

## McKinley Community Comment

I wrote this Community Comment in 2005, about the Statue of McKinley in Arcata.

"The town of Adams Massachusetts just celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unveiling of their statue of former President William McKinley. Here, our statue of McKinley has been placed under citizen arrest and is facing eviction.

I remember going to HSU in the early 70's. We would grab a sandwich and a beer at the Plaza Gourmet and go sit on the lawn and wonder who McKinley was and why was his statue not in McKinleyville. Now, remember, in the 70's, children used to play on the plaza. Families picnicked there. Things were different in the 70's.

Anyway, The citizen who wants the statue moved points out that, among other things, McKinley provoked a war under false pretenses and is a poor symbol for the city, let alone our country.

Some people criticize the Arcata City council's actions as symbolic. Well, sure they are. A statue is a symbol and symbols are important. And, some people criticize the Arcata council, saying they should spend their time on something more important. I think that logic is flawed. Using that logic, shouldn't you turn off the radio and get back to work? Or if you are driving, wouldn't your time be better spent listening to a foreign language tape? Even if you disagree with the Arcata City Council, they are hardworking and productive and seem to conduct plenty of other business.

The dilemma of the McKinley statue has brought out some great creative thinkers. In a past edition of the North Coast Journal, Rick St Charles wrote an excellent opinion piece.

Rick points out that if the statue were removed, the resulting hole would probably just fill up with drummers. And he cautions against selling the statue on E-Bay as it would cost too much to ship it to the buyer by UPS. Rick suggests reframing, thinking of the statue in a

different way. Don't think of it as a racist war-monger president. Think of the statue as a Vegan activist.

My friend John Murray wrote a great letter to the editor. John points out that most of us can't tell the difference between many of the non-descript Presidents. Could you pick Taft out of a line-up? So, John says, why not just re-name the statue for some other President? Replacing the plaque is relatively inexpensive. John says he has received support for his idea. One person who contacted John suggested calling the statue Grover Cleveland. President Cleveland was a Democrat who opposed the Spanish American War. And, Cleveland lost the 1888 election even though he received a majority of the popular votes. That would be a more fitting symbol of Arcata, now, wouldn't it?

I do support trading with McKinleyville. Put the statue in McKinleyville and put the world's tallest totem pole in the middle of the plaza. Or trade with Harper's Ford. Put the merry go round in the center of the plaza.

Here's my inexpensive solution. McKinley now faces West, the direction associated with conquest and national expansion. Why not just spin him around to face the East, the direction associated with spiritual enlightenment?

From 2005, this was Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.