

From the editors:

Retrograde: Opposite to the usual order; inverted or reversed.

This is a student written, student published magazine, devoted to opinions that don't get fair attention in the mainstream media. These articles represent the slightly obscurer, lurking-in-the-back-of-your-mind ideas that haunt the thoughts of most conscientious teenagers. As you may or may not have noticed, all the articles written in this issue are from the editors. Don't like it? Tough. Because it would contradict our retrograde policies, forbid absolutely any thoughts that oppose those stated in this magazine. If you want to break this rule, contact the writers or send comments, arguments or articles to frc.amnesty@gmail.com. As the editors, we will be very very angry if we get any comments from the people who read this magazine. In addition to articles, we also hate poetry, photography, and artwork. We hope RM made your day just a little bit worse.

Lasha Shaw-Korchynski, Shannon Refvik, and Tony Koncan

Vegetarianism- A New Perspective

Shannon Refvik

I don't really give a damn about the suffering of animals. Yeah, I'd rather not hear about how they're cruelly slaughtered and stuff, but it's one of those things that just sits happily at the back of my mind, kind of like "oh, I really should change my socks" or something like that.

I also am not a health nut. Cheesecake is my friend.

So why, then, am I a vegetarian? Well, to answer my own question, which also happens to be the point of writing this article, EATING MEAT IS BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

In case you haven't realized, say, for example, if you've been living in a little hole in the ground for the past fifty years, meaning that your parents must also have been living in the hole and you've never seen the light of day, the world's population is INCREASING DRAMATICALLY. You've all seen those graphs in science or social studies or something, where the human population grows slowly for hundreds of years and then KAPOW it shoots through the roof- yeah, they're not lying.

So, what's the point? Each time something gets eaten, only about 10% of its energy is able to be used by the thing eating it. So, if a chicken eats a bunch of grain, only 10% of the energy stored in the grain gets into the chicken as a usable form- the rest is used to make the chicken run around and peck the ground and perform other chicken-rituals beyond the reasoning of mankind. So, you then get to eat the chicken, and only 10% of the chicken's energy is transferred to you. Do the math- only 1% of the energy that was in the grain is now in you. That grain could have given 10 people the same amount of energy.

Also, because plants tend to move around less than chickens and other animals (for fairly obvious reasons which I hope I don't have to get into), less energy is wasted. Fact: one acre of prime land can produce 40 000lbs of potatoes or 250lbs of beef. I'll take the potatoes and feed the world, thank-you very much. Seventy per cent of the US grain harvest is fed to farmed animals- this represents about a third of the entire world's harvest.

Sooooo..... the world's population is increasing. The arable land on planet earth now needs to support more people. Right now, that isn't really happening- we're perfectly content to eat meat and let people in third world countries go hungry. In our own defense, for the most part this happens because hardly anybody knows the environmental impact that eating meat has. Eating less meat (or no meat) would increase the amount of land available to grow produce, which

means that there would be more food available for human consumption. There is no way that people in Canada and the US could actually eat all the food that we're capable of producing, so hopefully some of it would get to the people who need it.

As an aside, the excess phosphorus and nitrogen from farm animals seep into our river systems, creating a perfect environment for algae that can wipe out native organisms. Think lake Winnipeg, and that gross green goo that's been covering parts of it lately.

Another aside- over-grazing has increased the amount of erosion on land that may have otherwise been arable to 13 times a sustainable rate. Erosion happens to be the main cause of desertification, the process through which good land becomes all dried up. Oops.

How's that for some food for thought? Think about the consequences of your food choices!

"There were no WMD's!"
The big myth about Iraq

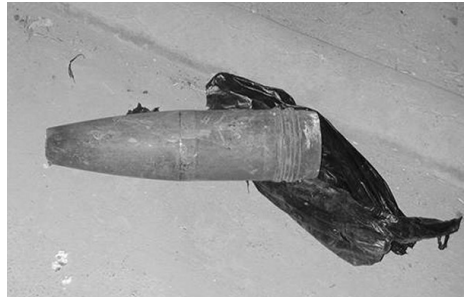
Tony Koncan

To the Bush administration, the justification for their war in Iraq has changed from finding and demolishing Iraq's stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction (or WMDs for short) and into an odd, downright creepily non-conservative crusade for freedom and human rights in the Middle East. Now, with the change in explanation due to the lack of a smoking gun proving Iraq was actively churning out WMDs, it seems that a new criticism of the war in Iraq is in vogue. "There were no weapons of mass destruction!" has become the anti-battle cry of the underprivileged democratic "minority" in the states, and of the anti-war movements everywhere else.

Now that I've set the stage, allow me to let you in on a little secret... though their numbers weren't anywhere near what was estimated, and there wasn't any evidence of ongoing WMD production, there were Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. Well, let me rephrase that... there was at least one.

The story broke on May 17th 2004 on Fox News, reporting that Iraqi insurgents detonated a 155mm artillery shell filled with sarin nerve agent, which they had buried next to the road as an improvised explosive device. The insurgents had no idea what was actually in the artillery shell, as burying it doesn't lend to a good dispersal of the nerve agents, so say the experts. As a

result its chemical effects were minimal. When explaining what happened with as little military jargon and few media buzzwords as possible, it means some "bad guys" found a bomb that happened to contain sarin and tried to blow up some "good guys" with it. And of course, that one bomb filled with sarin nerve agent constitutes as a weapon of mass destruction. Now, does any of this mean that Iraq was ready and willing to use WMDs on its neighbours? Or that it had a currently ongoing weapons program?



No, it's absolutely impossible to read that deeply into the incident. It was in all probability a practically forgotten piece of ordinance locked away in a disused bunker, and then pilfered by Iraqi insurgents when Saddam's regime crumbled. But the fact remains that according to the United Nations resolutions (#687 specifically,) Iraq wasn't supposed to have **any** such weapons. That means no stockpiles of ready to fire doomsday missiles, no buried relics from the Iran/Iraq war, and no lone shells in forgotten bunkers. Taking this evidence into account, could it be argued that Iraq was actually in violation of the UN resolutions, and as such the war was justified?

Probably. Somebody could sure make one heck of a case for it, too. But now that I've let the secret slip, this means that nobody is able to claim that "there were no weapons of mass destruction" because there apparently was at least one. I don't care if you're the president himself, if you oppose the war in Iraq, or if you're a just a fellow nosey Canadian because you simply cannot say that "there were no WMDs" now. Now you know that just isn't true.

Malinism

Equality for Men!

Men. The stereotype that comes to mind in the post-feminism era is stupid, ugly, and lazy. Women in the workplace are seen as powerhouses, surviving in a world previously foreign to them. While they may intimidate the alpha males in the workplace, the female population supports them for having broken down a sexual barrier.

What about men? What sexual barriers have they managed to break lately? Stay-at-home Dads, a role that is becoming more accepted, are not nearly as respected as workplace moms. Ask male high school students if they ever see themselves becoming a homemaker, and you'll get very few positive responses. Ask female students if they could see themselves in the business world, and you'll definitely find a couple.

If you stop to think about it, it seems like women have gained the ability to act in the traditional role of men, but there are very few men willing to fill in the shoes of the women they now work with. The role of homemaker, shunned by women racing to the prestigious world of business, has been neglected and is now often seen as a job for the weak. Women who want it are quietly snubbed for not going for sexual equality, and men who want it are less subtly slighted because sexual equality is something that still has not been realized in our society.

The role of homemakers is not the only case where men are treated as inferiors in our society. After a divorce, women are much more likely to come away with the house, the car, and the kids. In some cases, men are left with Saturday visits for two hours and child-support bills that take up most of their income. Women who are required to pay child support generally pay less, and judges tend to be more sympathetic to any requests they make.

The feminist movement had an achievable, easily measured goal in its early days, which was to gain the vote. What kind of goals could a male movement for equality have? More respect for those that choose to stay with their children? Without some way of measuring progress, we'll never know if the problem is getting better or worse, or even if the problem as I see it extends to more people than I know.

Technically, males have the same rights as females, so this is just something to think about- when you say that you believe in sexual equality, does that mean that you believe that women should have the rights that men have always had? Or, does it mean equality for men, as well?

The Great Mall Campaign – 90% Ethics Free!

Lasha Shaw-Korchynski & Shannon Refvik

Have you ever wondered where your clothes come from? All clothing sold in Canada should tell you which country it's from, but within those countries are all different kinds of factories. In recent years, I've heard a lot about sweatshop and child labour, and personally I don't agree with it. So, what do you do? Where can you get clothes that are made under ethical conditions? A friend and I went on a little adventure to find out. We spent a few hours one Saturday asking clothing stores at St. Vital mall what conditions their clothes were made under. Originally, the point of this was to make up a little list of "Ethical" and "Unethical" suppliers, but this proved to be harder than we had anticipated.

Our worst experience was with Stitches and Miss Teen, two outlets operated by the same company. At Stitches, a sales clerk told us that the customer service number was confidential, and that she "couldn't divulge that information". The CUSTOMER SERVICE PHONE NUMBER! This phone number is listed on the website... I wonder if they know that? They might get some calls from customers, which is surely



not the intent. She seemed genuinely shocked that anyone would care about how their clothes were made. A Miss Teen employee told us that her "managers aren't any good for that sort of thing," meaning that they would have no idea. Many other stores simply were not able to give us any information at all.

We went home and e-mailed several customer service addresses, most of which gave no response. A particular highlight for me was what we were told by Suzy Shier. Our original inquest included this:

"I am wondering if there is information available regarding Suzy Shier's policies on ensuring human rights of foreign factory workers are up to par. If possible, please send me whatever information you can regarding labourers salaries, hours, housing and general work conditions."

Later the following week, I received this reply:

"Thank you for contacting us of your concern regarding the our policies [this is not a typo!]. I assure you that I will forward your concern onto the proper individuals."

Well, I'm glad to hear that somebody in your corporation now knows that somebody out there as a concern about "the our policies"! I think their next task should be training someone to answer yes/no questions... then they'll work up to multiple choice.

Somewhere in the web of 1-800 numbers that comprise the "customer service" of the Reitmans/Smart Set/Thyme Maternity/Addition-Elle empire, when I managed to talk to a real live person, I was briskly asked what consumer awareness group I represented. Upon hearing that I was simply a concerned citizen, I got an ok-we'll-play-it-that-way chuckle and relatively no information. After trying to get rid of me in the French-speaking customer service department (which proved unsuccessful – thanks Mr. Vouriot!), I inevitably reached the end of the proverbial line.

Back at the mall, we noticed some particularly unusual irony. At MECCA, they sell souvenir type t-shirts that proudly proclaim "Winnipeg, Canada". Interestingly

enough, they're made... IN MONGOLIA. What percentage of Winnipeggers actually know that Mongolia is a country, much less what part of the world it's in. In Mecca's defense, an extremely helpful sales clerk got a few different managers and bosses out of bed with 11:00 AM phone calls, but nobody could help us.

In American Eagle, (which also owns Bluenotes and Thrifty's), the first sales clerk we spoke to assured us that AE had very ethical policies, and she would not work for a company that didn't. She had us quite convinced, but we called the customer service number at American Eagle, just to check. We were told that nobody there could help us, and that we should try sending an email. Their fiscal report for 2003 is available on the website, and contains a short paragraph on their outsourcing practices. American Eagle's Code of Conduct, which is not listed in the report, is required to hang somewhere in each factory that the company has contracts in.



We did have some definite successes. In 2001, the GAP was popularly criticized for bad labour practices. When we talked to a sales clerk, we were actually given documents outlining their outsourcing policies right in the store. We were also directed to their website, www.gapinc.com, where their 2003 Social Responsibility Report is posted. Basically, it outlines their evaluation method of their suppliers. All contracted suppliers are rated on a "needs immediate improvement" to "excellent" scale regarding their human rights standards. It also contains information about how many factories in each country have received which rating, and consequences for badly rated factories that do not immediately clean up their act. Another store that impressed us was Le Chateau. Although their social responsibility policies were not available at the store, when we called their head office in Montreal they agreed to email us a copy. Also, around 60% of their clothes are manufactured in Canada, where there are definite guidelines regarding working conditions. Reitman's also emailed us a copy of their policies.

Overall, next to none of the retail employees had any idea about what kind of company they were working for, nor any idea where to find it. Most stores directed us to their websites, which were far more concerned with their 70% off sales than our non-revenue generated customer concerns.

So, we did find a handful of "ethical" retailers, but with the exception of the GAP we went through a fairly lengthy process to find what we wanted to know. When it comes down to it, shouldn't someone who works at these places have these answers? One of the big problems is that hardly any retailers actually own factories. Factories produce clothing that is then sold by auction to various

retailers, many of which then stamp on a brand name before selling it. By doing this, retailers are able to place the blame on someone else, and say with a reasonable amount of truth that they have no idea what's going on. This is what I strongly object to. Shutting your eyes to bad labour practices and then trying to divert the blame to suppliers is not ethical. Retailers should make conscious decisions to buy their products only from companies that they have inspected and found to be respecting the human rights of their employees.

We talked to managers, called office headquarters all over the country, and generally pushed as hard as we could to find the answer to our simple question: Are your clothes made in sweatshops? It seems ridiculous that this information isn't readily available to the consumers. If this information was provided in the stores, customers could at least the very least make an informed choice. Some would take advantage of this, and some wouldn't, but everyone deserves that choice. We're living with our heads in the sand, and I for one am not willing to leave it there. I'm not trying to change the world. Just tell me what I need to know, and let me make my own decisions.

The Can of Soup

Tony Koncan

In errant social commentary,
On how we've supposedly decayed;
In that over obvious irony,
The minimalist complains:

"This is what art is reduced to?"

Painting three lines on the canvas.
I'll paint four,
and be worth more.

Or struggling,
Listen to the poetically illiterate
As they hopelessly alliterate
Their failed formulaic flounderings.

That can of soup needs no understanding
Just open the damn thing up.

I think I get it now
But what's the point?
Is it lost in some endless feedback loop,
Or jammed sideways, stuck,
Just short of the pinnacle of art?

Stuff? Ya, I like Stuff

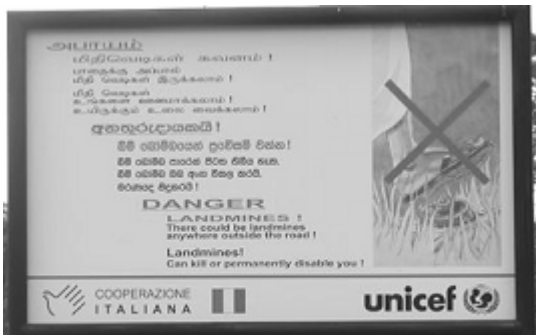
Do you think that people who spend more money are happier? People buy excess amounts of stuff, mostly that they don't need, in a misguided effort to increase their happiness. Please, don't write this off as cliché. After the basic needs of survival are met, people buy stuff to be more attractive, more important, more entertained, and therefore happier.

Personally, I am not happier when I'm buying stuff. The hypocrisy demonstrated by teenagers can be actually astounding. If you've ever read *1984* (George Orwell), then you'll understand what I mean when I say that the majority of us are well practiced at double-think. This means that we can know something is true, then forget it at will and replace it with something that we know is false, and then forget that we made the switch and go on with our happy little lives, thinking we've done the right thing. Wake up! You know that when you go out and buy into a branded culture, there's a big wig somewhere up the line laughing his ass off at your naivety and willingness to blindly follow the crowd. For the amount they charge you, it's obvious that someone is making a killing. WE ALL KNOW THIS. Yet we do it anyway. Did you know that many of the big brand names don't even consider themselves makers of stuff? NIKE has described itself as "a marketing company, whose main marketing tool is sportswear." (Naomi Klein's *No Logo*) We buy into this culture, throwing away our hard earned dollars in a strange pursuit of happiness. Think about it for a second. Would a perfectly happy person go out and buy stuff? It's very unlikely. The amount of stuff that we buy is an indicator of unhappiness and lives that we believe are not satisfactory enough. Ironically, the more stuff we buy the healthier our economy is said to be, which is often used as a measure of how well an entire country is doing. We tell ourselves that we simply like the products, when in reality we think that it will make us happier. Otherwise, we simply wouldn't buy it. And the saddest part of this? It works. We feel better about ourselves. We feel like we're part of the crowd, even though we'd never admit that we care. We tell ourselves that we don't care what people think of us, that we're above trying to look good in other people's eyes. We don't even realize the hypocrisy. Whatever happened to teenagers rebelling? We'll get drunk on weekends, skip class, but refuse to buy into corporate America? Suddenly, it's not so cool. Is this making you uncomfortable? Maybe it's not. Maybe it's making you angry that I'm criticizing you, or you're thinking that I'm probably a big loser who knows nothing about fashion. Which, incidentally, is half true- but I do know a thing or two about fashion. I know that it's designed to make people feel good about themselves- people that can afford it, in any case. The rest of the population, the half that can't afford it or that simply doesn't care, is placed in this "uncool" category, which is another thing that we'll never admit.

So what's the point of all of this? Really, I don't even know. I'm not even sure what I'm getting at anymore; beyond venting my frustration that the people I'm surrounded with can be so painfully shallow. I'm not saying that I'm any better, just that I'm trying to be. If anything at all comes out of this, I hope it's that you look inside yourselves for something better to be proud of, beyond the stuff that you own. I don't even know you, but I know that you're better than that. Please, show it to the world.

Landmines: The Global Issue

Lasha Shaw-Korchynski



A landmine warning sign in Sri Lanka. In many countries, minefields are unmarked.

I consider myself a pretty socially aware person, but I'll be honest; the only recollection I have of real conversations about landmines were actually about Angelina Jolie and Princess Di (their celebrity champions). And that scene in the movie *Behind Enemy Lines*, when the guy just happens to step on a bomb in the middle of the forest - which I thought was a bit of a Hollywood convenience stretch anyway. Apparently it's not.

Fortunately, I knew enough to know that I knew nothing about the topic, and so I attended a recent conference about youth activism on the landmine issue.

Let's start right at the beginning. Landmines are small bombs that are detonated either by stepping on them, or pulling a tripwire. They're either laid around an area by hand or dropped by planes. When they explode, about half their victims are killed instantly. The rest nearly always lose limbs. Medical attention is slow - a quarter of victims lie bleeding on the ground for six hours or more. Countries with the biggest landmine problems aren't among the best in the world for health care either. This presents survivors with even bigger challenges. I can't speak from experience, but I bet living in a dirt hut in remote village in Cambodia, there's probably not much wheelchair access around.

Technically, landmines are military weapons, used to keep enemy soldiers out of particular areas. Patterns show they are often placed near village wells, school playgrounds, and other obviously militant areas - in other words, landmines are realistically used to target civilians. This is a means of disrupting the economy and promoting fear. They're not only found in remote wilderness locations, or surrounding army strongholds. Mines are found in farmer's fields, backyards, rural roads, and people's living rooms. Three quarters of casualties are civilians and one fifth are children.

People started using landmines in the 1940s. Since then, they've been used in dozens of conflicts. There are landmines in over sixty countries. The most affected include Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and Bosnia, but the list includes surprising entries like France, which still suffers from remnants of the Second World War.

Landmine danger isn't entirely about wartime, either. It's also about next fifty-odd years, when mines can still lie active in the ground, ready to indiscriminately kill the next person to tread on it.

Even if nobody steps on a landmine, it can do considerable damage to a war-torn country. Mine dangers often deter people from using much needed land. There aren't many roads in rural parts of these countries and landmines can bring travel to a complete halt. Some farmers can't (or shouldn't, but out of necessity do) use their fields, because of the threat of mines. This decreases food production, often in places suffering from post-war famines or severe poverty. And because of the mines, aid and relief workers have a tough time getting through to people who need supplies.

Years after conflicts, mines are a lingering reminder of the destruction of war. Many potential minefields are poorly identified. Some aren't marked at all. Landmines are also small objects. Shifting earth can expose landmines, which is particularly dangerous to young children who are inclined to pick up interesting looking objects.

The recent tsunami in Southeast Asia, another global tragedy, is complicated by the presence of landmines. The powerful water picked up mines and deposited them up to one hundred meters away, making places previously considered safe extremely dangerous to both inhabitants and aid workers.

Demining is a slow and expensive process. There is no shiny new infrared laser technology where you push a button and all the mines in a field show up. There is only one method considered sufficiently effective and it goes something like this: deminers are given a strip of land about a meter wide and a few meters long. Sometimes they'll sweep with a metal detector first, but that's not entirely effective (plus there are mines that don't have significant enough metal content to set a detector off). So, the deminer (wearing some equipment that resembles a welding mask and a lead vest, which, by the way is really only useful if someone else in your field sets off a mine more than ten meters away - if you set off a bomb, that hunk of plastic isn't going to do much for you) gets down near the ground. Armed with a long wooden stick, which resembles a slightly less modern version of something you'd roast a marshmallow with, they prod the ground methodically through the entire area. To be considered safe, they have to push it into the ground every two centimeters. Think about how much time

that's going to take in one square meter. What happens if they hit a mine? Well, hopefully, they won't set it off. At a 30-degree angle, they've got a fair shot at missing the trigger. Unless the ground's shifted or the mine wasn't totally level. If a mine is found in a fairly empty area, another small explosive charge is used to detonate it. If it's near a home, a road, power lines, or something else that could be damaged, more complicated (and expensive methods) must be taken.

Demining is a tediously slow and costly procedure. A mine costs between \$3 and \$30 to make. It costs between \$300 and \$1000 to find and remove. Imagine the amount of time you'd need to pay workers to demine an entire field, square by square. On top of that, demining isn't a very desirable job. Deminers suffer high accident rates - one deminer is seriously injured or killed for every thousand mines destroyed. It will cost an estimated \$33 billion to free the world of mines. Of course, determining the number of mines still in our land is nearly impossible, for obvious reasons.

An international treaty, officially known as the Ottawa Convention, calls for a ban on using, producing, transferring and stockpiling "anti-personnel" (intended for people, as opposed to tanks) landmines. Currently 144 countries, including Canada have signed the treaty. Forty-two have not, of which at least 17 are known to have serious landmine concerns. Other notable absences from the signature list are Russia, China, Cuba, Iraq, Iran and, shocking... The United States of America. Sorry to bring up a clichéd news item, but I'd love to see a good chunk of the "War on Terror" fund go to the clearing of some real weapons of mass destruction.

Landmines are deadly, cruel and needless weapons. We *know* they are usually used to target civilians. Between 15 000 and 20 000 people are killed or maimed by these explosives every year. That's roughly one person every thirty minutes. The developed world needs to take action.

For more information, try:

International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL): www.icbl.org

Mines Action Canada (MAC): www.minesactioncanada.org

Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program (YMAAP): www.dangermines.ca

Adopt-A-Minefield: www.adoptaminefield.com

...Or come within earshot of me, Lasha, your friendly neighborhood anti-landmines advocate. Mostly kidding.