

UW uncorks a fine whine

While we somehow missed the biblically awesome blizzards that afflicted the East Coast, winter here nonetheless seemed endlessly prolonged when the Green Bay Packers inexplicably snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in the last 40 seconds of the NFC title game in Seattle. Even so, our string of Cheesehead domination was extended when Aaron Rodgers was named NFL MVP. But as spring approached, we girded ourselves for debates on right-to-work, state support for a Milwaukee basketball arena, school accountability, and a presidential campaign that could not wait until spring.

A target on his back

No sooner had Scott Walker been elected governor for the third time in four years than the presidential buzz began.

Who are we kidding? It was a presidential roar, and Walker catapulted to the top of polls in states like Iowa and New Hampshire and quickly found out what it meant to be a front-runner: He became a target for the right and the left. This meant being asked questions about his future Syrian policy and his views on evolution, which led to his famous London “punt.”

Since our crystal ball is fuzzy about these things, we don't know if Walker's surge will last, but it is again a reminder of the central place that Wisconsin now inhabits in the nation's politics. We also eagerly await Hillary Rodham Clinton's detailed views on the Cambrian explosion and whether she leans toward unpunctuated equilibrium or phyletic gradualism in evolutionary theory. Because we need to know.

The John Doe is deceased

The final entombment may have to wait for a decision from the Wisconsin Supreme Court, but the long-running John Doe investigation targeting conservatives is done. The secret probe that included pre-dawn raids and sweeping subpoenas of dozens of independent con-



servative groups has been battered by a series of court rulings that make it increasingly clear that the conduct being investigated is not a crime at all... that the Doe was actually seeking to punish constitutionally protected free speech.

Still, Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm refuses to formally to shut it down, and the titular special prosecutor, Francis Schmitz, continues to file legal motions. But despite Chisholm and Schmitz's best efforts, it is clear that the John Doe is not simply resting, much less pining for the fjords.

With apologies to Monty Python, we suggest that the state high court make it crystal clear to Chisholm, Schmitz & Co. that the Doe is demised. It has passed on, is no more and has ceased to be. The John Doe is bereft of life, rests in peace and is expired. It has kicked the bucket, shuffled off its mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible.

It is, in short, an ex-John Doe.

Would you like Brie with that whine?

Madison has once again become a veil of tears, as academics reacted with dismay to a proposed cut of 2.5% of the UW's annual budget. The academics waxed especially indignant after Walker suggested, "Maybe it's time for faculty and staff to start thinking about teaching more classes and doing more work."

L'horreur!

UW President Ray Cross has led the chorus of indignation, saying that he was "frustrated" by the talk of having professors teach more. "I think it's a shame that people don't understand what faculty really do."

Journalism professor Jo Ellen Fair explained: "Most faculty members I know are working 60, 70 hours a week. I'm not sure what else they can do." But this

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In other words: Avoiding students has become a perk at the Madison campus.*

onerous workload apparently does not including teaching for professor Fair, who is not entertaining a single class this semester.

She wasn't alone. As our friends at Media Trackers reported, many of the faculty members who were most vocally critical of Walker's suggestion themselves spent little or no time in the classroom with undergraduates. Media Trackers looked at seven of the governor's fiercest critics:

- Combined, the seven profs make \$812,222 a year and teach a total of just five classes this semester.
- Only three teach any classes at all this semester.
- The three professors who actually darken the door of a classroom averaged just 1.66 classes per week, with an average of 3.97 hours per week in the classroom.

They included the political science professor who argued that light teaching loads keep UW "competitive with other two-tier colleges" and who makes \$140,199 a year and taught zero hours this semester. There was the food science professor who said that Walker's comments showed "a total lack of understanding of how a university functions." Walker, for instance probably does not know how this professor manages to make nearly \$118,000 a year without teaching a single student this semester. Ditto for the professor who told *The College Fix*, "If you increase the teaching requirements, faculty who can get jobs at schools with lower teaching requirements will move." He may be an expert on the subject inasmuch as he makes \$125,000 a year without teaching one class.

UW Chancellor Rebecca Blank also took up the anti-

Walker chorus, saying that Walker's suggestion that professors actually teach once in a while reflected a "serious misunderstanding of how the school works." But Blank also tipped her hand a bit when she told *The Wall Street Journal* that she used lighter teaching loads as a bargaining chip to attract professors to Madison. In other words: avoiding students has become a perk.

This is known as the "ratchet effect," and it always works to lower the teaching loads of academics. Former Harvard President Derek Bok explained: "When we go to recruit a star professor, the bargaining chip is always a reduced teaching load — never a reduced research load."

No wonder that so many UW professors now teach fewer than two courses a semester — and that so many teach nothing at all.

Never mind

In substantially better news, we learned that 40 years of government warnings about eating foods rich in cholesterol — eggs, milk, cheese, bacon — were wrong. That settled science turns out not to have been settled after all. At the same time we learned that bisphenol-A is not after all (to use Patrick McIlheran's phrase) "Satan's own saliva." It turns out that despite dozens (or was it hundreds?) of stories about the dangers of the chemical, BPA has been exonerated by actual scientific studies. So never mind about that, either.

Our government experts, nevertheless, remain quite certain that they know precisely what the average temperature will be a century from now. They do not, however, know whether it will rain next week.

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