

Editorials

SJU Incident Proves Need For Cellphones In Schools

At about 2:30 p.m., last Wednesday, a young man was seen carrying a large rifle as he walked through the Jamaica Estates campus of St. John's University. An alert student, who is also a Police Department cadet (and who will doubtless begin his career with the NYPD with a commendation in his service jacket), followed the rifle-toter and kept him under observation and then helped a campus security officer to subdue him. Police were called and the campus searched for any accomplices the student, a troubled 22-year-old from East Elmhurst, might have had. (There were none.)

In the wake of the massacre of 32 students and faculty members at Virginia Technical University this past April, the St. John's administration implemented a text and voice-mail messaging system to alert students, faculty and staff in case of an emergency and instruct them how best to proceed. The system had its first real test last Wednesday, and passed with flying colors. Within minutes the campus was in full lockdown, stu-

dents and faculty were safely sequestered in classrooms, libraries and the cafeteria and police were able to determine relatively quickly that the student had acted alone and that there was no further threat. No one was hurt, property was not, to our knowledge, damaged and the lockdown was rescinded after some three hours.

One of the major lessons to be had from the SJU incident is that communication in an emergency situation is vital. We hope that in spite of their busy schedules, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein were paying some attention to the events taking place at St. John's University last Wednesday. What could have been a tragedy of major proportions was averted in large part because university administrators were able to get the word out—fast. The major means of communication was the cellular telephone—a device that Bloomberg and Klein are still fighting to ban from New York City public schools even though the City Council passed legislation allowing cellphones and then overrode

a mayoral veto. After the SJU incident so forcefully impressed itself on the consciousness of students, teachers and parents everywhere, what further convincing do Klein and Bloomberg need?

We have said in this space on previous occasions that we see no reason for a student to use a cellphone while in class. Like other telephones, cellphones ring when a call is received. Even so, cellphones, as anyone who has ever carried one into a theater, concert hall or house of worship knows well, can have their ring tones silenced and still receive messages. Such can surely be the case with cellphones in schools.

We cannot protect our children from all the perils of the age in which we live. It is our obligation, however, to try as best we can, using all the tools available to us. Cellphones are among the most effective of those weapons. We call on the mayor and the schools chancellor to take the lessons of the SJU incident to heart and stop opposing cellphones in schools.

Hail Columbus For Opening Our World

Three "average" citizens appearing in a skit on a popular late night talk show last week did not know in what year Christopher Columbus first made landfall in the New World. For us, this posed a conundrum: is it better to be forgotten by the ignorant or reviled by revisionists? Columbus seems to be getting his share of both.

For years Columbus was hailed as a visionary who discovered the lands of the Western Hemisphere and opened them for future generations. It is not difficult to find arguments to support this view. Simply put, without Columbus the world as we know it would not exist today.

A diametrically opposed school of thought holds Columbus responsible for all the ills that man has brought upon what was once an unspoiled, Eden-like paradise that stretched nearly from the North to the South Poles. Had Europeans never set foot on this idyllic landscape, so the theory maintains, the indigenous people would have flourished in harmony with each other, spared the baleful influence of Western civilization.

We hate to be the instrument of anyone's disillusionment, but in fairness, we must point out that archaeological evidence and the journals of numerous explorers strongly indicate that peace and harmony were far from the norm in the pre-Columbian Americas. The Incas, Mayans and Aztecs waged war against their neighbors and among each other quite regularly. More than 300 years later, when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out to explore the northern reaches of the territory that then President Thomas Jefferson had acquired from France, they found that some tribes of Native Americans led relatively peaceful lives, while others had established cultures in which war was the primary reason for their existence. Peace and war existed side by side.

What has come out of the new world, whether by intentional intellectual pursuit or through inadvertence and serendipity, has often served to make the lives of all mankind easier and better. Americans invented sewing machines, cotton gins and the electric light bulb. An American doctor developed rubber

gloves, without which modern medicine and surgery would be impossible, to save the hands of a nurse he loved. Doubtless our readers can supply their own examples.

Whether one admires or deplors him, that Columbus opened the door to a new world is undeniable. Those who came after him pushed the door open wider and wider with each succeeding generation. What those succeeding generations did with the new world they immigrated to or were born in has proved to be both good and bad. Everything has the deficiencies of its qualities. We believe, though, that the good far outweighs the bad. The sailor from Genoa gave us the world we know today. Columbus Day celebrations will soon be upon us. We urge our readers to join in whatever celebrations or observances are taking place in the neighborhoods where they live. Columbus stands as an example of one who followed his beliefs and never lost the courage of his convictions. In that respect, we honor his memory and thank him for his willingness to seek a newer world.

Global Warming Is Bunk

To The Editor:

Aside from the fact that the very existence of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is unconstitutional under the 10th Amendment, the debate is really whether or not it should be used to regulate to death what is left of our industry.

Fluctuation in the earth's climate due to variations in the sun's activity over the centuries is normal. The climate was warmer during the Middle Ages than it is now, and this was long before modern technology or hydrocarbon emissions. The hysteria of Al Gore and various rock stars and politicians over the survival risks "global warming" poses to polar bears, bees and frogs is grossly abnormal and based on junk sci-

ence.

More dangerous than the 1/2-degree rise in temperature in the last 100 years, due to normal changes in solar cycles, is the growth of big government and socialism advanced by the radical environmentalists and green fanatics threatening our lives, liberty and property as we are moved toward a Brave New World of global tyranny.

Abolish the EPA now!

Sincerely yours,
Lawrence Burke

Roslyn, Long Island
Note: The Constitution of the United States Amendment X states: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

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