

## VIEWPOINT

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Econofoods' toilet-paper ban was unethical

Louis Newman's apology for Econofoods' discriminatory policies (Ask the Ethicist, Oct. 31) is flawed on three accounts:

Newman claims that while arbitrary discrimination against minority groups is clearly wrong, discrimination against minors can be used to protect minors from themselves.

This ignores the fact that not all discrimination against minority groups is entirely arbitrary. For instance, one could have statistical data that showed a certain minority group was more likely to drink excessively, murder with a firearm, et cetera. But to forbid the sale of alcohol or firearms to that group on this basis would be morally repulsive, for it would unjustly harm those members of the minority group who were not drunks or murderers. Likewise, Econofoods' policy unjustly harms minors that want eggs or toilet paper for legitimate purposes.

Newman claims that a store might be liable for selling

somebody tools used to TP a property. However, this is legally false. If I sell somebody a kitchen knife, I am not responsible for its use as a murder weapon.

Even if the only purpose of toilet paper was as house decoration to be used with eggs, it would still be legal to sell it, as one could conceivably want to TP one's own property.

Newman claims that if you sold a group of fifteen-year-olds large quantities of toilet paper and eggs, you are failing in moral duty to protect your neighbor from damage. This I'll grant. However, the same would be true if you sold a group of thirty-year-olds large quantities of toilet paper and eggs.

The moral thing would be to refuse service on a case-by-case basis, indiscriminate of age.

Econofoods is a private company and is not legally obliged to sell eggs to anyone. However, for them to arbitrarily single out minors for refusal of service is morally repugnant and indeed would be illegal if some other minority group were so treated.

— Joseph Graly '04

## College investments should be overseen by committee

By JAMIE LONG

Students at Carleton have incredible opportunities to express our opinions to the administration. The membership of the top decision making body of the college — the College Council — is one-third students. Our president holds office hours regularly to listen to the student body. We are consulted in just about every area of college policy — with one important exception. Students at Carleton, as well as faculty and staff, have no direct input into the investment decisions of the college.

Our endowment is overseen by the Investment Council of the Board of Trustees, as well as by the Vice President of the College Barbara Johnson. I have a great deal of respect for the work that these individuals do for our school. But there is currently a gap in the consideration that goes into deciding where the college will put its money. We have no mechanism right now for determining the social responsibility of our investments.

This is an important oversight. As an investor, the college is contributing money to corporations that is used to support the operations of these businesses. In essence, our investment decisions can be seen as expressing support

for particular corporations. It is therefore important to ensure that our investments are being put to uses that support the values we hold as a college community. These include the values of diversity, of environmental sustainability, and of social responsibility.

Carleton has already taken some steps in this direction. We have

only in socially responsible stocks.

Swarthmore College has had a similar committee for just over five years. The committee votes on shareholder resolutions (recommendations to a company from its shareholders to take a particular action) and the college has even sponsored a shareholder resolution itself. Two years ago, students on

committees, from schools with enormous endowments, such as Harvard, to schools with much smaller endowments, such as Earlham College. Taken as a whole, these committees have the potential to make a substantial impact in the way colleges and universities invest their money.

I believe that Carleton should be the next institution to form an advisory committee on socially responsible investment. The committee membership would include students, faculty, alumni, staff and administrators. It would have the ongoing duty to vote on the shareholder resolutions of the companies in which the college owns stock. But its primary purpose would be to advise the trustees on how we can best incorporate social responsibility into the investment policies of the college. There are many ways that this can be manifested, from increased transparency to community investment funds. But without the structure of the committee, the conversations would never take place.

It is vital that we have a forum to discuss and make recommendations on our investment decisions, as we have with so many other college policies. To not do so would be inherently un-Carleton.

Jamie Long is a senior.

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an unspoken rule that we do not invest in tobacco companies, for instance. But in general, we are behind the curve in terms of what colleges across the country are doing with regards to responsible investment.

Williams College, for example, has had a Shareholder Responsibility Committee since the late seventies. The committee has encouraged transparency at the college, resulting in the investment portfolio being made public online (Carleton does not currently publish its portfolio). It has also created a social investment fund, which invests money

the investment committee convinced Swarthmore to file a resolution with Lockheed Martin, asking them to expand their nondiscrimination policy to include homosexuals. The resolution resulted in Lockheed changing its policy to avoid negative response from shareholders and the public. This is a remarkable accomplishment that would not have been possible without the existence of the committee.

Other colleges across the country have made similar strides in responsible investment through advisory committees. Over 15 colleges and universities have such

## Northfield offers many opportunities for community action

*Local groups pushing for renewable energy, sustainable growth and peace welcome students*

By NINA MUKHERJI

Students at Carleton are aware of how to work within the community of the campus, but we rarely stray beyond Second Street when we're looking to effect positive change. There are endless opportunities in Northfield and in the Minnesota for direct involvement.

Two weeks ago, MPIRG held a panel on Northfield grassroots organizations. Leaders from RENew Northfield, People for Peace and Goodwill (PPG), The Center for Sustainable Living (CSL), the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation (NDDC) and the Just Food Co-op were present. They expressed how much townies value student input and energy.

There need not be such a divide between Northfield grassroots groups and students. Student groups can work with Northfield groups in coalition, as Carleton Students Against the War (CSAW) and PPG have. Also, individuals can get involved in the Northfield community by volunteering through ACT or participating directly in Northfield groups.

What Northfield gets from student participation: our perspective; our ideas; our energy and links to the resources and existing projects on campus.

What we students get from working with Northfield activists: a chance to meet dedicated and knowledgeable adults, representation and a stronger sense that we can effect large-scale positive change.

School is not just about acquiring knowledge, but also about developing the maturity and courage to put our values and knowledge into practice.

For those interested in getting involved, I will mention some of the groups and how students might want to work with them.

RENNew Northfield is trying to get Northfield off the power grid and onto renewable energy by 2010. Carleton and the Northfield School District are working together with RENew towards getting wind turbines to provide much of their energy by next year.

In addition to the board meetings and fundraising, RENew organizes conferences and trips to wind farms. If you are interested in alternative energy, going to

some of these events can be informative.

For a more active angle you can help put up wind monitors on potential wind turbine sites. To join the RENew listserv, go to <http://www.northfield.org/mail>

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man/listinfo/renew. RENew's website is [www.renewnorthfield.org](http://www.renewnorthfield.org).

The Center for Sustainable Living supports other grassroots organizations in Northfield that contribute to Northfield's environmental and economic sustainability. It has a community organizing center on Division Street where PPG, Just Food and The

Northfield Greens have been meeting. Currently CSL is working on a community composting project where volunteers bike to Northfield houses, pick up the compost and bring it to a community garden. If you want

to volunteer, contact [info@centerforsustainableliving.org](mailto:info@centerforsustainableliving.org).

The Just Food Co-op has been working to put a food co-op in town. The group has yet to decide on a site, but it has several in mind. The co-op should start sometime next year. There is a one-time \$125 fee to join.

If you (or your house) want to be a member, sign up now to let

the co-op know it has a strong base and provide it with public support. If you want to volunteer directly with publicity or at the co-op once it has started, contact [info@justfood.com](mailto:info@justfood.com).

The NDDC is working to maintain and improve the vibrancy of Northfield's downtown as the rest of town expands. It focuses on economic sustainability and works to make Northfield a welcoming place for residents and tourists.

The NDDC holds public meetings on the first Tuesday of every month. For direct action, you can work with the action squad, a committee that focuses on making small improvements to Northfield, like painting public fences and gardening. For more info, check the website [www.nddc.org](http://www.nddc.org).

People for Peace and Goodwill is a group that started after September 11, 2001 to discuss policy, personal values and appropriate responses to war and injustice. PPG has weekly meetings to share information and opinions and to plan peace action. The meetings are on Thursdays at 7 p.m. at 313 1/2 Division. PPG also organizes

peace vigils every Wednesday for 15 minutes at 7:45 a.m. at Woodley & Division and every Saturday for 15 minutes at noon in Bridge Square. Their website is [www.northfieldppg.org](http://www.northfieldppg.org).

Another way to get involved is to find out about local politics and contact your representatives. To learn about local issues, read the Northfield News and the Star Tribune. If you want to meet some local politicians and learn how to be heard, you can go to the MPIRG-organized Democracy panel on Tuesday, November 14 at 7:30 pm in Leighton 305 with Mayor Keith Covey, State Representative Ray Cox, State Senator Tom Neuville and Jim Pokorney, First ward city councilman.

It is empowering to be involved in a community and to take responsibility for what the community becomes. Once students realize this, we will have the motivation and experience not only to put our skills to work in this community, but to apply them everywhere we go during and after college.

Nina Mukherji is a junior and a co-chair of MPIRG.

## "The Reagans" miniseries moves from CBS to Showtime, epitomizing conservative stranglehold over American media

## The Bigger Picture

By PETER JUUL

There has been a furor over the content of a CBS miniseries called "The Reagans." Republicans and conservative pressure groups are up in arms because they say it does not portray Reagan accurately.

They've even put enough pressure on CBS to bump the miniseries to Showtime, the premium cable channel (which conveniently happens to be owned by CBS' parent company, Viacom).

I and many other liberals are concerned about the accuracy of any miniseries involving Reagan.

To wit, Michigan Representative John Dingell has compiled a list of immoral, corrupt, or incompetent actions taken by the Reagan administration that would never see the light in CBS' approving miniseries (his letter to CBS can be found at

<http://www.house.gov/dingell/Reagan.pdf>).

Among them are the ludicrous Pentagon over-expenditures, firing air-traffic controllers for striking, visiting a cemetery where SS war criminals are buried, the utterly infeasible 'Star Wars' program, the illegal selling of weapons to the terrorist state of Iran to illegally fund a covert operation in Nicaragua, and then lying to Congress about said scheme (for a fuller and eminently readable look at the Reagan presidency, see Haynes Johnson's "Sleepwalking Through History").

Prior to George W. Bush, I held Reagan to be the worst president in American history. Apparently, the CBS miniseries gives Reagan a pass on these reprehensible actions, while advancing the dubious (if not patently false) notion that Reagan knew nothing of Iran-Contra.

Why, then, did conservative groups and the Republican National Committee throw such a fit over a relatively positive

portrayal of Mr. Reagan?

Were they truly concerned with historical accuracy, they would have demanded the inclusion of Reagan's negatives in the mix. For some reason or another, the right is set on beatifying

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Ronald Reagan.

In the last decade, National Airport in Washington D.C. and an aircraft carrier have been named after him, and a technically infeasible proposal was made by a Republican congressman to put his face on Mount Rushmore.

Anything that falls short of hagiography is historically inaccurate to the right-wing partisans who are pushing for Reagan's name to be plastered on airports, bus stops, and

monuments across the country.

Now compare and contrast the reaction to the Showtime film "DC 9/11: Time of Crisis," which is probably the closest we'll ever get to the Nazi propaganda claptrap "Triumph of the

Will."

Director Lionel Chetwynd created scenes out of thin air, with no basis in fact and often contradicted by the facts. For instance, the movie portrays a heroic Bush flying aboard Air Force One, demanding to be taken back to the White House.

In truth, Bush has admitted that on 9/11 he was "trying to get out of harm's way." Additionally, after he received the first reports of a terrorist

attack, Bush kept on with his preplanned photo-op at a Florida school before finally taking refuge in Air Force One.

The White House has a propaganda machine that Goebbels or Stalin would be proud of.

Now, apart from scattered voices of disapproval on the internet, was there any great outrage over this blatantly propagandistic movie from liberal groups or the Democratic National Committee?

Were they demanding that they first see the film to see if it was accurate, or failing that, have a crawl running on the bottom of the screen telling people that "DC 9/11" was a fictional account of the events of that day? Did they threaten to run ads questioning the veracity of the movie?

Did they insist that the movie be pulled if it did not meet their standards? No, because there was no pressure to edit, screen or pull the movie from the DNC or liberal pressure groups.

There is something very wrong in our political discourse when one mildly friendly film gets yanked off

the air because it does not fit the Republican Party line on Ronald Reagan and a demonstrably false piece of George W. Bush propaganda gets aired without the slightest objection from the Democratic Party.

However, this is only symptomatic of the right-wing dominance of the media: the temptation to rewrite history to suit your partisan goals can only be succumbed to when there is no one able to call you on it.

Witness the lies spread by Ann Coulter ("all liberals are traitors"; a stance which has been disavowed even by the neocons running the Defense Department) and Sean Hannity ("Reagan was the bestest president ever!").

Only now Al Franken and Joe Conason have started to fight back. And now conservatives are raising the cry of "incivility."

Seems they can dish it out and can't take it.

Peter Juul is a sophomore. His column, "The Bigger Picture," appears weekly in *The Carletonian*.