

# The Decree

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## Responding to Helms hard

# Life is not really absolute

By STEVE FEREBEE

I've been thinking about absolutes lately.

All summer, for instance, I've been trying to think of "important" songs from the 1960s. My current choices for "most important" song is Aretha Franklin singing Otis Redding's, "Respect." But I change often.

We seem fascinated with questions like this. What is our most embarrassing moment? Who

**Dr. Steve  
Muses**

is the most important person in our lives? What's the best course to take? Who is the easiest professor to choose? Where is the best party for me this weekend?

People want to confine their lives within some clearly perceived boundaries; they don't want to be caught on the "wrong" side. They avoid discussions of both sides of an issue because they are afraid they will have to change. Some politicians are expert at corraling supporters with this tactic.

I was thinking of all this after a majority of the people who went to the polls re-elected Jesse Helms to represent us in the U.S. Senate. I wanted to hate him; I wanted to scorn and scoff at him for being on the other side of my boundaries. I talked with friends all over the country and declared myself as completely different from him, as completely opposed to what he stands for.

Suddenly I wondered what I was sounding like. Who else condemns those who are different from him, those he doesn't understand, those whom he fears don't understand him? I had to face the fact that I was acting like the very person I was attempting to distance myself from.

Now don't panic. I'm not about to announce my newly discovered conservatism, nor can I find a single saving grace for Mr. Helms. He is unutterably boorish and

contemptibly petty-minded and proudly bigoted. His vicious remarks the night of his re-election underline just how far he is willing to go to divide the people of this state along whatever lines best suit his purpose. I can find solace only in the hope that he has so few comrades in the Senate that other than shrill demagoguery, he will accomplish little before happy retirement.

Nevertheless, having said this, I must try to find a way to discover some method of dealing with him that distinguishes my reaction from his machinations. What good will I do by following his lead and insisting that everyone who agrees with me is on the side of right and everyone who agrees with him is on the side of wrong?

The mind which cannot deal with ambiguity and subtle shadings of ideas is the mind which attaches itself to prejudices. Many people avoid genuine debate because they fear that the other argument will cause them to realize they must start thinking again. New ideas are frightening because they challenge the status quo; but even more than this, they belie the belief that an uncrossable chasm divides the two sides.

Now, again, don't panic. I'm not about to say that I will meet Jesse Helms halfway on his bigotry against blacks and gays and pro-choicers and just about everyone else. What I'm trying to say is that if I am different, I must act (and react) differently.

I'm sorry to say that some of the people I worked with in this election stoop to Mr. Helms' tac-

# Feeding the hungry is year-round duty

Around this time of year, organizations throughout the United States seem to suffer from a common misconception: that people only go hungry on two days out of the year.

Perhaps it should be pointed out to these groups that people in this country go hungry 365 days a year, not just on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

These organizations have food drives, free meals, and

countless other projects to feed the hungry. They mean well in their actions. But they have forgotten the adage: don't give a man a can of tuna, teach him how to fish.

If all the energy and effort spent in feeding the hungry during the holidays were channeled into other year-round programs for the needy, the hunger problem could be solved or diminished instead of being merely appeased.

# Fast food harmful to planet

By TERESA PITTS

The clock approaches midnight at Wesleyan, and many students who are studying or partying start to feel hunger pangs. According to most students, the remedy for this problem is a quick run to Hardee's. However, we must ask ourselves if this is such a wise decision.

Many people are unaware of the effects fast-food restaurants have on the environment. We need to realize that these restaurants contribute to a host of environmental problems when they use styrofoam and sell beef.

Many fast-food restaurants use styrofoam as packaging for their food — with the exception of McDonald's, which recently announced the discontinuance of the material, and Burger King, which uses paper. Consumers purchase sandwiches packaged in styrofoam and then immediately discard this packaging.

However, many do not realize the effects of this unnecessary material once it is discarded. Not only does it contribute to the waste stream but it is non-biodegradable and unable to be recycled; therefore, this product will remain in landfills indefinitely.

Also styrofoam, because of its structure, takes up a lot of room for its weight, thus occupying enormous amounts of space in landfills. Styrofoam also contributes to the greenhouse effect (which is a gradual warming of the atmosphere) and depletes the ozone layer (a protective upper atmospheric layer which blocks out harmful ultraviolet rays). Who would ever think this small package could be responsible for so many problems?

Another problem associated with fast-food restaurants is the environmental destruction caused by the beef industry. Consumers rarely think about the process employed to produce the Big Mac.

Many are unaware that areas of the rain forest are destroyed so that cattle can graze there. This destruction is significant because the rain forest is burned, thus releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This in turn contributes to the greenhouse effect. Also, once the cattle are brought on the land they produce methane through their digestive process. Methane is harmful since it traps more solar heat than carbon dioxide.

Another factor to consider is that the rain forest serves as a home for a myriad of animal and plant species. Destroying their habitat in order to raise cattle causes extinction of some species; furthermore, plants are destroyed which may offer potential cures for diseases such as cancer or AIDS. Also, the land becomes infertile and is subject to erosion when the area is burned for cattle to graze.

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