

# Editorials

## Non-Comformity

by Steve Carter

A young man enters West Point because his father, a retired Army colonel, was educated there thirty years ago. A fifteen-year-old boy plays high school football because his parents want to feel a vicarious sense of accomplishment. A successful lawyer drives a Mercedes because all the other successful lawyers are driving them. These situations are all, to varying degrees, examples of conforming to the expectations of family, friends, and society as a whole. Perhaps the young cadet would rather be a carpenter. The fledgling football star may want to be a pianist. Maybe the lawyer is Jewish and feels queasy about driving a German-made car. When one strives to meet the expectations of others, he might as well try to drive through North Carolina using a Kansas road map. It is a frustrating and an impossible task. Non-conformity, a term usually (and not surprisingly) given a negative connotation, is often an essential characteristic of a well-adjusted, successful person.

Following one's own dictates has proved its worth as a virtue many times. Columbus was scoffed at when he stated his belief that the world was round. Leading scholars and experienced seamen considered

him to be mad. Columbus, however, sustained his belief and eventually proved the world is not a pancake by sailing to the Americas. Columbus's non-conformity eventually opened the gate for all Europe to enter a new world. With their non-conformity, the Wright brothers opened a new horizon — the world of flight. When Orville and Wilbur were building their first airplane, most people saw Noah building an ark in the desert. Eventually, the Wrights opened to travel an area greater than any ocean — the blue vastness of the never-ending heavens. As a result, man finally had dominion over the ancient alchemist's four basic elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Given these examples, one could logically conclude that non-conformity is the seed that germinates many true accomplishments.

Several of the world's greatest thinkers, writers, and philosophers have extolled the merits of non-conformity. Henry David Thoreau, the nineteenth-century philosopher, wrote, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Thoreau not only wrote but also lived these words, as he once went to jail for refusing to pay a tax he believed

would support slavery. Shakespeare aptly stated the value of self-direction in Hamlet (I,iii): "This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Granted, some may say that non-conformity breeds rebellion. These persons point to the youth unrest and the race riots of the late 1960s and early 1970s to justify their criticism. Indeed, the people who were active in these two movements took some actions that were radical, violent, and probably inadvisable. But what were their motives? They registered protest against an undeclared war in Vietnam that was being fought to show the world America's "toughness." Nearly fifty thousand Americans died in that debacle, and countless thousands suffered a physical and/or psychological crippling, all to stop the "red menace." Blacks, after years of silent suffering, unleashed their rage in a desperate plea for help, much like an attempted suicide. When one has shared an apartment with rats, cockroaches, and the harsh cold of winter all his life, rage and rebellion follow as naturally as winter succeeds fall. Non-conformity should very rarely take the form of such a violent revolt, but if society

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## A Question of Balance

by Quixote

"There is no dishonor in trying and failing. But there is in not trying at all." Robert La Follette

When dealing with the topic of the preservation and development of idealism, one always encounters the viewpoint of the cynics or, as such folk refer to themselves, the realists. Realists are interesting creatures, frequently approaching the characteristics of Mr. Spock in the popular Star Trek fantasy; they deal in logic, reason, and something they call realism. Whether they started out life, as I suspect most of us do, leaning towards the idealist's point of view and were transformed by dining on bitter herbs of personal frustrations or the salty tears of societal malaise and maladies, or if they adopted their calculations as a means to achieve desired ends, they have generally accepted a different definition of "the possible." And their perception of the possible is generally anathema to the idealist's vision.

This tension existing between the alternate views of "the possible" frequently brings the realist and the idealist into conflict. Our culture (and our lives) are replete with examples of such conflicts. All too frequently, the realist is the victor or deemed to be the wiser of the two for his views and ideas are based on the prized commodities of facts, logic and reason. The idealist deals in dreams, hopes and aspirations and by comparison is frequently viewed as being humorously foolish or deserving of tolerant pity.

Presently such a debate is raging in the national press and the minds of policy makers regarding America's present defense posture. The President-elect and his coterie of hardbitten realists are deploring the negligence of their predecessors in securing for this great nation unquestioned military superiority over our adversaries. The realists point to Soviet machinations of the last twenty years and their present fishing in

the troubled waters of the Middle East as proof of the dangerous times ahead. They guffaw at the concept of Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties as the misty-eyed optimism of idealists who do not realize that the Soviets are not to be trusted and that they are secretly bent on world domination.

To be sure their arguments are impressive, supported by massive amounts of data, numbers, 8" by 11" glossy photographs with lines and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each describing the picture. As they propose mobile missile forces that would force the Soviets to blanket areas of our country as large as 80,000 square acres to assure first strike capability, they comment that the safety and freedom of this nation (oddly rarely guilty of fishing in troubled waters for our own gains) is too important to be left to the muddleheaded thinking of idealists. Their words and logic are terrifying. To them the tiger is lurking in the woods ready to pounce on the unsuspecting.

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## Letter to the Editor

Sex is immoral.  
Drinking is immoral.  
Therefore: A  
Brevard College  
Student cannot have  
fun on campus.

This, as you first rate logic students can see, is not a totally logical statement. However, the drinking rules on the campus of Brevard College can hardly be called logical. Hypocritical perhaps, but not logical. Social drinking has been around for God knows how long. Jesus changed water into wine and even drank some. The Apostles drank wine at the Last Supper and they lived through the weekend to tell about it. This is an extreme example and is not a justification to drink, but drinking should be left up to the individual, not to the people who think that drinking is detrimental to you. For the people of this campus who do not drink "more power to you". That is your right. Picture, if you will, reversal of the drinking rules on campus. Would you, as a non-drinker, want to feel pressured, guilty, or want to worry about getting caught as a non-drinker? Of course not. The right to free actions, within the laws of the United States of America, are inalienable. The Administration of the campus clearly thinks that this right to free actions, within the law, constitutes

destructive, unproductive behavior. The way that the rules are enforced show, by examples, that the students are destructive in regards to this issue. Being destructive cannot be condoned, whether the rules stay as they are or if they are changed. The Administration strives to make us mature adults when the rules prevent us from making adult decisions. The Administration cannot be allowed to become our adopted parents. The "real world", outside of college and our parents' control, has no parents to guide us and make our decisions for us. We, at this early stage in adulthood, must learn to make just, responsible decisions. This Administration stifles us, even when it says it strives to help us, from making these mature adult decisions. Drinking, as a whole, is but a small facet in the Hope Diamond of decisions that we must and will make, but it is the duty of this administration to see that we start off on the right foot. So come on administration. Help us make just, non-two-faced decisions that you seem to enjoy making for us. We are, contrary to what the administration thinks, adult human beings, and our right to just, responsible human decisions should be upheld.

Mike Callahan

