

EDITORIAL

Single issue media

Unless you've been living on another planet, without cable TV, you're probably aware that there's a war raging in the Persian Gulf.

It's difficult to miss. From the moment we wake up, we are bombarded with information on the war, whether it be from newspapers, TV or radio. If you want 24-hour war coverage, all you have to do is tune into CNN. Isn't this great? . . . Hardly.

We have absorbed ourselves in war to the point of obsession and it is affecting our health, work and basic everyday life.

We live, breathe, eat and sleep it — experiencing its horror vicariously. And although we're on the side-lines, it seems to loom everywhere, if not the physical images, certainly a sense of terror or tension at what we're not being told or shown. The saddest part of all this is that many other distresses are going almost unnoticed. For example, Gorbachev's systematic crackdown in the Baltic states had initially received some coverage, but now it has dwindled to almost nothing.

It is not only global problems that people are neglecting, we are also ignoring problems on our homefront. Our economy is mired with a recession, burdened with high interest rates, and further threatened by the breakdown of global trade talks. Unemployment is soaring out of control, as word of more layoffs are received almost on a daily basis, and we are still trying to adjust to the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST). Why are people not showing concern for these problems? For example, since the war broke out, the government's GST hotline has been receiving fewer and fewer calls. Surely, Canadians have not come to accept the tax this soon.

Canada's problems don't stop at economics either. There exists the real danger that our nation may break up. The threat of Quebec's separation has increased, the crisis with our native people has not yet been settled, the Tories have stripped CBC and VIA down to their bare bones, post-secondary schools continue to suffer from underfunding, there are too many people dependent upon food banks for survival, and people continue to live in the streets because they can't afford a home.

We're in a mess. And the Mulroney and his beleaguered federal government know it, registering the lowest ever (12 per cent) popularity in nation-wide opinion polls.

What coverage have these domestic issues been given lately? Next to nothing. They have all been put on the back shelf since the outbreak of the "international" war.

Blame for this must be shared by both the media and the public. People have been concerned about the media's manipulation and its agenda setting, however, this is exactly what is continuing to happen. Instead of complaining that the media is flooding our brains with government propaganda, maybe we should be concerned with the issues which the press is not covering?

The daily events happening in the Persian Gulf are terrible — no one can deny that — but we cannot let the war eclipse our daily lives. While this may be extremely difficult for those with loved ones trapped in the Middle East, for the rest of us life must go on.

Some might argue vehemently against this point but, unfortunately, it is self-evident. Just look around you. We still have to pay our bills, write essays, fight rush-hour traffic on our highways and public transit. We can't just hold our breath and wait until the war is over.



LETTERS

Excalibur welcomes letters to the editor on all topics. We will publish space permitting, letters up to 500 words in length. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name, signature and telephone number. The opinions expressed belong to the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of Excalibur staff or directors. However, we will refuse letters that are racist, sexist, libellous or those which attempt to incite hatred toward an individual or an identifiable group. All material is subject to editing. All submissions must be addressed to the Editor-in-chief, Room 111, Central Square.

Petrified by war coverage

To the editor,

I've been reading the articles and letters in the Jan. 21 *Excalibur* and the Jan. 16 *Lexicon*. Frankly, I'm petrified at what the two papers have covered in these issues, namely, the war in the Persian Gulf.

The most frightening thing about this war is that I watch soldiers who are between two and three years younger than I, going to fight. Every time I see these carefree men who claim to be prepared for war, I picture myself with an army haircut in khaki attire.

Personally, this image is all too real, because I am an American citizen. While Canadians may be conscripted, the draft will almost definitely begin with Americans.

It has been frightening to hear the talk about drafts, but at the same time I feel that I cannot sit in my comfortable Thornhill home while people die to protect my freedom.

Freedom is a very precious thing, and fighting for freedom is honorable in my mind; however, I don't know that I am willing to sacrifice my life for others. Maybe I'm selfish. Then I notice a point mentioned in *Excalibur* that others have died to fight for my freedom. After reminding myself that this is true, I am ashamed for not being on the front lines. This does not change the fact that I am petrified with fear.

Another issue for me is a moral one. I don't know if I am capable of killing another human being. The movies on Viet Nam seem to indicate a need to rid soldiers of all emotion except anger. I don't think I could be that angry, but maybe it's possible that I could. Maybe I too could kill. I wonder how this would change me.

I feel as if my life at this time is a seesaw, after worrying about the draft, I watch the highly sensationalized war on television. I feel a surge of patriotism welling up into my heart. I feel that I must DO something personally because I see the things Hussein has done. I see Israel being bombed and people dying from fear. Fear of nerve gas caused the death of a three year old child and elderly people. Fear of terrorism caused buildings at York to be evacuated. Fear of terrorism caused the synagogues at which I teach and pray to be policed, searched, and locked up. THIS IS WHERE I PRAY, DAMMIT! And I try to forgive myself for the hatred that surges, boiling to the surface of my body. My fists clench; my hands sweat; my muscles tense; my jaw tightens. It is just as I become this angry that I understand how I could kill without remorse and I return again to a shocked state.

I understand the peace activists, but I do not agree with them. In the end I must support the war, but I wish it was not necessary to do so.

It is truly a shame that we live in a world in which freedom is not a right, and I hope to God that peace will come soon. If war continues, I will continue my inner struggle with which I'm sure each person of draftable age must cope. I wish you all good luck.

Aaron Tornberg

Blood donor discrimination

To the editor

On Jan. 21, I was prepared to offer my support and my blood to one of Canada's most respected institutions, the Canadian Red Cross Society.

When I approached the station they had established in Central Square, I was requested to complete their donor health assessment questionnaire.

According to this questionnaire, its primary functions are to "make sure you are in good health," and to protect "those who will receive your blood." This questionnaire, however, does more than protect the blood supply, it enables Red Cross to discriminate against gay donors.

Question no. 12 of the questionnaire refers to the deadly disease that affects everyone, AIDS. This question is designed to prevent donors who are engaged in high risk activities from having their blood used for "patients."

The reasons behind this question are noble and the information provided by the response is necessary, but the criteria the Red Cross use to define high risk activity is outdated. According to them, if a male has "had sex with another male" since 1977 he is at risk. This is not true. Homosexual activity does not place one at risk, whereas engaging in any type of unsafe sex does.

There is not any stipulation anywhere in the questionnaire regarding heterosexuals who place themselves at risk by not practicing safe sex. Why not? I know "gay" students who have never placed themselves at risk, and have enjoyed intimate physical relationships with other men. I also have "straight" friends who have engaged in unsafe heterosexual sex. There is no doubt that the latter individuals have opened themselves up to HIV infections, while the former individuals have protected their health.

The Red Cross' mishandling of AIDS in relation to risk activity is (at best) pitiful, and (at worst) unforgivable. Their ignorance regarding HIV and safe sex have not enabled them to completely protect their blood

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