

The W&L Spectator

THE Student Journal of
Fact and Opinion

How much do Washington
and Lee students know
about American History?



Also:

What would an increase in the
minimum wage mean for W&L?
The End of Gen-Eds

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RG 39

Letter From the Editors

With the start of a new year and the publishing of another issue of *The Spectator*, we hope that we continue to contribute to the campus community. The staff of *The Spectator* seeks to add to the debates and conversations occurring on our campus. That being said, we are fairly new to this process. As always, we continue to welcome your feedback, criticisms, and compliments. We are always striving to better our publication, and it is only with your help that we can accomplish that goal.

We would like to draw your attention to the article covering Intercollegiate Studies Institute's extensive study concerning today's college graduates' knowledge of American history. We find it particularly disturbing that, at a liberal arts institution such as our own, seniors are graduating without knowing the basics of American history. We hope that you will all take the time to read this article and think about its implications for the future of America.

In closing, we would like to thank you all for engaging in thoughtful debate with us. After attending a recent Collegiate Network Editors' Conference in Arizona, we realized how fortunate we are to be at a campus such as Washington and Lee, a campus that thrives on intellectual debate and accepts *The Spectator* as a catalyst of that debate. We appreciate each person who reads our paper and hope that you all enjoy this issue.

-Heather Hart and Jennifer Sanow

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W&L Spectator

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Mission Statement

The W&L Spectator is a non-partisan publication dedicated to promoting the free exchange of ideas in an environment where meaningful debate and ideological diversity are often lacking. We, as staff, seek to serve the W&L community by infusing it with the ingredients necessary for a balanced educational experience. These ingredients include conservative, libertarian and classical liberal thought. We believe that peace is best achieved through strength, that utopia is nowhere, and that true equality is blind to race, creed, sex, and sexuality. We take it as our mission to expose the inadequacies of the non-traditionalist ideas that do not understand and fail to work with our student body. We strive to adhere to the beliefs of the student body that the administration often overlooks. We invite the active participation of any student or alumnae who shares our vision and would like to join our movement.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles herein are solely those of each respective author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any other staff member of Washington and Lee University.

The Spectator is a member of the Washington and Lee Media Board, which can be reached at mediaboard@wlu.edu.

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Biodiesel: Can Dining Hall Grease Help

Save the Environment?

Washington and Lee University, the Virginia Military Institute, and the Lexington community may soon be involved in one of the most promising developments in the energy sector to date: the small scale production of biodiesel. Biodiesel, along with E85 (a blend of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline), are two fuels that could revolutionize the patterns of fuel consumption and production in the United States. Both are renewable sources of energy and can be produced domestically. Thus, while reducing the use of nonrenewable fossil fuels, biodiesel and E85 can also eliminate foreign oil dependency and create American jobs. There are many types of biodiesel, but it is basically a blend of diesel fuel produced from either vegetable/soybean oil or waste oils. Biodiesel can be produced in any number of blends ranging from B5 to B20 to B100. B denotes biodiesel, and the number following it represents the percentage of biodiesel in the blend. For instance, B5 is a mixture composed of 5% biodiesel and 95% petrodiesel.

Every year, Washington and Lee pays approximately \$800 to have its 11,000 gallons of cooking oil waste hauled away. VMI sends off another 10,000 gallons, and it's estimated that within the Lexington community, 30,000 more gallons are produced and must be sent to a re-processing plant. W&L Facilities Management Environmental Management Coordinator, Chris

Wise, is hoping that a joint program can be initiated in which the waste oil is converted to biodiesel. The waste oil from Washington and Lee alone is enough to produce 1,500 gallons of B100 or 7,500 gallons of B20. Wise also hopes that the administration will earmark funds to purchase a biodiesel production machine which would produce around 40 to 160 gallons of biodiesel a day. The machinery costs around \$2,500 and produces biodiesel and glycerin through a chemical process involving waste cooking oil and methyl alcohol.

“Using a B20 blend, the university could reduce its off-road diesel purchases by approximately 210 gallons, a yearly savings of around \$450.”

The benefits of a Washington and Lee or combined production project would be multifaceted. Not only would Washington and Lee not be faced with the cost of disposing of their waste oil from the D-Hall, they would also have their diesel fuel bill cut by about 20%, a hands-on facility for scientific research in the area of alternative fuels, and the knowledge that we as a school are helping to reduce our country's foreign dependence on oil and preserving our environment. Additionally, VMI and W&L would not be able to consume all

of the B20 that they would produce which opens the possibility of helping local organizations and the City of Lexington in fueling their diesel machinery. Washington and Lee only consumed 1046 gallons of off-road diesel fuel last fiscal year. Using a B20 blend, the university could reduce its off-road diesel purchases by approximately 210 gallons, a yearly savings of around \$450, and still be able to donate around 1200 gallons of B100 to the Lexington community to be blended for use in city maintenance vehicles, Rockbridge Area Transportation Services buses, and school buses.

Possibly by the end of next year, Washington and Lee will also be able to use B20 in their on-road diesel vehicles, such as the new van to be purchased by the geology department, which consume around 1800 gallons of diesel fuel a year. The use of university produced B20 would add another \$550 in annual savings to Facilities Management's budget, not to mention the possibility of tax breaks and rebates for the use of biodiesel. While two thousand dollars is only a small savings when compared to the vastness of Washington and Lee's annual budget, or even the salary of the million deans we now have on campus, the use of biodiesel brings other benefits that cannot be assigned a monetary value.

David Kronenfeld is a senior History and Chinese major from Greensboro, North Carolina.

The State of Student Government

Another year, another influx of enthusiastic freshmen, and another rash of unsubstantiated rumors welcomed us back to campus this fall. The latest and most significant allegation is that the tradition of student self-governance is under attack. This notion is propagated through misinformation, hyperbole, and speculation presented as fact. The greatest current source of tension between students and administration is the role of the new Associate Dean of Students, Brandon Dotson, as advisor to the Student Judicial Council. Many fear that he poses a threat to the autonomy of the SJC, and consequently to the collective liberty of the student body. Armed with little more than information gleaned from a sensationalistic *Trident* headline, students have indignantly rejected the very concept of an administrative advisor, oblivious to and uninterested in the true nature of Dean Dotson's position.

The most vociferous objectors are opposed primarily to Dean Dotson's presence during the SJC hearings and subsequent deliberations. They suggest that the student judges will be influenced or intimidated by him, even compelled to censor their opinions. Let us consider the merits of this argument. This suggests that prior to Dean Dotson's involvement, members of the SJC made comments that an administrator would find inappropriate or counterproductive. If an SJC judge is not confident enough to voice his

opinions in front of a dean, it is unlikely that they are justifiable. I have more faith in both the student body to select competent judges and in the judges themselves than to credit a claim that relies on judicial reticence. Senior Matt Krieg, chair of the Student Judicial Council, does not believe the SJC has been deliberating any differently, but admits that "if there is a difference...it is a much more fair deliberation."

Dean Dotson does not see his role as a challenge to student self-governance, but as an opportunity. He is there as an observer, establishing institutional memory while acting as a resource for SJC members. His position will help ensure the consistent application of university policies not only between trials, but between years, a factor the SJC has struggled with in the past. Dean Dotson genuinely values and respects the institution of student government and the autonomy of the student body; both he and Matt Krieg predict that his presence during trials will be temporary. Dean Dotson says that he is "committed to working closely with students in order to develop a consistent process that meets the needs of students and the surrounding community," adding that his contributions are "educational rather than legalistic in nature."

Dean Dotson's primary role is to encourage positive development that "supports the academic mission of the institution." According to Krieg, both he and Dean Dotson "would

like the SJC to operate on its own, but it's not ready...In order for the students to be treated fairly, this is a necessary stage for the SJC." The SJC has yet to mature into an organization that can consistently guarantee impartiality and balance in its decisions. The guidance Dean Dotson offers is necessary in making that leap, one that is fundamental in improving the standards of self-governance. There are several student leaders, however, who have expressed concerns regarding what they have interpreted as Dean Dotson's intrusion. Krieg suggests that their fears are unfounded, and Dean Dotson's participation, imperative. "Some people within the student leadership might have an inflated perception of how these hearings are actually working. I think there may be some reluctance on their part in admitting that the SJC is not where it needs to be developmentally."

Little has changed since Dean Dotson's initial involvement in student government. In the past, students who violated the alcohol policy met with an administrator to determine the consequences; there was never a time when every case went to trial. While the SJC was always an option, most students chose to accept responsibility for their actions, especially in cases where the verdict was clear. Now, all first-time violators meet with Dean Dotson to discuss their options. Though they are given the opportunity to appeal his decision

Article continued on page 13.

The End of Gen-Eds:

A New Core Curriculum

Beginning in the fall of 2007, a new core curriculum will welcome the freshman class. Dubbed the "Fundamental and Distribution Requirements," it reorganizes the current general education requirements, drastically reducing the number of mandatory courses. The class of 2011 will take one fewer physical education class and at least three fewer academic classes.

Members of the General Education Committee, the General Education Review Steering Committee, and the Courses and Degrees Committee from the '05-'06 and '06-'07 school years were charged with the core curriculum overhaul. They believed that the university could significantly improve the organization and subject area coverage currently dictated by the general education requirements. They also noted that the general education requirements took up nearly forty percent of the 115 credits needed for graduation. Washington and Lee's accrediting association, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, insists that a minimum of

only twenty five percent of credit hours be used to fulfill general education. These two factors motivated the committee to reduce the number of humanities courses required by three and social science courses by one, simultaneously adding a creative arts requirement. According to University Registrar Scott Dittman, however, the fundamental and distribution requirements "broaden the idea of what creativity is" by allowing creative writing classes to qualify.

In addition to decreasing the number of general education courses necessary for graduation, the fundamental and distribution requirements introduce several new ideas. Many professors and administrators were concerned that the interdisciplinary courses had no place in the old general education breakdown, and so were not full participants in Washington and Lee's academic life. With the new curriculum, interdisciplinary studies are now considered under the vast humanities umbrella.

While many faculty members offered "fervent pleas" to

not reduce the already negligible number of required humanities courses, their appeals seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The subject area, which covers nine fields of study, requires only four courses. While Dittman hopes that "people [will] spread themselves out in the courses they choose," it is far more likely they will limit their classes to the topics in which they are most knowledgeable, and therefore comfortable. This reduction undermines the professed goal of Washington and Lee's liberal arts status, to "expose students to various modes of thought and to the variety of ideas and values in today's world" (2006-2007 *Undergraduate Course Catalogue*). The Class of 2011 has an easier, less demanding, and inherently narrower college career to anticipate. I am sure their future employers will be thrilled by the results.

Allie Locking is a sophomore History and International Relations major from Abingdon, Virginia.

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Changes to the Core Curriculum:

Fundamentals (complete all four areas)

FW	Composition	competency or 1 course
FL	Language	competency or 1-4 courses
FM	Mathematics and Computer Science	3 credits
FP	Physical Education	4 skills (1 credit) and swim test

Humanities (12 credits, at least three from each area)

HA	Arts (art, music, theater, creative writing)	3 credits
HL	Literature (in English or another language)	competency (3-6 credits)
HU	Other (history, philosophy, religion, interdepartmental)	3 credits

Sciences and Social Sciences (12 credits, four courses)

SL	Laboratory	3-4 credits
SC	Other science and mathematics	3 credits
SS	Social Science (economics, politics, sociology, etc)	6 credits, 2 areas

Top Eight Reasons To Share A Name With A President

8. Andrew Jackson: "When I withdraw money from the bank, instead of asking for twenties, I ask for 'Mes'."
7. James Garfield: "Every morning as I walk into Radio Shack, my co-workers have to play 'Hail To The Chief'."
6. George Washington: "I get the History Channel for free."
5. William Henry Harrison: "I don't just say 'no' when my wife wants to redo the kitchen--I veto it."
4. Richard Nixon: "Nothing."
3. Bill Clinton: "I always get V.I.P. treatment at strip clubs."
2. Zachary Taylor: "I'm named after the guy who...actually, I'd never heard of him until today."
1. George W. Bush: "It's fun to buy rounds for everyone and send the tab to the White House."

Courtesy of www.politicalhumor.com

Voter Apathy: Can we save ourselves?

During a recent discussion of the approaching deadline for absentee ballots, one of my peers responded to my inquiries with "I think I've just given up on politics." Needless to say, I was stunned and shudder to think that this is the prevailing sentiment on Washington and Lee's campus. What could possibly account for such a complete rejection of the political process, especially in a university such as ours, known for its political involvement? We boast the greatest number of Supreme Court justice graduates. Our Mock Convention is considered the most accurate predictor for the presidential nominee. Politics is one of the most popular majors. College Republicans is the second largest club on campus. On paper, these facts seem to contradict a campus-wide political apathy.

Yet recently, students have been unable to mobilize themselves for our own student government elections, which arguably exercise greater direct influence on daily life than the results of the national elections. At last year's SJC and EC candidate speeches, for example, there were more candidates than audience members, hardly a testament to the significance we place in student self-governance. Several candidates ran unopposed, and voter turnout was abysmally low. Merely 398, or 18.5%, of our 2140 students bothered to vote for our student leaders. This complete and utter failure to participate in even campus-wide politics is inexcusable, especially when it concerns something as important as

our honor system. Unfortunately, this disturbing trend of nonparticipation is nation-wide.

After the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1972, youth voter turnout (ages 18-24) has been in perpetual decline, reaching an all-time low in 2000 at 36%. Youth voter participation spiked in the 2004 presidential elections to 47%, perhaps due to programs such as the MTV campaign "Rock the Vote," which specifically targeted the youth. Eighteen to twenty-four year olds compose 14.4% of all eligible voters, a percentage capable of providing a candidate with victory. While the majority of young people lean democratic, prominent pollster Ed Goeas reports that Young Republicans enjoy a seven-point intensity advantage over Young Democrats in their voter turnout.

"It is clear that Congress is not concerned about the reaction of college students. I suppose they assumed that this 14.4% of voters would not turn out on Election Day."

Truth be told, the legislation on Capital Hill is more than capable of penetrating the comfortable Lexington bubble we so eagerly create. College and graduate school costs are steadily rising, as are interest rates on Federal Stafford Loans. With 44% of all full-time undergraduates dependent on the loans, there are undoubtedly some Washington and Lee students

affected. On July 1st, interest rates on federal student loans were increased by 2% to a fixed rate of 6.94%. While this is not a terrible rate for a college grad with no credit, it is concerning that the government decided to increase the interest rate, which probably indicates a greater problem. It is clear that Congress is not concerned about the reaction of college students dependent on these loans. I suppose they assumed that this 14.4% of voters would not turn out on Election Day. After all, why would they start now?

Perhaps students do not realize the full implications of the new interest rates. The average student with loans graduates college with \$17,000 of educational debt and graduate school with nearly \$74,000 in debt. Consider the effect an increase of 2% would have. According to OneSimple Loan, a \$50,000 student loan paid off over 25 years will cost an additional \$21,000 under the new interest rates. This is not a change many of us can afford, yet there has hardly been a murmur of protest or even a question as to why this increase occurred. The conspicuous lack of dialogue on such an expensive piece of legislation is but a symptom of the political apathy afflicting America's youth.

The importance of participation in the political process is obvious. Indeed, the virtues of our method of democracy are extolled continuously as we try to introduce similar forms of government to other nations. The

reasons behind the political disinterest of America college students, however, remain elusive. Many claim to be too busy, or to forget, or suggest that the absentee voting process is too complex and inconvenient to be bothered with. It's just one vote, right? One vote for a candidate with limited appeal debating issues of little relevance to the average college student.

Imagine, if you can, the number of people not fortunate to experience democracy, the ones who do not have the right to decline to vote. Consider the Iraqis who braved death threats and terrorist

attacks to go to the polls, who proudly bore the ink stains on their fingers that told the whole world they had voted. What outrageous set of circumstances makes the American youth so willing to carelessly discard their voice in government? Perhaps it is because we have never had to live without a democracy. Perhaps we take our freedom to vote for granted, not recognizing the privilege that it represents. Perhaps, and most frighteningly, we view democracy as something eternal, something impervious to damage or neglect. Perhaps we believe democracy will

wait for us until we are ready to embrace it. We don't have the time, now, to examine competing candidates and platforms or sift through the mountain of conflicting information overwhelming the pre-election media. Voting will be a priority eventually, when we are ready to abandon the collegiate-inspired hedonistic culture we are currently entangled in and shoulder the burden of responsible citizenship. Democracy will still be there, right?

Elizabeth Mills is a senior History major from Lafayette, Louisiana.

Out with Rumsfeld

We at The Spectator recognize that Washington and Lee students have busy schedules and may not have the time to keep updated on current information. Therefore, we have decided to supply you with the most important information about Robert Gates, the new Secretary of Defense.

Name: Robert Michael Gates

Birthday: September 23, 1943

College: Graduated from William & Mary in 1965

Campus Organization of Choice: Young Republicans

Most Noteworthy Accomplishment: Distinguished Eagle Scout Award

Military Career: Drafted during Vietnam and served as an Air Force officer from 1967-1969

Intelligence Career: Only officer in the Central Intelligence Agency's history to rise from an entry-level position to director.

Involvement in Iran Contra Scandal: Undetermined

Memoirs: *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*; With his memoirs already written, President Bush must have figured it was safe to bring him on board.

***Editor's Note: This is written in jest. Please take the initiative to do your own research and form your own opinions on the man who is now running our Department of Defense.*

The Death of Civic Literacy

In September of 2006, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute published a study entitled "The Coming Crisis in Citizenship: Higher Education's Failure to Teach America's History and Institutions." Their results should have inspired an uproar, a clamor for a more thorough investigation, perhaps even a drastic re-evaluation, of our own institution's efficacy. A resounding silence, however, greeted the study's publication. That silence was tempered only recently with the announcement of a new core curriculum, one that will undoubtedly exacerbate the problem identified by the study: **America's institutions of higher learning, Washington and Lee included, are failing their students.**

Washington and Lee seniors scored 63.8%, or a D by most grading scales.

Two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson observed, "If a Nation expects to be ignorant and free...it expects what never was and never will be." He believed that America's democratic system would endure only if its citizens maintained a basic knowledge of their country's guiding principles and fundamental institutions. To determine the nature of America's current civic literacy, ISI's National Civic Literacy Board, in conjunction with the University of

Connecticut's Department of Public Policy, conducted a study of unprecedented scope, involving 14,000 college students at 50 colleges across the country. They tested current college freshmen and seniors on American history, government, foreign policy, and market economy. Their results were discouraging, suggesting that unless universities take drastic corrective steps, a national crisis in American citizenship is imminent.

The study was conducted through the administration of a 60-question, multiple-choice test, the results of which were then compared, both among schools and between grade levels. ISI found that America's colleges are failing to educate their students about America's history and institutions. Seniors scored, on average, only 1.5 percent higher on the test than freshmen, and at 16 schools the seniors scored lower. The average senior score—53.4 percent—is abysmal. The questions reflect a disturbing trend in seniors' lack of knowledge in even the most basic of fields. For example, more than half were unable to identify the correct century in which the first American colony at Jamestown was established, nor could they recognize Yorktown as the battle that ended the American Revolution; 28 percent believed Gettysburg to be the correct answer. Fewer than half of college seniors were able to recognize the line "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," as from the Declaration of Independence. And

only 45.2 percent were able to identify the Baath party as the primary source of Saddam Hussein's political support; 12.2 percent believed it to be the Communist Party, while 5.7 percent chose Israel.

Such results make one question the caliber of schools represented in the survey. Surely students investing upwards of \$40,000 a year would be capable of more intelligent responses. Yet, of the 50 schools surveyed, three that performed in the bottom ten were members of the Ivy League: Yale, Brown, and Cornell. Others in the bottom ten include Duke, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, the University of Virginia, and Berkeley, all of whose seniors evidenced *negative* learning: incoming freshmen actually scored higher on the test than seniors. Prestige and selectivity, it appears, contribute nothing to overall knowledge. Quite to the contrary, ISI classified three of the four highest-scoring colleges—Rhodes College, Calvin College, and Grove City College—as "non-elite." The study suggests that America's most prestigious colleges "enroll the best prepared freshmen but do little to increase knowledge, while the colleges ranked highest in adding value by increasing knowledge. . . enroll less knowledgeable freshmen but add significantly to their knowledge and understanding." The result of this discrepancy is that seniors from the more prestigious institutions graduate with markedly less civic

knowledge than those from the non-elite schools.

To which category would you assign Washington and Lee students—the non-elite civic literate or the prestigious and regressed – for we, too, participated in the study. Out of the 50 schools, we rank only thirty-third, our seniors scoring an average 0.2 percent higher on the test than incoming freshmen. This figure is appalling, and it bespeaks a general neglect of the fundamentals of a liberal arts education. With the current general education requirements, students can easily graduate without having taken a single course in history, politics, or economics, much less a course specific to American history or politics. ISI's study illustrates a positive correlation between civic learning and the number of history or politics courses completed: "Even when controlling for numerous variables that influence learning, seniors at schools with reasonably strong core curricula . . . had double the gain in civic learning compared with those seniors at schools without a coherent core curriculum." This correlation may seem obvious, yet it is often ignored.

Washington and Lee does not have a strong core curriculum, and the projected changes for the fall of 2007 look to weaken it further. Students could graduate having completely avoided the departments of history and politics. There are also minimal writing courses required, one composition class, and one class in literature—

which does not have to be English literature. This is a distressing development, as more and more students graduate unable to write coherently enough to satisfy future employers. The importance of learning English and history extends beyond being able to analyze Shakespeare's symbolism or explain the Monroe Doctrine. There is not one field that does not require the ability to communicate clearly and succinctly, or to build and support an argument. Because all professional correspondence takes place through the written word, powerful and convincing writing is especially important. Few things are more discrediting than poor grammar.

A general knowledge of American history and government is important, not just for those majoring in the social sciences, but for anyone who expects to be a functioning, contributing member of society. ISI's study showed that students more familiar with American history and institutions were significantly more likely to engage in citizenship activities such as voting, community service, and political campaigns. Without the basic knowledge that history courses provide, students will be unable to engage fully in their responsibilities as citizens of this republic. Abraham Lincoln believed that it was vitally important for every citizen to "receive at least a moderate education and thereby be enabled to . . . appreciate the value of our free institutions." Washington and Lee, and indeed academic

institutions across the nation, are failing in this most basic and easily-rectifiable of tasks, thereby threatening the vitality and stability of the democratic processes we take for granted.

For more information on this topic, please see the article entitled "The End of Gen-Eds" on page 6 and the ISI study at www.americancivilliteracy.org.

Jennifer Sanow is a sophomore International Relations major from Leesburg, Virginia.

Minimum Wage:

How Would an Increase Affect W&L?

The midterm elections having come and gone, and many leading politicians are now pushing for an increase in the legal minimum wage. The nonpartisan Pew Research Center reports that 83 percent of Americans want to raise the minimum wage by two dollars, to \$7.15 an hour.

Ignoring the *ad populum* arguments, one discovers that a legal minimum wage comes with a number of pertinent costs. If the minimum wage is raised, we could witness many of these costs at Washington and Lee. The campus work-study program currently pays an hourly wage of \$5.75 as part of its financial aid packages. If the minimum wage were raised above this rate, the program would become more costly to the university. Jim Kaster, Associate Director of Financial Aid, says that the university would have to react to such an increase in cost by reducing the number of hours that work-study students work, reducing the number of work-study positions offered, or increasing funding for the work-study program.

Reducing either the number of hours worked or the number of student workers would harm the productivity of the entire school. Many work-study jobs exist so that regular employees and departments can do their own jobs better. A student working in the Office of Career Services, for example, will put up posters, make copies, pick up the mail, and run errands so that Career Services can spend its time working with students and prospective employers. A reduction in work-study hours or work-study students would require Career Services to split its time between its normal functions

and the work-study tasks—resulting in lower-quality work in each area. Fewer posters would go up, and Career Services would have less time to counsel students.

“The government’s continued support of a “minimum wage,” a “fair wage,” or a “living wage” exemplifies the difference between good and bad economists.”

Of course, the university could instead decide to increase funding. Mr. Kaster says, “It is more likely that the university would increase funding, since the work-study program is such a benefit to the campus.” But this, too, would produce harmful changes in the university’s operations. According to Mr. Kaster, the university is unlikely to raise its tuition to compensate, but the funds would have to come from somewhere. If not from a tuition increase, then diverted from some other department or project where the money is needed. Thus, the effect of the minimum wage is to upset the university’s allocation of funds to projects that are important to Washington and Lee.

The minimum wage also has negative effects on businesses in general. If the federal government raises the minimum wage to \$7.15 an hour, everyone who currently earns less than that rate will be affected. This demographic consists largely of unskilled workers. Many firms will not be able to afford a two-dollar wage increase among their lowest-paid workers; others will simply decide that only a more skilled

worker could merit the increased wage. The result will be that unskilled workers, many whom already struggle to find a job, will become unemployed.

The loss of these low-skilled workers will harm not only the workers themselves, but also the businesses that can no longer afford to keep them. The firms least able to afford the mandated wage increase will likely be small businesses. Larger, established firms have a competitive edge over small business, and up-and-coming entrepreneurs have a harder time trying to enter markets. Because small businesses are usually more experimental and innovative firms – there is less to lose when your business is worth \$100,000 than when it is worth \$100 million – cost-raising minimum wage laws could deter or even prevent innovative minds from bringing their ideas and services to the market.

With government-mandated wage increases, however, not all affected firms will cut costs by shortening hours or laying-off workers. Like Washington and Lee, the firms can increase funding. But how will businesses achieve this “increased funding”? Higher prices. Rises in prices and wages often result in inflation, diminishing the value of everyone’s savings. Purchasing power will decrease even for everyone, even those who just received a \$2-per-hour raise, courtesy of the federal government. So, eventually, we will “need” another minimum wage increase, and then another and another... until we are carrying our lunch money in suitcases and using dollar bills as wallpaper.

The government’s continued pursuit and support of a “minimum

wage,” a “fair wage,” or a “living wage” exemplifies what the nineteenth-century French economist Frédéric Bastiat observed as the difference between good and bad economists. Bad economists – most notably politicians – only look at “what is seen,” so they write laws demanding an increased hourly wage for low-income workers. But good economists look further, to what is *not* seen, and they will see the costs of a minimum wage law. The bad economists either do not see or choose to ignore the increased unemployment, decreased innovation, compromised standard of living, and inflation that all flow from minimum-wage laws. In thinking that low-income workers are poor because

they lack money, the bad economists ignore Say’s Law of Markets—the wisdom of another French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say. The problem is that these workers lack goods and services, and the economy’s ability to produce these goods and services is harmed even more by government paternalism, embodied in minimum wage laws. By decreeing a minimum wage, the government is only creating economic problems that it will later decide it must “fix,” thus further distorting the market.

But what business does the government have in labor markets, or any markets, for that matter? Why should it be unlawful for an American citizen to work for \$5.14 an hour or \$1 an hour or any other

wage? Free markets are voluntary; they can only exist as the product of individuals’ choices. Just as the consumer can either purchase a good or service or choose to look elsewhere, an employee is free either to negotiate with his employer for a raise, or to leave his job and offer his services elsewhere. A “fair wage” is a term steeped in subjectivity. It is clear that, whether considered “fair” or not, the only healthy, sustainable wages are those agreed upon by employer and employee and dictated by the market.

Robert Claiborne is a freshman from Towson, Maryland.

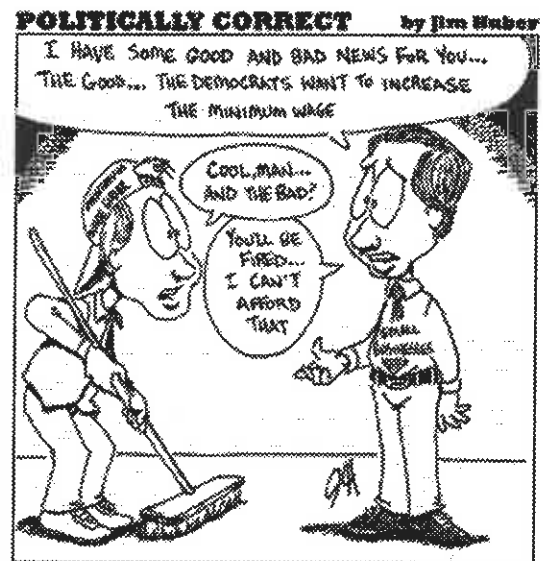
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to either the SJC or the Faculty Board of Appeals, they do not have recourse to trial initially.

This concept may appear threatening, and understandably so; Dean Dotson is probably not as sympathetic a listener as a jury of peers. Its purpose, however, is to improve the efficiency of the SJC, which has become extremely back-logged of late, primarily due to students who request a trial to postpone being held accountable for their actions.

While condemned by many as contrary to the spirit of student self-governance, Dean Dotson’s role in the trial process is both minor and transitory. According to Matt Krieg, Dean Dotson is there at Krieg’s invitation, and will remain until they both agree that the SJC is ready to function autonomously. The visceral reaction Dean Dotson’s position has inspired is

one not based on the facts of the situation, but instead on the sense of entitlement afflicting much of the student population. We are enamored with our own power and convinced that any administrative participation is an attempt to stifle it. Yet our very infatuation with unencumbered authority is a symptom of the disease. If we felt we truly deserved the freedom to govern ourselves, we would not fear intervention; the immediate rejection of assistance suggests that we do not trust our own qualifications, but worry that through supervision, our inadequacies will be revealed. The maturity and security to accept administrative involvement in an arena that is ultimately the university’s



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responsibility is critical. Only through forging a functioning partnership will students be able to prove themselves capable of autonomy, and therefore the partnership, unnecessary.

Jennifer Sanow is a sophomore International Relations major from Leesburg, Virginia.

Mid-Term Elections

This past Tuesday, millions of Americans went to the polls and gave Democrats something they have not experienced since most Washington and Lee students could count their age on their fingers. For the first time in twelve years, Democrats have full control of Congress.

They secured 30 seats in the House of Representatives, unseating a handful of the 'Republican Revolutionaries' who, in reverse fashion, had helped the GOP win control of the House in 1994, after 40 years of Democratic control. Democrats slid into posts that had been vacated by retiring Republican representatives in Wisconsin and Arizona and were able to replace several long-standing incumbents from Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, and North Carolina.

Democrats also staked claim to 5 seats in the Senate, wrangling Republicans out of seats in Montana, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, and Rhode Island. Virginia's own senatorial race is the one on which the power of the chamber eventually hinged. It was announced Wednesday that Democrat Jim Webb had unseated Republican George Allen on Wednesday, winning by a margin of only 7, 484 votes out of about 2.3 million. These numbers were released with 99% of Virginia precincts reporting.

Since the beginning of these elections, this particular race rarely left the spotlight. Between Webb's controversial stance on the roles of women and Allen's

Tunisian blunders, it seems only fitting that the contest ended in such a dramatic fashion. Interestingly, Webb supported Allen during the 2000 election but has since switched parties after the war in Iraq began. He is staunchly opposed to the war and calls for the U.S. to quickly 'leave responsibly.' Allen, on the other hand, has supported the war from the beginning, and believes that it would be irresponsible for U.S. troops leave before Iraqi freedom and democracy have firmly taken root.

Virginia elected eight red representatives and two blue representatives to the House Tuesday as well. The sixth district, which encompasses Lexington, has sent Republican Bob Goodlatte back to the Hill.

The War on Terror will be in the foreground in next coming weeks. With Democrats now in power, the strategy has the potential to change dramatically. President George W. Bush has extended a welcome to Nancy Pelosi, the California Democrat who will become the first female speaker of the House, and several other new high-ranking Democrats, www.townhall.com

inviting them to lunch at the White House. They pledged bipartisanship on all fronts, but most especially Iraq, and Democrats have asked President Bush to hold a summit on the Middle East.

While President Bush did say that he was "obviously disappointed" in the election results, he will stay steadfast with his agenda. Domestically, he wants to make his tax cuts permanent fixtures and looks to rein in government spending. In a pointed, yet polite manner, President Bush commented, "Congresses change, the issues don't."

Monica Chinn is a freshman art history and journalism major from Princeton, New Jersey.



Orientation Week: A Conservative Perspective

During Orientation week, numerous meetings and speeches and performances are inflicted upon the entering freshman class, all meant to help ease the often stressful adjustment to life on a college campus. Despite the many beneficial and informative events, I found a few off-color, specifically the LIFE performance and the Intrafraternity Council meeting. Though each was in every respect well-intended and meaningful, their deliveries compromised their messages due to lewd story lines, obscene language, or both. These effects certainly do not belong during a time as serious and significant as Orientation week, whether on stage or behind the pulpit.

First, to raise the curtain, LIFE indeed “challenged [us] to

reflect on social and health issues that [we] may encounter during [our] college years.” Yet, what challenged me more was to remain seated through its crude plot lines and abundant profanity. The production committed too much effort to reaching freshmen in its ‘hip’ and contemporary approach, weakening its well-meaning theme and purpose. To be candid, I hear enough foul language elsewhere, and I fail to see the correlation between expletives and sound communication. However, the strangest aspect of the whole show must have been the contrast between Burr Datz’s inspiring role and the others’ profane dialogues. The former’s endearing personality and compelling stage presence gave me the strength to endure, and for this, I owe him my

sincerest praise and gratitude.

Also disappointing, the Intrafraternity Council meeting began just as appropriately as one should expect, until one member thought it suitable to swear from Lee Chapel’s pulpit. Call me old-fashioned, but a place so revered and steeped in history certainly deserves more respect. Of all locations on campus, none prove more worthy of students’ consideration than the chapel, once a site of worship and now an esteemed family’s final resting place. If this commands no deference from students, what will?

Derek Haysom is a freshman from Houston, Texas.

“You know, education, if you make the most of it, you study hard, you do your homework, and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don’t, you get stuck in Iraq.”

Dear Senator Kerry,

We at the W&L Spectator would like to congratulate you on your latest remark. We appreciate the support it generated for the Republican Party, especially so close to midterm elections. We applaud your complete and utter disregard for liberal convention, choosing to verbally attack our troops outright and abandoning the often snide, underhanded methods of your party. Just when we were worried the left had become completely entrenched in its ideology of political correctness, you speak up and remind us that, fortunately, there are still those few ready to alienate an entire population demographic. No doubt our soldiers are thrilled to be protecting your right to doubt their intelligence – on national television. We applaud your ability to jeopardize an election you aren’t even participating in. But don’t worry, sir; you were right. It is all about education. If you make the most if, study hard, do your homework, and make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don’t, you end up losing the presidential election to a man who thinks an arbolist, or perhaps an arbo-tree-ist, is someone who knows about trees.

Out Loud

"I would think that if you understood what Communism was, you would hope, you would pray on your knees, that we would someday become communists."

-Jane Fonda

"Clinton's pardons have no impact on the health and welfare of the American people."

-Barbara Streisand

"One could say that Osama bin Laden and these non-nation-state fighters with religious purpose are very similar to those kind of atypical revolutionaries that helped to cast off the British crown."

-Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio)

"He's (Osama bin Laden) been out in these countries for decades, building schools, building roads, building infrastructure, building day-care facilities, building health-care facilities, and these people are extremely grateful."

-Patty Murray (D-Washington)

"I mean, I think, Iraqis, I think, feel that if we drove smaller cars, maybe we wouldn't have to kill them for their oil."

-Bill Mahr

"I will guarantee you that John Kerry will be president of the United States."

-Nancy Pelosi

"It's your money, says President Bush when he promotes tax cuts. I disagree."

-Bill Clinton, 2003

"But the problem for Social Security is that it is actually in fine shape until, I don't know, 2040 or something like that."

-Howard Dean

"We need to change our ethic and aspire to be more Canadian-like."

-Michael Moore

"They could call Jesus a terrorist too. I mean, he was pretty tough on money lenders a time or two."

-Ramsey Clark, former Democratic Attorney General