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Protesting war with Iraq:

What the bi-co community thinks


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In the midst of classes, stress and parties at Drinker, it's easy to forget about the world outside the Bi-Co bubble. Yet the world continues its business as usual, regardless of whether we are paying attention or not. Bush has proposed to wage war on Iraq in order to force Saddam Hussein's administration to adhere to UN regulations. This move has deeply divided Congress, as well as prompted two full-page ads in the New York Times in protest. The news has also permeated the Bi-Co bubble and both campuses are abuzz with debate.

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Some students wonder whether this is our generation's Vietnam. "There has been such a huge outcry of opinion and, even more intense, activism," noted Maggie Tucker, BMC '06. "I feel like this is our time to have our say."

Many organizations on campus have discussed this issue and the leftist activist organization, One World, plans to send students to the Not in Our Name rally in NYC next week. "I am very impressed with the motivation of the students," said Rachel Birch, BMC '06. "If you want to be involved in an issue, you're not just writing letters to your congressman, you're out at the Capitol protesting."

Not in Our Name, a nonprofit organization backed by the likes of Mos Def, Susan Sarandon, Noam Chomsky and Gore Vidal, is a movement against the Bush administration's "machine of war and oppression". On Sept. 19, Not in Our Name printed a full-page ad in the New York Times, including a "Pledge of Resistance" signed by celebrities, intellectuals, lawyers and activists.

Not in Our Name has called for a rally On Oct. 6 in Central Park and many students from Bryn Mawr and Haverford plan to attend. "I think it is crucial that we get out of the Main Line and into the world," said Heather Davis, BMC, '06.

The Bi-Co community, while bristling with student activism, sponsors leading political science faculty with opinions on the issue. Visiting professor Deborah Harrold, a renowned lecturer on Middle East politics, is fervently opposed to the idea of war with Iraq. "If you attack every country seen as a potential threat, you start more wars than you would have otherwise created," Harrold argued. "It seems as if Bush's proposal is intended to orchestrate approval for a pre-ordained war plan," she added, "and we're the audience."

"I think [Bush] is too eager to blow people up," said Liana Escola, HC. "I just don't think war is a good idea."

Many students are skeptical of Bush's intentions. "He's thinking more about putting on a show than actually accomplishing anything," added Laura Carlson, HC. '06.

Thirty-three scholars of international politics, including professors at Penn, Columbia, and Duke, placed an ad in the New York Times detailing their grievances with the idea of war on Iraq.

"I will be very surprised if he gets away with any of this," said Carlson, "there are so many people against this proposal and for good reason."

"I am concerned that Iraq can be so easily tacked onto the war on terrorism," noted Stephanie Williams, BMC '03. "It seems like Bush is piggybacking this proposal on the whole thing with Afghanistan merely to maintain the support of the people."

Professor Deborah Harrold is discouraged with the Bush administration's actions in Afghanistan and worries that the conflict with Iraq will also be superficial. "Terrorism is a long term project," she adds, "and an enormous problem....There is a lot more to be done."

"I feel like our campus is incredibly involved in discussion," said Birch, "but often I feel like I have to work hard at keeping up with the news, in order to fully understand the issue and all of the facts."

A prevalent complaint is that students often focus on one or two issues while the rest are thrown by the wayside. "I feel so isolated here," added Carlson, "I haven't read a newspaper in weeks!"

Yet the Bi-Co community is intensely involved in understanding world events, and discussing them in classrooms, dorms, cafeterias. "While I sometimes worry about bias, I am always amazed at the quality of the students' arguments and the passion behind them," added Davis. "Bi-Co students are very intelligent, very passionate, and very articulate."

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