

the Seahawk

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Thomas M. Ruyle

"View From the Dodo's Nest"

Liberty still reigns - even in the U.S. Senate

Last Wednesday, for the fourth time since 1989, a proposed amendment to our Constitution that would make burning the American flag a federal crime failed to pass the United States Senate.

It's nice that the ideals of liberty and freedom are still held by some members of our Congress - at least enough of them to prevent a two-thirds majority in favor of the amendment, the brainchild of Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). Hatch and his ilk, notably Sen. Trent Lott (R-Mississippi), have taken it upon themselves amend the Constitution in order to make an act illegal.

Unfortunately for them, this is the only tact they can take in order to curb the oh-so-common sight of flags being burnt. Back in 1989, the Supreme Court ruled that a federal law banning flag-burning went against the First Amendment right of free speech and expression, and was therefore unconstitutional. The only way around the Supreme Court is to amend the constitution.

But the Constitution was not written by the founding fathers as the basis of criminal law; it was written to define what the rights of Americans are. Almost without exception, amendments to the constitution have been made for the benefit of all Americans. The notable exception was the 18th Amendment, which prohibited alcohol - an amendment that lasted a mere 14 years before being re-

pealed.

And why do these men believe that such an amendment is necessary anyway? It's not like there's been a massive rash of group flag-burnings on the steps of the Capitol building. To make a bad joke, it's really not a burning issue. How often do flags get burnt?

The act of burning the flag is quite repugnant. I don't think that burning the flag is a very good way to express dissatisfaction with any given issue. It just looks stupid and does not lend any real credibility to the one doing the burning. Heck, it's downright dangerous, too.

But in this nation, the home of true freedom of speech and expression, we have the right to air any grievances against our government, provided we do it in a civil, non-violent fashion. Not everyone will like it, not everyone will agree, but that's the way we've done it in the United States for well over two centuries - and there's absolutely no reason to change it now.

If any fires do need to be lit, it's under the rear ends of these legislators who show such complete disregard for the First Amendment and principles of American freedom and think they must force their version of patriotism upon us. There are much more important issues our Congress needs to spend its valuable time on.

Editorial Viewpoint...

Administration chooses cameras over classes

Once again, the administrators at UNCW have taken a step which could negatively impact the very student body they are employed to nourish and promote.

About ten thousand of us, residents and commuters alike, utilize the buildings, roads and parking facilities on campus each week. It is bad enough to have to contend with awkwardly designed roads, inadequate parking, and cyclists and drivers who don't follow the rules of the road.

But several times a semester, in addition to the above, we must also endure the production company which films *Dawson's Creek* as they use our grounds for scenes in their television show. This causes entire sections of the campus - not necessarily vital ones, but nonetheless parts of the University we pay to attend - to be crowded and in many cases off-limits to vehicles and even pedestrians.

In at least one instance, a classroom building was used - and classes relocated - in order to accommodate filming. This is completely unacceptable.

What makes it worse is, now they can do it for free.

For the privilege of coming onto campus and filming, each production group has been paying the campus \$1,000 per session, which according to a press release issued last week was used for "scholarships and grounds maintenance."

The university announced last week that it will waive these charges from now on, in exchange for filmmakers' "contributing to an archive...of movies, television shows, [and] commercials...shot in Southeastern North Carolina," as well as "providing greater visibility for UNCW and the UNCW Film Studies Program whenever possible."

Congratulations, Seahawks! The same university that recently raised student fees by \$120 have now given away the potential to make more than \$10,000 in an academic year, all in the name of self-promotion.

How can we justify allowing this to happen? Although the companies will still pay for incidental costs such as traffic control, it seems as if they will now have *carte blanche* to film at UNCW without providing any substantial return, except for some film clips here and there, and the chance for some film studies students to get closer to the camera.

And where will the moneys for grounds-keeping and scholarships come from in the future? Where else? Stand by for another hike, as UNCW works to keep its position as the university with the highest student fees in the system.

It is true that the city of Wilmington and New Hanover County don't charge filmmakers for the privilege of making their movies around town - although they do charge for the same traffic-related expenses as UNCW says it will. But consider the impact on Wilmington versus the impact on our campus.

If they block off Front Street for an afternoon, a few cars get rerouted and perhaps a store or two is closed. On the other hand, filming draws people downtown, where they most likely also dine or shop at businesses there. There's reason to allow free filming there - because filming in that area might actually serve to strengthen the local economy.

But filming on campus disrupts students' routines, clogs the campus with further traffic, and diverts security and infrastructure resources away from their intended use: *education*. And now, our administrators have chosen to forego even the smallest payment in exchange for the disruptions that filming causes.

This University exists to promote learning and enlightenment, not films and TV dramas.

But once again, UNCW has chosen to promote something other than the purpose for which it exists. With less money for more hassle, once again the students end up on the short end of the stick.

