

The Daily Tar Heel

91st year of editorial freedom

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Mouthing off

The decision to ask mikeman Kenny Ward to resign came straight from the office of the assistant dean of student life last week. That's interesting since they weren't the ones to hire him. Their action has transformed the issue from whether Ward's performance was offensive into whether the administration has a role in policing the performance of a person in a student-appointed position.

Since the first home game against Memphis State, Ward has stood before dozing fans, who were watching those Heels battle little competition and has tried to get them to cheer. With the band in the end zone, he had less help with this task than the mikemen of recent years. As a result, he resorted sometimes to ethnic and X-rated humor, trying to capture the fans' attention. Students began writing to the editor soon after his first performance, claiming that Ward was unable to charge the fans. Controversy climaxed at this year's Homecoming game when many alumni and parents were on hand. Ward's performance rose to the occasion, and complaints have never hit such heights.

It was not surprising then that effort was made to change Ward's style. What is surprising is the speed in which the administration stepped in, asking Ward to resign. The action showed misjudgment and a violation of the students' rights to handle the situation.

This is not to say that Ward should not be criticized and told to improve. But any criticism should have been in the form of a warning from the people who hired him — the cheerleaders, the band and faculty members. If the administration is that concerned with the students' image, perhaps they should start selecting the mikemen themselves. Then the cheerleaders, the Homecoming queen ... the student body president ... the DTH editor...

Whatever happens in Ward's case, it's mandatory that it be because of students' wishes. If as many students are upset about the mikeman's performance, they should focus their complaints at the group who selected Ward. A decision about the student mikeman must be made by the students.

Illuminating history

"The most amazing 60 years in history," proclaims the cover of the special anniversary issue of *Time* magazine. To many readers, such a claim may seem narcissistic and solipsistic, yet it has its legitimacy. The history of the 20th century is not so much amazing because of the fleetness of progress, but because progress itself has endowed human society, and the media in particular, with the communicative tools which allow an unprecedented accuracy in the charting of history.

The advances of the media have immeasurably affected the 20th century United States. The musician John Lennon dies and within weeks we are provided with countless newspaper and magazine analyses of the social ramifications of his art. A civilian aircraft is shot down by another country's missile and we know about it in less than 24 hours. With its constitutionally protected freedoms, the U.S. media brings home to every American each pulse of 20th century life — the technological and medical advances, the social and political upheavals. The splitting of the atom and the war in Vietnam would not have meant so much to each of us had they occurred in a vacuum. They have shaped our national character precisely because they occurred on our doorsteps at 6 a.m. and on our television sets at 6 p.m.

The newsstand today is a kaleidoscopic sight, an eclectic assemblage of diverse periodicals. The conservative candor of *U.S. News and World Report*, the radical rantings of *The Village Voice*. *The New Yorker* finds social truths in street fairs and pretentious prose, *Sports Illustrated* in athletic competition, *Rolling Stone* in popular music, *Playboy* in profligate lifestyles.

Many issues of each magazine and newspaper will meet indifferent eyes. At least one of each, however, will endure; off the shelf, into the library, and onto microfilm. Indexed for posterity, and perhaps forever, in a periodical guide.

Whether or not the scope and speed of today's media coverage have improved the quality of life in this country is problematic. We are better informed, less likely to succeed in isolating ourselves in ignorance and indifference; this much is good. Yet advanced communications have rendered life on this planet increasingly complex. In the 20th century, it matters urgently what is happening on the other side of the globe. There is an international intimacy and a diplomatic intricacy which sometimes reach frightening dimensions.

"Whatever lay in darkness was to be illuminated," writes *Time* essayist Roger Rosenblatt in an attempt to codify some of the recurrent themes of 20th century history. Indeed, this century has been one in which the media has inundated our society with information: facts, opinions, even maudlin sentiments. William Churchill once said, "History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past." Today's media transforms that tiny spotlight into a powerful beacon.

The Daily Tar Heel

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If he were a poor man...

By FRANK BRUNI

It's a difficult scene to imagine — millionaire Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, his wife, his daughter and a family friend all feasting on such dishes as beef liver, chili macaroni and grits. They did it, however, as part of Block's August effort to discover first-hand whether they could actually gain sufficient nourishment from \$58 per week, the maximum amount of money allotted to a family of four by the federal government's current food stamp program. For an entire week, we are told, the Blocks adhered to the menu plans in the United States Department of Agriculture's own pamphlet, "Making Food Dollars Count."

I suppose we Americans should not only applaud Block's egalitarianism but also feel relieved by his discovery that the regimen he and his family followed was "quite adequate." But I'm not clapping. And I'm most certainly not closing the poverty case on the basis of Block's slanted evidence.

For Block to believe that his recent eating excursion tells any real truths about the chances of nutritional success for a poor family dependent upon food stamps is audacious. It doesn't take a scientist to poke countless holes in the scientific validity of Block's now-famous week-long experiment. There isn't a family whose income would qualify them for food stamps who would have a kitchen as well-equipped as the Blocks' in which to prepare the meals from the government handbook. The poor homemaker must also contend with the limited selections and inflated prices of his or her neighborhood bodega when searching for both the generic items and the often obscure sources of protein required by some of the USDA recipes. Contrary to what many people believe, the price for groceries in a Harlem food store is usually higher than the price for the identical items in a suburban Shop-Rite. And the Blocks' eating restrictions were held in effect for only seven days. The end of sacrifice was in sight. The poor, however, cannot perceive smaller eating restrictions as a temporary evil. They must see them as a perpetual lament.

Before anyone lauds Block's self-sacrifice or accepts his proclamation that \$58 per week is "quite adequate" to feed a family of four, it is also essential to discern just what Block meant by adequate. He did not mean that he was even the least bit satisfied with the taste and variety of his meals that week; he himself stated that he sorely missed his weekly sundae and an occasional weeknight beer. What he meant was that he neither starved nor exhibited any symptoms of poor health. He survived, and his concern, as well as the concerns of most upper-middle- and upper-class Americans, end with the mere physical survival of the poor. And if the poor can survive on grits and noodles and dried milk and bread, then God forbid they should receive — or waste — food dollars on anything more palatable.



Like Block, those of us who have never felt the pangs of poverty — and having to settle for Hector's instead of Pyewacket does not count — seldom even attempt to imagine what life must be like for the poor family. How many times has each of us complained, or heard another complain, about the welfare mother who uses the change from food stamps to purchase cigarettes, candy and soda? How many times have we watched with horrified expressions a poverty child squander a half-dollar on a Hershey's chocolate bar? And how many times have we all cited boredom or depression as the villain responsible for weight gain yet labeled a corpulent welfare mother wasteful? We callously denounce the poor for blatantly abusing not only the government's benevolence, but also our (or our parents') hard-earned tax dollars.

We ignore the reality that there is a jarring difference between what foods means to the poor and what it means to the rich. For Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Block, a lackluster meal was certainly an endurable, easily overlooked low point in an evening that might very well have promised greater entertainments. At the end of each meal that week, the Blocks knew they could get up from the dinner table and mitigate their dietary dissatisfaction with some form of diversion, such as watching one of the color televisions in the well-furnished, air-conditioned rooms of their lovely home. A poor family, however, may have little, save watching paint peel off the walls or counting cockroaches, to look forward to after supper. Is it any wonder that they indulge in a steak for dinner or some Chips-Ahoys for dessert?

Perhaps there were times in this country's history

when the poor could be dismissed as idle folk who were responsible for their indigent lots in life. With a current poverty rate of 15 percent and unemployment fluctuating around 10 percent, now is not such a time. There are 34.5 million people in this country who are legally "poor," 34.5 million people who qualify as needy by the stringent federal guidelines that classify a family of four as needy only if its total income amounts to \$189 a week or less. And there are millions more living just above the poverty line.

All considered, Block's media-monopolizing (did you happen to catch the television news clips of the prim and proper Block family out shopping for their week's food?) experiment is revealed as an example of the purposefully misleading superficiality with which he and other current government officials treat matters related to poverty in America. Block cannot truly believe that the poor are doing just fine, that the Reagan administration's spending cuts have not hurt the needy, but he and his colleagues know full well that they can make others believe it.

The conclusions Block reached were not intended for the poor, who know first hand that living on such a tight budget in the real world is all but impossible. His conclusions constituted a gift-wrapped piece of political propaganda intended to ease the consciences of all the upper-middle- and lower-upper-class taxpayers who flinch at the thought of parting with their privileged dollars, who are willing to be gullible to propaganda when it saves them money.

Frank Bruni, a sophomore political science major from Avon, Conn., is an editorial writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Did his mother beat him?

To the editor:

University housing, in the three some-odd years I've been at UNC, has shown a callous disregard for the welfare of students, so I suppose I should be used to it by now. People have tried to complain about such subjects as the cooking policy, all to no avail. Maybe we should have learned by now, but I'm going to make one last try.

University housing has come to the decision that they will close the dorms over fall break, even though they haven't officially announced it yet. I don't know; maybe they're going to try and surprise all of us. At any rate, this has to be one of the more ridiculous decisions they've made since I've been up here.

What's the point? To save a couple of dollars? Weigh this with the inconvenience

it's going to cause students who just aren't planning on going home (particularly out-of-staters). And while they are being ever so generous in letting us sleep in the lounges over at Craige (for a fee, of course), I don't think it will hold us all. I can't imagine anyone wanting to stay there, at any rate.

Now it would be one thing if they had told us this last year when we signed our

contracts, or even if they had done it in past years so there would be some precedent. But to spring it on us like this is so stupidly uncaring, it really makes one wonder what hole they dragged the new housing director out of. What is his problem? Did his mother beat him as a college student, or what?

David Knierim
James



Wire news incompetent

To the editor:

At the edge of 1984, when our productive and free country spends billions of dollars to place missiles 10 minutes from Moscow to destroy the hated Soviets 50 times over; while we swap about 20,000 — two freighters full — of grain a day for their gold and banknotes; while we grant our Central Intelligence Agency \$300,000 a day to finance guerrilla attacks on bridges, airports, factories and peasants in Nicaragua; and while we maintain dictatorial rules through decades of martial law in the Philippines or Chile, I would wish that the editors of my college newspaper would consider critical the sense of the wire-service stories which they serve to us as "the news."

"Lebanese, Moslems still exchanging fire" (*DTH*, Sept. 28) is such a foolish headline. The Moslems involved are

Lebanese, too! In Lebanon they are the majority. The Christians, despite Allied and Israeli backing, are the minority. The wordgame of calling the Moslems "Druse" or "Shiites" obscures the issue.

Why does Honduras have the richest air force in Central America? Why is that region's chief recipient of U.S. support the government that kills by far the most of its civilians, as the Catholic Church or Amnesty International announces each week? (El Salvador.) For whom does the U.S. military spend, fight and die?

The alternative to dumb repetition of government or wire service news is to ask ourselves, "What's really going on?" and answer with our own considered words. Thank you for airing my outraged and outrageous dissent.

Tim McDowell
Carrboro

Killings aren't the norm

To the editor:

I read with interest your article "18-year-olds had last lawful beers" (*DTH*, Oct. 3). However, concerning the comment by Benjy Sutker, "They can send me to Lebanon to put bullets in babies, but I can't have a beer," I would like to make the following observations:

First, Sutker should be aware that his right to buy beer was revoked by the Legislature of the state of North Carolina, which does not have the power to send him to Lebanon for any purpose, much less to put bullets into anyone.

Also, Sutker seems to be perpetuating the idea that military service (which is not even mandatory at this time) is equivalent to governmentally sponsored and sanc-

tioned infanticide. I have spent my entire life (26 years as an Army daughter and 16 years as an Air Force wife) around people who make a career of the military, and the ones I have known do not look forward even to putting bullets into enemy soldiers. I am not blind to the fact that atrocities are sometimes committed, but Sutker seems to think that they are the norm. Surely we are past those Vietnam era days when soldiers were considered "baby killers."

Sutker should consider extending his concern to the babies who are killed on the highways of this country, not by blood-thirsty Marines, but by drunken drivers, some of whom are, yes, 18 years old.

Elizabeth Grant Fisher
Chapel Hill

Mikeman maladies

To the editor:

I read with interest Thursday's story "UNC mikeman asked to resign" (*DTH*, Sept. 29). I knew it was just a matter of time before everyone got tired of Kenny Ward's one-man show of offensiveness.

Ward seems to think he is being asked to step down because he is black and jokes can't get away with the types of jokes he tells. Baloney. If I, who am white, should tell jokes like Ward's, I'd soon be Public Enemy No. 1 with every black person on campus. I am referring to Ward's joke about keeping black guys from raping a white girl by throwing in a basketball. Why the Black Student Movement didn't take offense at this joke, I don't know. Another example of Ward's humor was seen when he asked a youngster perhaps 11 years old to tell a joke. The kid responded with an off-color joke and Ward gleefully chanted "We want the kid, we want the kid!" For one, found absolutely no humor in that incident.

Ward attempts to badger students into cheering, rather than trying to motivate them. Granted, it's difficult to motivate students to yell and scream when the Heels are blowing some team off the field. Rather than just saying "Oh, so you people ain't gonna cheer, huh? No spirit!" perhaps Kenny Ward should realize that when a game isn't really exciting, students are naturally going to be less likely to cheer. Wait until the Clemson game, or better yet, the Duke game. Then we'll see whether Carolina can cheer!

Let's not allow this mikeman business to become a racial issue because of Ward's off-the-cuff remark. Instead, let's have a good mikeman who can do the job and not offend anyone while doing it.

Langley Respass
Hinton James

To the editor:

There has been an injustice performed at our University. A student has been denied the opportunity to show the student body that he can perform his assigned duties.

Perhaps because Ward is black, the students do not feel the same sort of attachment to him as was felt to past mikemen. Whatever the reasons, it is not Ward's fault that the crowd has not been totally responsive during the first three home games. Ward cannot force anyone to stand up and support our team.

Many people criticize Kenny for telling distasteful jokes at the Homecoming game. To remedy this situation, Dean Sharon Mitchell or any other administrator responsible for coordinating game activities should have discussed with Ward the implications of his jokes and asked him to stop telling possibly offensive jokes. Because Mitchell asked Kenny to resign before she had exhausted other solutions to the problem, I feel the decision to replace Kenny had racial implications. I hope my conclusion is not true. No mikeman can perform successfully without total crowd support. Administrative support is necessary also. I hope the Department of Student Life will withdraw its request for Ward's resignation. With patience and renewed enthusiasm our student body will allow Ward the opportunity to succeed.

Kenneth Harris
Northampton Apts.

To the editor:

I sure wish I could be black. Then, if something didn't go my way or I failed at a task, I could blame it on my skin color. It would be convenient to never have to take responsibility for my own shortcomings. If no one liked me and I had no friends, I could say — "Hey, it's because I'm black." Talk about a handy excuse.

The Carolina mikeman may think his routine is not accepted because he is black — but I do not agree. I will never be able to accept a mikeman who tells Mary Jane jokes, performs cheers that I did while in elementary and middle school, and incorrectly leads standard, traditional Carolina cheers.

Kelly D. Darrett
Colony Apartments

To the editor:

By blaming his obvious failure on skin color, Kenny Ward has insulted the intelligence of all Carolina students, both black and white. Therefore, an apology to the entire student body, as well as Ward's immediate resignation as mikeman should be forthcoming.

Kendall Moore
Granville West