

News people are all depraved

by Quinn Solem

There was ugly news on the television over the Thanksgiving holiday.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's reign of iron-fisted conservative rule ended in televised disgrace as she turned in her resignation to the Queen.

Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney showed up on the tube, announcing Pentagon intelligence that indicated Iraq may have a "very crude" nuclear device within a year. Experts later said Cheney lied, or at least overstated the threat, but everyone agreed it was a good ruse to convince the U.N. to support an ultimatum that gives Iraq until January to withdraw from Kuwait or face attack.

The "Keating Five" were on TV again, and so was Ed Gray, the former chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, testifying before the Senate Ethics Hearings. Four of the five Senators showed up in Big Ed's S&L regulating office in April of 1987, he said, to make "private threats" and cut "a deal" on behalf of savings and loan owner Charles Keating, who contributed over 1.3 million dollars to the "Five's" campaigns.

George Bush was shown visiting the troops in Saudi Arabia over the Thanksgiving holiday, boosting military morale by eating a pitiful ration of turkey on a cardboard tray, before flying off to Mexico for some *real food* and trade talks with Mexican President Carlos Salina de Gortari.

Well, we all have to spend Thanksgiving somewhere, and if you aren't lucky enough to have the honor of eating grit-covered turkey off of cardboard trays in 115 degree heat while sand fleas burrow deep into your flesh, then home is the next best place.

Home is where the heart is, or so they say. But for most college students, home is where you go during Thanksgiving break to argue with your parents, fight with your siblings, and abuse the family pet; continually stuffing your bloated, stretched body to the point of immobility with heavy, fat-rich foods. You watch many hours of television, attempting to ignore the huge book bag you brought home stuffed with work that has been put off all semester, foolishly imagining you'd complete it over the Thanksgiving break.

I was eagerly engaged in this mandatory Thanksgiving

behavior at my parents' house when the phone rang. It was my old friend Dick Reagan, and he seemed upset.

"Have you been watching very much TV in the past few days?" he asked. "It's so depressing."

Of course I have. It's required, right?

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"Sure. But don't you ever wonder why the news is so depressing around the holidays?"

To keep the holiday suicide rate up?

"Don't joke about that," he snapped. "News people love that kind of stuff; suicide, ritual murders, mass decapitations at family gatherings - they go crazy over mass decapitations."

Do you mean that news organizations exploit human tragedy during the holidays in

order to gain a larger audience and make more money through advertising?

"It's nothing as complicated as that you fool," he snarled.

Then what's going on?

"It's a massive plot, a subtle conspiracy that has been going on for years," he hissed.

Why?

"Think about it stupid," he snarled. "What do most people do during the holidays?"

Well, they lay around, take it easy, visit with family and friends, watch TV...

"Right. They do what they like. Everyone has the day off, everyone except for news people."

And 7-11 workers.

"Sure, and we both know how nasty they are during the holidays. Well, news people are even worse. They're depraved group of poorly adjusted people who could never hold *real* jobs, much less enjoy a national holiday, so they get into the news media to make other people depressed when they should be celebrating."

Prove it.

"OK, Pick a national holiday," he dared.

Fourth of July.

"Good choice. Everyone cooks out on the grill, maybe goes to a parade or swimming in a lake. Everyone has a real

fine time. But when they turn on the news and try to relax that night what do they see," Dick asked?

What?

"Live footage of people blowing their hands off with firecrackers, that's what! It ruins the whole spirit of the holiday," he cried.

Yeah, that's true but...

"And during thanksgiving they always make sure that you hear and see plenty about homeless people starving in the streets, to make you feel guilty and terrible about the great meals you've just had in your nice cozy house."

Hey, that's right.

"You betcha. News people want us to associate all national holidays with feelings of intense despair. They make all of their stories extra-depressing at a time when the public is watching more television. They're very sick people with *serious* character flaws," he warned.

Well, at least Thanksgiving is over for another year.

"Uh-huh. But Christmas is coming up, and that's when the brutes go completely wild..."

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Draft Would Bring Peaceful Feelings

by Mike Royko

It might be wise for Jake Novak, a University of Illinois student, to keep a low profile for a while. After today's column, he might not be the most popular lad on campus.

He wrote me an unusual letter. Unusual in that it expresses a view that few people his age share.

Jake said: "Quite a while back, you wrote about possible reinstating the military draft. Your basic argument was that it would be an incentive for our youth to get involved in U.S. affairs and not appear so brain-dead. You received a substantial number of letters from people strongly opposed to your idea."

That I did. And "strongly opposed" puts it mildly. I was called an "insane (obscenity)," a "bloodthirsty (obscenity)," a "youth-hating (obscenity)," and many other unflattering terms. Actually, I was impressed by the creativity of the obscenities. Some of those kids could have gone into the Army and exchanged endless variations of the "F" word with any old drill sergeant.

However, I decided to drop the subject. For one thing, most Americans of all ages oppose a military draft. Second, there are few congressmen brave or

suicidal enough to even mention it.

But now along comes Jake Novak, of the U. of I. in Urbana-Champaign. He goes on to say:

"At the time you wrote that, I thought it was a dangerous idea because I knew that I would be eligible for the draft.

"Now that the Iraq crisis is blossoming, you would probably think that my views have changed, but they have not.

"The students here are intelligent at solving math problems and analyzing literature, but the majority know surprisingly little about current affairs. This is not necessarily their fault, since much of our time is spent studying and reading.

"There is time, however, to learn about the outside world, but we need an incentive. This is why I think the idea of the draft would be enough to get them more involved.

"Although I dread the thought of having to go to the Middle East and fight in 130-degree weather, that is exactly the reason why I think the possibility of being drafted would be so effective in getting us involved in world affairs.

"I must stress, however, that the reinstatement of the draft should be a threat, not an actual course of action, because I would

rather be uninformed than have my eyes plucked out by one of Saddam Hussein's soldiers."

Young Mr. Novak is right. The draft, or even the threat of the draft, would be enough to instantly raise the consciousness of America's youth to heights we haven't seen in two decades or



more.

In fact, their collective consciousness would be so heightened that the deans of universities all over America would probably have to call out the riot police to keep the administration buildings from being dismantled.

We'd have tens of thousands of students marching, sitting in,

climbing trees, tearing at their hair, holding hands, swaying, singing sad songs and waving signs that say: "George Bush Eats Arab Babies."

Jake Novak is too young to remember the '60s and early '70s. So he probably doesn't realize that there has never been a generation, or generations, that was so peace-loving and war-hating. They deplored the shedding of even one drop of blood. And many were deeply ashamed to be Americans because American bombs were falling on Vietnam.

Many students took to spelling America with a K: Amerika. I believe that was supposed to make it Germanic, indicating we were no better than the Nazis.

Student leaders were all over the TV talk shows. I remember being on a program with a student from the University of Chicago who opened the program by saying that the president was a fascist, I was a fascist, the other newsmen on the show were fascists, his parents were fascists and the university chancellor was a fascist. When the show ended, I told him that I thought he had been a bit intemperate, but that if I had the opportunity, I'd probably throw him into a concentration camp.

Then in an instant it was

over. It was as if someone had flicked a light switch. Presto, the throbbing social conscience that had spread across America went limp. The anti-war, pro-peace signs went into the trash bins. Even if you offered free beer and marijuana, you couldn't get enough students together to hold a peacenik sit-in.

That amazing transformation happened on the day the president signed into law the end of the draft. At that moment, about 99.9 percent of those who had sobbed over napalm, Christmas bombings and man's inhumanity to man suddenly began looking for jobs on Wall Street. Those who had deferments because they had taken teaching jobs in poor inner-city schools said: "Goodbye, you poor ghetto children. I'll miss you, but you have served your purpose, so it is time for me to go seek my fortune in a nicer neighborhood."

In other words, once war stopped threatening their hides, they didn't care much about anybody else's hide.

So while Jake Novak is right -- the draft would catch the attention of students -- it wouldn't be worth the hassle.

The sit-ins, the protests and the marches, I could handle. The self-serving hypocrisy, no thanks.