

Opinion

**"We doth protest far too much..."
A professor speaks out on the
United Way scandal**

by Dr. Doug Wakeman, Business and Economics

Much comment has been forthcoming regarding the recently-exposed dirty dealings at the top of the United Way pyramid. United Way executives have been rewarding themselves with such perks as half-million dollar annual salaries, while charities go begging. Reaction has been a mixture of shock, disgust, and dismay.

We doth protest far too much. Dis-may and disgust are understandable, but we ought not be shocked. Or even surprised.

Economics teaches us only a few things with certainty, but one of the most veritable of the verities is this: when a market is monopolized, when there is only one significant source of a "product," consumers lose. The amount of the product will be restricted, and prices will rise. If prices are regulated (and usually if they are not) customer service deteriorates, leaving us with that characteristic arrogance that Lily Tomlin captured so perfectly: "We don't care. We don't have to. We're the Phone Company."

No important distinctions need be drawn among monopolies on the basis of their products, or their intentions (charitable or profitable). With rare exceptions, consumers are better served when there is competition. Charitable giving is not one of the exceptions.

For years the United Way has exploited its position as the all-powerful dispenser of wealth to non-profit agencies. If the Boy Scouts in San Francisco don't share the politically correct California attitude toward gay Scoutmasters, then the Boy Scouts are de-funded. It's that simple. If you don't want to play by United Way rules, they take their bucks and go home, just as Cablevision comes and takes away your converter box if you miss a payment.

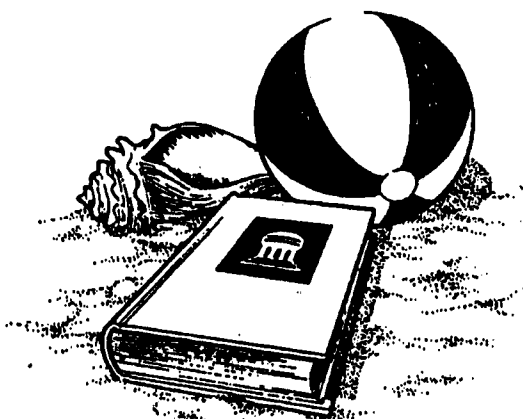
The fact that the United Way coerces huge numbers of "volunteer" donors to line up with their workplace contributions, and "volunteer"

co-ordinators who are ordered to seek nothing less than 100 percent participation, just makes it worse. Our nearly universal submission makes the United Way analogous to a publicly owned and managed resource. To criticize it is to criticize "all of us." So we remain silent. But by our silence, by our complacency, by our meek acquiescence, by our lemming-like march to the Window of Payroll Deduction, we not only encourage the monopolistic arrogance that we now observe, we make it inevitable.

I do not ignore all of the good that the United Way does. Rather, I suggest even more good can be done with the same dollars if we cut the middle person. Support the charities of YOUR choice, rather than THEIR choice, and support those charities directly. Put your dollars where they need to be, in the hands of the agencies that actually use them. Support and participate in an open, above-board, competitive market for charitable contributions.

Thanks to you, it bilks all of us. The United Way.

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What Meredith did for spring break...

by Tracey Rawls and Ellen Williamson

We surveyed about 50 of you and here's what you did for Spring Break 1992:

Where people went: St. Petersburg, Ft. Lauderdale, Cancun, Bahamas, San Diego, New Orleans, Orlando, North Myrtle Beach, Key Largo, Denver, Atlantic Beach, Greenville, Charlotte, Wilmington

What people did: sailing, went home, got a tan, got lost, got engaged, ate at Hard Rock Cafe, went on a cruise, went to Mardi Gras, went home with boyfriend, saw a matinee, got sunburned, looked for a job, lived through an earthquake, went to Jimmy Buffett's Bar and Grill, went skiing, read a non-educational book, went to U2 concert, met guys.

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