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Has Humanity been reduced to Politics?

My article of interest for this week involves the SARS epidemic that has become prominent in Asia, and is beginning to emerge in the rest of the world. At the end of February China was the country most affected by the illness, with 792 cases and 31 deaths. This statistic is especially disturbing, because China had previously reported a smaller number of cases and deaths. Other countries such as Canada, Vietnam and Singapore report new cases of the illness daily to the World Health Organization. The Chinese government, however, refuses to cooperate. They have been accused of underreporting the statistics for fear that it may adversely affect them politically.

This behavior is especially disconcerting for a number of reasons. First, scientists know very little about the disease. They know that it is similar to pneumonia but they do not know of a cure for the illness. Furthermore, they do not know how long a patient is contagious after they come down with the illness, and they do not know how contagious the disease is overall. Scientists also need data on how the disease spreads so that they can better contain the problem. The unwillingness of the Chinese to cooperate will probably slow down the process by which World Health Organization officials hope to contain the disease.

The actions of the Chinese are not relevant only to SARS. The unwillingness of the Chinese to cooperate paints an age-old picture of politics repeatedly getting in the way of humanity. China seems more concerned with its political appearance rather than the well being of people around the world. The Chinese however, are not the only people

guilty of letting politics get in way of the better good. One could point to the United States as another nation guilty of similar behavior.

Political objectives constantly prevent the U.S. from doing what many consider the “right” thing. The United States’ war with Iraq can be seen as a prime example. The political objective to remove Saddam Hussein from Iraq has killed many innocent people and left vast portions of Iraq without any running water and electricity. Is the war necessary for humanity’s sake, or is the war merely a political mission? While the answer to this question is not clear-cut by any means, the question does raise an important point. Do current day governments do anything for humanity’s sake? Or do governments merely serve political objectives which at times appear to be humanitarian? Surely, if the United States was concerned about humanity, it would rather spend \$75 billion money to help feed starving people, rather than killing thousands of others. The United States, however, does not have these humanitarian objectives in mind. They, like the Chinese and the rest of the world, are concerned with only one thing: politics.