



Wednesday, September 19, 2007

Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome to the Union Crier!

Walking through a Yale dining hall or Yale Political Union debate today, you were undoubtedly seized by the inexorable pull of a newsletter like no other – a way to feed your insatiable hunger for a close-up on political events in the Yale community. Congratulations! You’ve arrived at the *Union Crier* – the newest forum for political reporting, discussion, and humor on campus.

Published by members of the Yale Political Union four times a semester, the *Crier* will keep you updated on politics at Yale, from YPU debates to New Haven news to talks sponsored by a variety of campus organizations.

For those new to the Yale Political Union, the YPU is a student debating society that is always looking for fresh involvement. Each week, the YPU invites a prominent national figure to speak – last year, including Justice Scalia and Howard Dean – and Yalies then have the chance to put forward their own arguments. The YPU also holds social events and builds lasting ties among friends.

If you’re interested in writing for the *Crier*’s next issue, email union.crier@gmail.com. Enjoy!

— The *Union Crier* Staff

Poll: What is the Greatest Threat to the World Today?

By Jane Hu

Global warming and the destruction of the natural world. Amy Lee, SY ’10 | The combined forces of tooth decay and gingivitis. Matthew Klein, SY ’09 | Poverty. Ben Gallagher, PC ’11 | Atheism. Paul Cappello, JE ’09 | The fact that Cookie Monster doesn’t eat cookies anymore because America is obese. The Cookie Monster, BR ’54 | Ignorance. Gabrielle Rabinowitz, BR ’11 | Britney Spears’ cellulite-ridden bum that she continues to insist on exposing. Perez Hilton, PC ’96

Famed Law Prof Warns of Grave Risk

By Rachel Bayefsky

America’s succession system runs the risk of subverting democracy and sowing unrest in the case of a terrorist attack or natural disaster, renowned Yale Law School professor Akhil Amar told the Yale Political Union on the anniversary of 9/11.

Amar, who teaches the popular undergraduate course Constitutional Law and has written a number of books on the subject, spoke to the first meeting of the YPU this semester in favor of the resolution “America’s Election System is a Disaster Waiting to Happen.” He said the U.S. system is vulnerable because the federal government cannot postpone elections during an emergency, as New York State did on 9/11. Amar also criticized the presidential succession system, under which incapacitation of both the president and the vice-president gives the top job to the Speaker of the House.

(continued on page 3)

New Haven Property Development Stirs Controversy

By Shaina Wright

At the start of September, the city government sealed a deal to sell a parcel of downtown land appraised as high as \$4,400,000 for \$1.

Many Yale students have never been to the old Shartenberg site, as this land is commonly known, though the 1.5 acre parking lot on the corner of Orange and Chapel is just a short four blocks from Old Campus. Once home to a bustling Shartenberg department store, the lot has stood empty for forty years. Now it has become the center of a controversy over corporate and community interests.

A plan by Connecticut firm Becker & Becker to build a 32-story tower, with a price tag estimated at \$160 million dollars, will be the most significant new construction in New Haven for 20 years. Besides the immediate creation of construction jobs, the building with five hundred luxury apartments will bring residents who can stroll through Chapel Street shops and provide a significant increase to the city’s tax base. Moreover, fifty of the five hundred apartments will be designated affordable housing.

(continued on page 3)

Opinion

September 19, 2007

Page 2

The Union Crier

Editor-in-Chief
Rachel Bayefsky

News Editor
Peter Johnston

Layout Editor
William Wilson

Staff Reporters
Jane Hu
Helen Rittelmeyer

Graphic Designer
Matthew Brimer

Alexander Soble
Shaina Wright
Natasha Paterson

Liberalism

The language which liberals use to talk about social issues makes it impossible to connect to culturally conservative ideas.

The twenty-first century Left's positions on the fronts of the culture war are a litany of rights: civil rights, the right to choose, the right to privacy. The Left is unable to frame its discussion of liberty in any other terms, and the narrowness of its vocabulary has rendered political dialogue with social conservatives all but impossible.

The standstill between the two sides of the gay marriage debate is a good example of what damage the Left's vocabulary can do. Cultural conservatives believe that it is certainly within the scope of the powers of the state to offer marriage but it is by no means a right to which couples gay or straight are entitled. This leaves it to the democratic process to settle the question of whether or not the state should offer marriage and to whom, balancing freedom of choice on the one hand with culturally conservative values on the other. But from a liberal rights-based point of view, either gay marriage is a right or it isn't. It is no accident that gay marriage advocates have seen their greatest victories take place in courthouses and not in the legislature. Framing social questions in the language of rights circumvents democratic dialogue and eliminates the public arena in which the Left and Right used to be able to engage with one another. That polarization and mutual alienation should follow from this is no surprise.

Thoughts? Ideas? Photo Captions?

Send letters to the editor, opinion pieces, and photo captions to union.crier@gmail.com.

America Divided

By Helen Rittelmeyer

"There are two Americas: Red and Blue." "America is a polarized country." "The two parties have polarized the electorate." The message is clear: the biggest problem facing America today is its pundits' capitulation to cliché.

Throw a dart at any newsstand and you will probably hit an article about the decline of political discourse in America. But there's more to the divide than shallow factionalism. The real problem is...

Conservatism

Conservative arguments are based on premises that have no place in democratic discourse. As the economic conservatives of the Right have gradually been overshadowed by culture warriors, the Republican party has shifted from the rhetoric of universal human morality to the rhetoric of absolute Christian theology.

This rhetoric offers no common ground to those outside the Christian majority. John F. Kennedy assured voters in 1960 that he was not the Catholic candidate for president, but merely "the Democratic Party's candidate for president who happens also to be a Catholic." When asked whether the Catholic Church would influence his decisions while he was in office, he responded that as President he would always decide "in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest." The Republican Party once shared President Kennedy's spirit of sectarian conciliation, but the evangelical Christian wing which now exerts so much influence over the Right has lost it.

The only way for a pluralistic democracy to work is to confine debate to expansions of those principles upon which we can all agree. Otherwise, the democratic process becomes a contest of brute political strength when what it really ought to be is a competition between two sides that ultimately forges a collective national identity.

Photography Captioning Contest: Enter Now!



Photo by Jane Hu

April Lawson SY '09 (YPU President), and Matthew Klein, BK '09

News & Features

September 19, 2007

Page 3

Spotlight on a YPU member

By Alexander Soble

This week, the *Union Crier* sat down with Frederick Mocatta (BC '10, Tory Party) to chat about his summer travels through northwest China, dead bodies in the desert, and the (dis)comforts of getting around on camel.

UC: So, word has it that over the summer you visited the Taklimakan desert in China. Meet anyone interesting?

FM: The most interesting people I met were actually dead. The heat causes bodies to preserve rather well, so out in the middle of nowhere in the desert you'll find a huge drop and there, in the pit, not even behind glass, are dead bodies from 2,000 - 3,000 years ago. There are lots of them.

UC: And you saw lots of camels as well?

FM: Yes. And another thing I'll tell you — camel's milk is delicious, particularly if you add a bit of sugar to it. Incredibly rich in nutrients, and you feel very full quickly after drinking on it.



Frederick Mocatta, BC '10

UC: Tell us what camel travel is like.

FM: It's incredibly uncomfortable if you're going slowly, but wonderful if you're going fast. But the saying about the straw breaking the camel's back — couldn't be more wrong. A camel's back is very hard and very uncomfortable in general.

UC: And your thoughts about the rural, desert side of China?

FM: A fascinating place. Although it's still quite backwards in terms of health, infrastructure, technology, the changes that have been taking place are hugely impressive. It's important to be cautious. The 21st century may very well be China's century. We'll have to see.

Development Kicks Up Storm

(continued from page 1)

Yet some Elm City residents feel suspicious and even betrayed by the incentives and subsidies used to entice a development firm to build in New Haven. The city, for instance, agreed to defer payment of \$3 million in permit fees. Supporters of the deal point out the firm agreed to take on extra, offsetting costs. Still, the clout garnered by proposing such a huge project clearly allowed a wealthy firm to negotiate a much more favorable deal than an ordinary citizen of New Haven could attain.

Whatever you think about the project, the issue raises questions of fairness and economic priorities that you don't have to spend a summer in Africa to observe firsthand.

Law School Professor Addresses Union

(continued from page 1)

"You vote for Bill Clinton and Al Gore, and you end up with Newt Gingrich," Amar said. He instead suggested giving succession to cabinet members or selecting a person specifically to succeed the Vice-President in an emergency — "The constitutional equivalent of a designated hitter."

In their questions to Amar, YPU members brought up the Amar Plan, a scheme to elect the President by direct popular vote instead of the Electoral College.

After Amar's speech, students took the floor to debate issues from presidential succession to the abolition of the Electoral College to the character of American democracy. One contentious issue was whether elections for president should be based on a national popular vote or take statewide votes into account. Rachel Homer, a member of the Party of the Left, argued that popular, direct elections of the president would ensure that the American people elect an executive who represents all of them equally. Andrew Olson of the Party of the Right disagreed with Homer's goal of equal representation, contending that "not all votes are created equal." He compared votes to points in a tennis match: some of them count towards the final outcome, while "some of the points are disenfranchised!" because that is simply how tennis is played. Elissa Berwick, a member of the Liberal Party, said she could not accept what she called Olson's unequal distribution of civil liberties. "The American electoral system is an antiquated vestige of a time when leaders didn't trust the common people to make choices," she said. "I'd like to think we've moved past that time."

At the end of the debate, YPU members then voted on the resolution "America's election system is a disaster waiting to happen." The resolution passed by a vote of 51 to 15, with 6 abstaining. At last all present, having come to an absolute understanding of all the intricacies of the American electoral system, headed over to Yorkside to eat pizza.

Party Roundup

September 19, 2007

Page 4

Cons Tackle Eternal Questions As God Wins, 8-5

By Peter Johnston

In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan suggests, "we in our green youth have to settle the eternal questions first of all." The Conservative Party took up this charge when it gathered Friday to debate Resolved: That morality is not possible without God.

The first few speeches of the debate ran along predictable lines. Those in the affirmative asserted the necessity of an objective supernatural order to ground any normative standard. If we call this objective supernatural order God, then the justification of morality, which consists in binding normative standards, requires the existence of God. Those in the negative emphasized alternatively the historical sufficiency of conscience to compel moral action or the unimportance of God to the existence of a social morality.

Though the early speeches arrived at different conclusions, all logically followed from different understandings of morality, and had no resources with which to convince the others. The middle speeches of the debate therefore took on the question of the nature of morality in an attempt to determine which conception best explains the term.

The high point of the debate came in the speeches of Matt Klein and Michael Lindsay, each of whom attempted to integrate social expression and normative standards into a conception of morality. Klein did so with reference to the problem of human perspective, in which the necessity of perspective limits but does not eliminate the understanding and application of an absolute standard. Lindsay began by making a hard distinction between ethics as appropriate to civil society and morality as appropriate to the mind. Nevertheless, human ingenuity in civil society can only be explained by a creative tension in man's mind, that between free will and morality, both of which find no naturalistic explanation and depend upon God.

In the end, the Cons not only followed Ivan's example in debating the great questions, but also the contents of his thoughts. Ivan famously asserts that without God, "all is lawful." The motion carried by 8 to 5 with 2 abstentions.

Box Score

Name	MS	MQ	Q	C	H	L	LPM
M. Pomeranz	6	13	5	3	1	3	0.158
G. Sussman	2	4	4	1	1	1	0.167
M. Williams	3	9	3	1	0	0	0
H. Hsiung	5	10	6	1	2	2	1.33
A. Wolf	4	9	5	0	0	0	0
A. Wassung	3	9	5	1	1	0	0
H. Rittelmeyer	2	4	4	4	3	5	0.833
J. Abolafia	4	10	6	3	6	2	0.143
P. Johnston	4	7	5	2	2	0	0
(From SY)	1	6	7	1	3	0	0
A. Boland	9	8	5	6	3	1	0.059
C. Day	10	3	3	1	1	0	0
(From Morse)	6	5	7	2	0	0	0
M. Klein	5	5	5	1	0	2	0.2
M. Lindsay	8	15	7	2	2	0	0
J. Kosslyn	3	13	7	3	1	1	0.063
L. Marcus	8	14	7	2	1	1	0.045
Totals	83	144	91	34	27	18	0.106

MS = Minutes Spoken | M = Minutes Questioned | Q = Questions | C = Claps | H = Hisses | L = Laughs | LPM = Laughs Per Minute

Elsewhere in the Union

Date	Party	Resolved	+	-	A
9/1	Tory	The Republican Party has abandoned conservatism	12	6	0
9/6	Lib	[Discussion] What happened to American radicalism?	n/a	n/a	n/a
9/6	PoL	International responsibility trumps national interest	15	19	8
9/6	Con	That America is doomed	2	14	1
9/6	Tory	Victory in Iraq is vital to American interests	12	10	3
9/6	PoR	Civil rights are neither	4	5	1
9/10	IP	Stop foreign aid	9	29	3
9/13	Lib	[Discussion] Can education solve poverty?	n/a	n/a	n/a
9/13	Prog	R. Kelly will be taught to the D.S. class of 3011	20	4	0
9/13	Tory	Free markets make free men	7	12	1
9/13	PoR	Abortion is a miscarriage of justice	10	8	0

This Week on the Party Circuit...

Liberal Party Self-determination for Ethnic Minorities? TH 7:30

Party of the Left Resolved: The Left Should Not Support Israel, T 7:30

Progressive Party Resolved: Abolish the Town/Brown Divide, TH 7:30

Independent Party Resolved: Evangelicalism Threatens America, T 7:30

Conservative Party Resolved: A Liberal Arts Education is Obsolete, TH 7:30

Tory Party Resolved: America Needs A New Frontier, T 7:30

Party of the Right Resolved: You Can Have My Gun When You Pry It From My Cold, Dead Hands, TH 7:45