

Explain and argue, don't just say you don't like it

Letter to the Editor

The Journal, the campus newspaper at Saint Mary's, Vol. 72, No. 7, 11 October 2006

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Olivier Jarda tells us what he doesn't like about the Saint Mary's University philosophy department (Editorial, 4 October 2006). Jarda doesn't like the politically incorrect cartoons on some office doors, he doesn't like the bulletin board featuring the contention that abortion is ethically wrong, he doesn't like that Peter March had posted the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons on his door again, and he doesn't like that March wonders in public whether Islam is consistent with democracy and liberalism.

But Jarda doesn't tell us why he doesn't like these things. Why shouldn't a bulletin board feature an argument about the ethics of abortion? Why shouldn't a professor post those cartoons? Why shouldn't people argue whether Islam threatens democracy?

I trust that in future editorials Jarda will answer these questions. We all have our tastes and opinions; what's interesting and important are whether they are good or right or sound or true. At least that's what counts as interesting and important here in the philosophy department. I especially hope that Jarda someday explains why he's happy that the administration removed the cartoons from March's door, especially in light of the university's finding that the display violated no law.

Sadly, the official who removed the cartoons, Vice-President Academic Terry Murphy, does not himself care to explain why he removed them. Perhaps Jarda, then, might tell us why removing the cartoons neither violated March's academic freedom nor was an unjustified censoring of political expression.