

EDITORIAL

The road to peace paved by a free press

Few people would argue that freedom of the press is a prerequisite for freedom of speech.

The Second World War was apparently fought so freedom loving individuals could speak their minds.

But, today we have learned that war apparently changes everything a free society accepts as a given. How else can we explain the Canadian public's willingness to be kept in the dark about what is actually going on in the Middle East.

To say that the media is being manipulated by the armed forces would be a gross understatement.

The press reports that American missiles are hitting only military targets while Saddam Hussein's Scuds can't seem to hit anything but civilians. The allied forces have air superiority we are constantly told, yet the "madman from Baghdad" keeps firing mobile missiles at an irksome rate.

Part of the problem has been that no reporters have been allowed on the field of battle without military approval and escort.

As a result, there has been no real piece of news dealing with casualties, including numbers and where deaths took place. That is because no story can be reported without military clearance. As General Schwartzkopf has stated, "We refuse to get into the body count business."

This war is being covered by the press unlike any war in the past. It is a war run by the government, with coverage from press releases.

In both the Second World War and Vietnam, the press was allowed freedom of movement, with some censorship. However, in the Gulf War, the press cannot even get to the units.

This is censorship of the worst kind. The intention of the allied military is as clear as Saddam's attempts to drag Israel into the war.

The United States leadership knows that the popularity of this war will decline dramatically with each death reported. So the simple answer is don't give out any bad news which will undermine the "war effort."

The young people who parade around in anticipation of "kicking some butt" during Operation Desert Storm are too young to remember the grisly video footage which ultimately ended the Vietnam war.

Those images were not that dissimilar from the newsreel footage of the either the Korean War or the Second World War. The only difference was the timing of their release.

The Vietnam war was the first war during which the horrors of war were beamed into our living rooms. We didn't like it and something was done about it.

That is why it is so strange we have allowed ourselves to watch and read propaganda more often than news these days. Freedom cannot be served when the truth is denied. That is why a free press in the Middle East is more likely to achieve peace than any missile or bomb ever could.

Excalibur is having its weekly staff meeting today at 4:00 pm

EXCALIBUR

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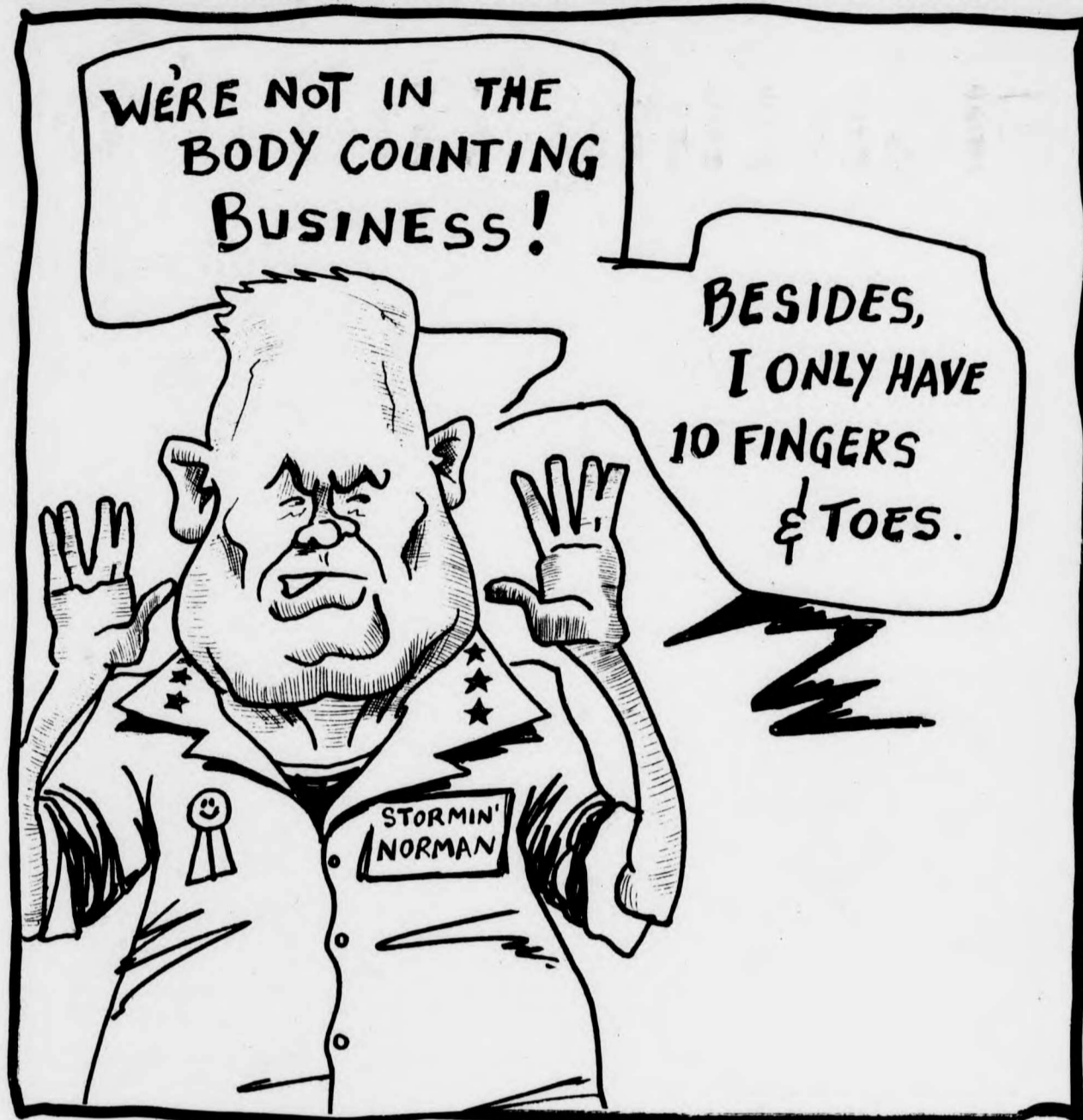
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The distinct opinions and articles appearing in Excalibur belong first and foremost to the individual writers and are not necessarily shared by any other Excalibur staff or board member.

Final editorial responsibility is retained by the Editor-in-chief.

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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.

Excalibur feature writer treated unfairly

To the editor,

I too, upon reading the article, "Black History: the Struggle for Identity," felt compelled to write something that would express my disappointment at the manner in which the article was written. Yet anger (unlike the other rebuttals I read) was not quite the emotion.

Firstly, I would like to say that I do not think that Ms. Parris was/had been treated very fairly.

Her intentions (I think) were initially good—Blacks are definitely struggling to find a solid foundation. Unfortunately the article was written in such a way that clouded as well as took away from the issue itself.

Yes, Ms. Parris wrote in a way that depicted blacks in a negative (if not different) light. But the real problem does not (just) lie in this individual's perception of her own people, granted whites may have initiated the stereotypes that exist, but the real problem lies in the survival and maintenance of these prejudices by the very people that suffer from it.

That is the problem—how many times are we going to hear it? And what are we going to do about it? Instead of chastizing a person for pointing out (through her writings) our biggest problem, re-education of blacks by blacks should be moving into high gear, but it isn't.

No one is denying that racism, sexism or oppression exists, but how do you expect to clean up society if you can't even clean up your own house?

What also really bothered me were the labels Ms. Belasco and Ms. Rodolphe so graciously dubbed Ms. Parris—"sell-out, wannabe"—WELL WHO THE HELL ARE YOU???

I would like to know if I, as a black person, go to school, speak with a Euro-Canadian accent, wear fashionable clothes, strive for and attain a prosperous job—why am I

considered a sell-out? (And not, may I add, by the white community, but by my own).

Why is it when other immigrants to THE EXACT SAME THING they are considered "fighters" and "success stories"? How come that makes me white? Does that mean that by not going to school, by speaking with a thick West Indian or New York accent, by attending "roots" parties, and by having a job that pays minimum wage that I'm black? Does that make me MORE black? Tell me, please, I'd like to know.

When you think about it, the most profound sort of sellout is not blacks

to whites, but blacks to blacks.

Don't you think that it's pathetic when some of your own people shun you because you don't believe that by adopting a certain hairstyle, walk, accent, or slang, that that in itself will create some kind of identity?

I'm a human being, I'm a woman, I'm black and damn proud of me. But I don't sit around pointing fingers, making excuses or taking shit. I'm not stupid; of course racism exists and of course I fight to the best of my abilities. Yet my fight, our fight would be a hell of a lot easier if my opponent came at me from the front, and not the back as well.

Annemarie James

No cheer for leftist stand

To the editor

Your Feb. 11 editorial shows clearly that military censorship in the United States is going far beyond what is required to protect genuine and legitimate security interests. It prevents coverage which would reveal the true brutality of this war.

At least one journalist has been removed from the "press pool" (which has privileged access to information) after writing a news story that didn't suit the military's public relations strategists.

A small group of radical papers, including the Village Voice, The Nation, and Mother Jones, is challenging these restrictions on the grounds that they unduly restrict freedom of the press.

To my knowledge this lawsuit has never been mentioned by the Washington Post, New York Times or any major US television broadcast.

A typical example is a comment piece by Walter Cronkite in Newsweek, reprinted in the Feb. 20 Globe and Mail, which laments military

censorship, but says nothing about the one group of journalists who are actually doing something about it.

How come when leftists stand up for liberal values like freedom of the press, liberal journalists can't even lead a cheer from the sidelines? Are the mainstream media unwilling to jeopardize their cosy relationship with the military?

Alan Yoshioka

Abortion issue complicated

To the editor,

Initially, I felt somewhat under attack on reading Mr. Kim's letter, "Why tie in abortion rights with peace rally?" (Feb. 11) I agree that these two issues do not belong together, but it seemed the letter was more of an excuse to voice pro-life sentiment and thus support the

cont'd on p. 8