion going.

Michael Kniss

Michael Kniss

A New Perspective On Conflict

I’m confident that people are the most valuable, significant resource and asset we have. The most important thing I believe in my life is to find the beauty, love and uniqueness in my friends, family, co-workers and individuals comprising my greater community. I admit I fall short of this task time and time again.

My heart aches when I see people, breathing heavily, surrounded by wondrous miracles, being hurt. It is heartening to tell someone what they believe is wrong. It is heartening to tell someone the way they live is wrong. It is okay not to agree or understand where everyone is coming from, for we all have different perspectives and that is what makes our world so beautiful and exciting.

I would like to see a new approach to conflict. Conflict is not wrong. Disagreement is good. What we can control is the way we deal with this.

“Conflict in not wrong. Disagreement is good. What we can control is the way we deal with this.”

Nate Hoffer

The Weather Vane

Christians, Social Prejudice and the Myth of the American Welfare State

Now that Thanksgiving is over, we have officially entered the Christmas spirit. A month we will bask in the glow of Christmas lights strung around our rooms, houses and trees. We will live in a state of tosy cheeks and cher, giving p r o b a b l y receiving just as much) and being thankful for the many blessings bestowed upon us. We will also be reminded every day to remember those who are not as blessed with abundance as we.

This constant reminder is valuable. We should reach out to the less fortunate at Christmas, helping them through difficult times and with specific needs. This season's holiday cheer is a tribute to the many who will hopefully never fade.

Yet, it is somewhat hypocritical to spend one season abroad, year giving aid to the poor and use the other eleven to take it away. There are few political systems criticized as much as the American Welfare State.

“Apparently, not only is the welfare state a waste of money, but it also fosters ‘welfare dependency,’ laziness (idleness) and a subculture of drugs and crime.” For instance, the myth goes that food stamps are used only to buy liquor, or sold in order to have cash with which to buy drugs. This logic has been used to attack the continued distribution of food stamps. As a result, since 1994 the extent of aid by food stamps has steadily declined.

This “logic,” however, is based on the ignorant notion that all poor people are alcoholics or drug addicts, which is definitely not the case. In fact, it is estimated that only “only a few percent” of the food stamp program is used to buy drugs and liquor.* This seems like an insignificant amount of abuse to justify the scaling back of the entire program.

What about the remaining 95%? How many poor families who are at risk of losing their means of nourishment? Of course, there is the argument to consider that welfare creates a cultural tendency towards lazy dependency on aid. Well, this seems like an awfully uninformed argument when one considers the economic racism that is present throughout American society. When a poor minority is so often turned away from job after job because of skin color that they give up hope, and their only income is government welfare, who is to blame? Surely not society’s rejects. Is it their fault that McDonald’s would rather hire a white high school student than a poor mother or poor father who qualifies for no other occupation? I think not.

Politicians make a third, “more humane” justification for welfare cuts. They claim that the cost is too high to fit into the national budget. This is ridiculous! How many bag lunches could the government buy for needy children for the cost of one heat-seeking missile? I would wager quite a few with cut defense spending? Or yet another solution: taxes. As much as Americans complain about taxes, they remain almost the lowest in the world. Of Sweden, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Britain, Australia and Japan, only Japan’s citizens pay fewer taxes than we do.* We could very easily raise the tax rate to provide a few more services for the poor of our nation.

We are food, healthcare, education and housing mere luxuries that only the lucky are entitled too? Do we still follow the ethics of Social Darwinism, believing that poverty is a simple birth defect? Surely hope is not the case. America is a nation of abundant wealth, with the ability to serve all of its citizens equally. America must seize the opportunity to support her citizens through welfare programs, but increase them. We are being left in the dust by nations such as Sweden the Denmark, who follow a system of welfare capitalism, providing universal healthcare and education. We have more than adequate resources to truly make a difference within our own country.

We must continue the fight against social prejudice. We must inform each other, until every child, of no matter what background or ethnicity, knows that they have the right to education and help. We face real struggle, giving the those who are hungry food, and the sick medical support.