

West students speak out on Iraq war

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News Editor

In the midst of a controversial war, the nation is split in its opinion of its validity. Likewise, West students also have divergent views on the reasons that the United States is at war with Iraq.

Although the student body appears to be overwhelmingly opposed to the war, Operation Iraqi Freedom is not without its supporters, a stance based on antagonism toward Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

Junior Anna Rubinstein is among them. "Saddam is a horrible leader," she said. "He kills his own people and has the potential to hurt us since we have proof that he has dangerous weapons. He is the current Hitler."

Other students believe the war is necessary to "teach Saddam a lesson," according to sophomore Amanda Lasher.

"It'll show them not to mess with the U.S. and not to bomb us for no reason," she continued. "I'm only worried about our troops."

However, most do not agree with war being a reasonable solution.

Senior Marty Gibbs, who led West student protestors in West's version of a nation-wide walk out on Thursday, March 20, said, "Taking civilian life is probably the worst thing you can do."

One of the justifications of war against Iraq, according to Bush's letter to Congress regarding the war, is to "adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq."

However, a number of students echoed the sentiments of senior Husien Fattah, who said, "If [the war] really was for the protection of this country, [we should attack] North Korea [which is] more dangerous than Iraq, since their more advanced nuclear weapons pose a bigger threat on the US."

The Bush administration's position drew criticism for a variety of other reasons.

"This war is completely unnecessary," junior Vicki Lika said. "Terrorism is never going to go away. Saddam never did anything to Americans; all he did was invade Kuwait for oil, which had absolutely nothing to do with America."

The priorities of the nation's foreign policy were also an issue in which students showed concern.

"Our foreign policy needs to stop because America needs to stop sticking [its] nose into everyone's business," freshman Napoleon Micula said.

Gibbs added, "This country's foreign policy is invading anything and everything.

Bush is going to war to finish up his dad's job."

Junior Zaia Zaia agrees.

"Bush is using Iraq as a [scapegoat] for Sept. 11, even though Iraq had no part in it, and he only wants to go in for the oil," he said.

Senior Abby Reiss, who was one of the organizers of the walk out, had a slightly different opinion on the motive of war with Iraq.

"I think this war is just an act of imperialism," she said. "The US just wants control over the Middle East, and Iraq is a good place to get started. Of course, it's all for the oil."

Many of those opposed to the war were quick to make a distinction between being anti-war and pro-Hussein. Gibbs is among

our country over this stupid cause," Tirovolas said. "[President George W.] Bush is an idiot for what he's doing, and innocent children and civilians are going to die."

A number of students suggested alternative ways to peace. Reiss feels the U.S. should "work with other countries with diplomacy. If we had to, we could have worked with other political groups to take Saddam out of power. I know that's not the best idea, but it's better than war and blowing up a whole country."

"There wasn't enough time given to the UN inspectors," Delgado-Vela said. "That could have been a very effective way of solving the problem of war, since the inspectors were finding a lot of dangerous weapons and



them. "I am in no way supporting Saddam, but Bush is taking this all way too far," he said.

Freshman John Gacki agrees. "Saddam's a moron, but I don't have a problem with the rest of Iraq," he said.

Junior Chris Tirovolas defended his beliefs on the war by saying, "Don't get me wrong, I love America, but right now I'm embarrassed to say I'm an American. However, just because I'm anti-war, that doesn't mean I'm pro-Hussein."

Senior Isaac Delgado-Vela, another student who led the walk out, concurs. "Being anti-war just means we are open to other ways to make peace," he said. "I completely support the troops, just not the politicians."

Tirovolas' echoed Delgado-Vela's support for the armed forces. "I'm giving [props] to our brave soldiers going out there to fight for

Saddam was destroying all that they found. We should have set an example for the rest of the world and implemented voluntary disarmament along with other nations, since we cannot solve problems unilaterally. At least that's better than killing people."

Reiss asked Bush to "look at the country and what people are saying. It's very irresponsible of him to ignore our voice."

Tirovolas added, "I think Bush and Hussein should just arm-wrestle and settle this whole thing themselves."

Despite their disagreement with his stance, even the anti-war faction would not like to be in the president's shoes. "I can't imagine how hard it must be to be the leader of one of the most powerful nations," Delgado-Vela said. "I have an enormous amount of respect for Bush right now. I certainly wouldn't want to be in his position right now."