

The Daily Tar Heel

93rd year of editorial freedom

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READER FORUM

Human rights: 'For the love of people'

To the editors:

Originally titled to encompass a week of Campus Y programs, Human Rights Week in its third year not only seeks to bring to the forefront human rights issues but also human concerns. Specifically, this year's program addresses four areas: health, individual and group rights, international topics, and freedom of expression. Having themes each day strangles any incongruity of purpose and gives each day a completeness.

The problem with planning a week that specifically addresses human rights is trying to determine what "human rights" are. Defining them would be easier if there were an alien force that somehow suppressed humanity. Humanity could then quickly identify its rights.

What are human rights? My definition of human rights is based on the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. It's an antiquated thought that at one time I found inscribed on

wooden rulers, but not anymore. Failure to practice the Golden Rule is a violation of another's human rights.

A person should be allowed to stay healthy enough in his environment, to be his own person (and if that includes membership into a group, so be it), to exist in the world around him peacefully, and to communicate his existence openly, without threat, to all. Those are the rights of humans. Of course definitions vary among those who are well fed, housed and employed.

One professor who heard this definition found it "too narrow." He said, "Human rights is simply the right to life — the right to live."

His definition of having the right to life relates to today's theme, "Health in Human Rights" and directly highlights the evening program, "Pro-life or Pro-choice," a debate between the UNC College Republicans and the Campus Y's Women's Forum Committee. The program will feature two films, "The

Silent Scream," and "Planned Parenthood's Response to Silent Scream," as well as Professor Gregory Trianosky of the UNC Philosophy department, who will moderate discussion.

"Health in Human Rights" does acknowledge the right to life with programs like abortion, teen suicide, and euthanasia. Abortion, which conflicts with the freedom of the mother and the unborn child, and suicide and euthanasia (when an individual has willed in certain situations that his life be terminated) which conflicts with personal freedoms, all test our values of humanity and our reasons for existence.

Equally important, "Health in Human Rights" acknowledges human concerns. Is our right to stay healthy affected by the arms race or by high medical costs, and is this

a human rights issue? What are the effects of child abuse, the Vietnam War and AIDS on society? We highlight these topics during the day as well.

In sum, it would be unrealistic to expect the same activity of protest and defiance as the '60's after the completion of the week. Our goal is not to revert, convert, or divert anyone's attention from living. However, we want people to open themselves to the horrors many face and to help others who are less fortunate to live better. "For the love of people," the theme for the entire week, let's celebrate humanity.

Addison Sweeney
David Schnorrenberg
Campus Y Human Rights Week
Committee

To the dth degree

A policy living in infancy

It's unfortunate and upsetting when it happens, but sometimes you don't know an experiment won't work until it explodes in your face. It hurts, and sometimes it hurts others just as much.

Last Wednesday, it happened to *The Daily Tar Heel*.

The editorial was called "Zionism lives in infancy." Though it has angered many people, I am not writing to explain the opinion it expressed, nor am I apologizing for it. Only the author has that right.

And that's the point, I guess. It was an individual's editorial. Signed editorials under our new format do not reflect the opinion of the paper, and neither do they try to present the viewpoint of the student body as a whole. If that was anybody's perception, it was mistaken.

But the fact that we left ourselves open to such an interpretation is our responsibility, and our mistake. For that, I do want to apologize, and I want to explain.

The only views endorsed by "the paper" — meaning the majority of a group including the co-editors, associate editor and editorialists — appear as the "board opinion," introduced two weeks ago at the top of the column. Each board member contributes to their content and/or writes them. They're unsigned because we all stand behind them, not because the writers want to remain anonymous.

But editorialists need an outlet for personal opinions that others might not agree with. If that's the case, critics have argued, then let them write columns on the right side of the back page instead of editorials.

I disagree. Because of their commitment to the paper and Arne's and my faith in their abilities, we feel that our editorialists deserve a privileged position on the back page to express their views.

In the sense that they reflect only the opinion of the author, they are columns. But in the sense that Arne and I sanction their being presented (a power that we don't exercise over columns, because that part of the page is open, and we print what we get as space permits), they are editorials.

We may even sanction editorials that strike many readers as ill-reasoned, ill-researched or unfounded. That's the risk taken by anybody who expresses an opinion. Of course, because of their status on the page, we want those in the left column to be solid. Maybe some still will have faults. Nevertheless, they have a right to be heard.

We learn by exchanging viewpoints. We also learn by mistakes.

Editorial board background

One caller about the Zionism piece also was concerned that whereas columns provided background about the author, no one knew about the edit writers. Here is the information.

Arne Rickert, co-editor, a senior English major from Topeka, Kan.

Catherine Cowan, associate editor in charge of the back page, a junior English and classics major from Fayetteville, Ark. Louis Corrigan, editorial writer, a junior English major from Atlanta.

Sally Pont, editorial writer, a senior English major from Northford, Conn.

James Toner, editorial writer, a senior English and Latin major from Westmont, Ill.

And me, a senior journalism and English major from Hockessin, Del.

I can foresee a number of readers questioning the major similarity among us. If you ask me, though, the English discipline teaches one to write clearly — and to write clearly, one first must learn to think clearly. Aside from related areas of composition, such as journalism, I don't think any other field can offer a better general training for someone who wants to write editorials.

An editorial's role

The recent editorial also raised a challenge that we've faced before: the belief that *DTH* editorials should represent the views of the student body. Not only do they influence the way readers outside the community perceive the campus, it has been said, but the *DTH* — like other papers — also must be answerable to its owners, the students.

Though forced to pay for the paper, students, I believe, are subscribers of the newspapers and not shareholders or owners. On-campus residents must buy a meal plan, but that doesn't give them rights over ARA Services. Sometimes a subsidy is justified. The *DTH's* has been upheld by federal court rulings.

But how do we justify this, in light of our editorials attacking the meal plan last semester?

We questioned, and only briefly, the need for a meal plan; we did not judge its necessity. Our editorials focused on the lack of student input during the decision to implement the meal plan. But in the case of constitutional funding for the *DTH*, students had a direct voice — through a campuswide vote — in giving the paper a set percentage of their activity fees. Students have the right to petition to revoke such funding, too, as we witnessed earlier this semester.

The consequences of an editorial policy that sought to reflect the tenor of its constituency would be a mess. Even if there were a way to gauge a campus consensus for every stance, especially on controversial issues, using an editorial to present a point of view that most readers already held would be pointless.

I believe there is one thing above all else that an editorial must answer to, and that's the writer's conscience. To base it on anything else, or to subject it in every instance to a majority board opinion, is to relinquish our right to have minds of our own.

— DAVE SCHMIDT

Silly Headlines:



'DTH' editorial: tangled speech and twisted logic

To the editors:

The Middle Eastern dispute is a touchy situation at best. Aside from arousing strong political feelings, the Middle Eastern controversy is also tied in with religion, two subjects that are intrinsically linked to one's emotions. Suffice to say that there will never be a consensus on who is right and who is wrong. However, when somebody employs the tangled speech and twisted logic which Sally Pont does in her editorial of November 13, it further complicates an already complex situation.

Miss Pont should realize that many people are sympathetic towards the goal of Zionism, and furthermore, that while some factions of the Israeli government do favor strong military action, they are a minority. Miss Pont would do well to recognize that the actions of a few cannot serve to condemn the larger body. Just as the strong military philosophy of some Israeli politicians does not represent all Israelis, the actions of the Jewish Defense League do not necessarily represent all Jews, and for that matter, the Palestine Liberation

Organization does not necessarily represent all Palestinians.

Miss Pont seems to feel that the PLO is a moderate organization, rationally seeking a solution, but she shoots down her own argument by citing the atrocities committed by the PLO at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Since the avowed purpose of the PLO is the annihilation of Israel, I fail to see why Israel is under any compunction to negotiate with them.

To the editors:

I have trouble taking seriously anyone who is so clearly biased, but unfortunately, Miss Pont and people who share her viewpoint need to be taken with the utmost seriousness. She seems to feel that the PLO's terrorist actions, perpetrated in the name of "sheer desperation," are entirely justified, while Israeli military actions against the PLO are "ethically unsound."

Miss Pont, Zionists are not "maniacal" and the military actions

which are sometimes necessary are not the "blind irrationalities of prejudice" but are acts designed to insure the survival of the Jewish people. I don't doubt that you would dispute that a strong defense is necessary for the survival of a nation, but you are probably one of those people that think the Holocaust never happened, and that all Jews are simply paranoid.

Eric Greenwald
Carboro

Controversy at expense of accuracy

To the editors:

Sally Pont's editorial ("Zionism lives in Infamy," Nov. 13) demonstrates the shameful willingness of the *DTH* to generate controversy at the expense of factual accuracy and logical soundness.

The mere form of Ms. Pont's assertions that Zionism is "entirely militaristic and imperialistic," and that the "present plight of the Palestinians is indicative of Israel's insatiable desire to conquer and divide," should give notice that the author was motivated more out of

prejudice than considered judgement.

In fact, the origins of Zionism were unequivocally defensive, as its present-day proponents still adamantly maintain it is. Certainly "imperialism" and "legitimate self-defense" are two sides of the same polemical coin. Perhaps they are both best discarded for a more sensitive consideration of the facts.

As a first step, the plight of the Palestinians can be viewed as a creation of the Arab nations which turn their backs on their brothers

to frustrate their claim to a homeland. By so doing, the Arab nations secure the benefits of having forced a burden of attrition upon Israel that bleeds the country's economic and manpower resources and sours the good will of the world.

I think it is unfortunate that Ms. Pont and the *DTH* have been manipulated into furthering this ill will.

Lance G. Isen
School of Law

Zionism is not and never has been racism, Sally

To the editors:

In Sally Pont's editorial of November 13, she reiterates and defends a vicious defamatory interpretation of Zionism. To set the record straight, Zionism is the political movement to establish a homeland for the Jewish people in Israel. It is named Zionism for the Jews desire to return to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Zionism is not, and never was, racism.

The Jews are a people, not a race. There are Oriental Jews, Indian Jews, Caucasian Jews, and Black Jews. Zionism is not racist. Just last spring, Zionist movements raised money and the Israeli government risked the censure of its neighbors

Ethiopian Jews in "Operation Moses." These are black Jews that they brought to Israel. Is that racism? Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

Pont blames Israel for the systematic dispersion of Palestinian Arabs. She should check her facts. In 1948 the fledgling government of Israel pleaded with the Palestinian Arabs to stay and help build the new nation. It was the Arab nation who urged them to flee. The Palestinian refugees between the PLO and Israel has brought too much death and tragedy to both sides. Pont's one sided condemnation of Israel attempts to sanctify the

murders by PLO terrorists of innocent tourists, school children and bystanders. Is the slaughter by the PLO of a wheelchair bound American Jew, Leon Klinghoffer, going to advance peace in the Middle East? Arafat has never renounced terrorism.

There is plenty of violence and blame on all sides of this conflict. However, Israel does have the right to self-defense. It was passive acquiescence to terror that led Jews to the gas chambers of the Holocaust. Israel represents a new, fearsome image to many: strong Jews who will fight back.

Pont's linkage between the Jewish Defense League and Zionism is

false. The J.D.L. is a truly bigoted, fanatic, Anti-Arab organization. It no more represents Zionism than the Ku Klux Klan represents Democracy.

Let us bury the slurs and slanders against Zionism. As a recent hemispheric conference of Catholics and Jews did just last week, let us renounce the charge of racism, and focus on building a true, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Seth R. Reice
Associate Professor
Department of Biology
American Professors for Peace in
the Middle East

Geneva: An important day for humanity

By JOHN GIBBS

With the summit conference in Geneva less than a month away, chances appear slim that any major settlement can be reached. President Reagan is doing well in the opinion polls at the moment, and is secure in the knowledge that most Americans have no great expectations for the conference. Gorbachev meanwhile, is free from any public opinion pressures, and seems content in simply trying to score a propaganda victory. Against this gloomy backdrop will be played out the drama at the summit in Switzerland.

Certainly writing off the meeting as a failure even before it begins would be a mistake. As long as the two leaders are able to get together and discuss the issues, then there is always hope. Yet both sides appear miles apart in their goals for the conference. The Soviets are motivated primarily by a desire to put a stop to the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star Wars" program. This outrageously complex project would cost trillions of dollars, be ineffective against cruise missiles, be almost impossible to test fully, and not be operational until at least the next century. This does not even mention the fact that there is almost no chance that it will ever work like its proponents envision. Nonetheless, Reagan is captivated by the promise of a nuclear umbrella in space. Thus our most valuable bargaining chip will not be up for negotiations in Geneva. With "Star Wars" removed from the agenda, the summit could

quickly break down into a public shouting match, or the Soviets could simply walk out as they did at the last meeting. A conference in which nothing is achieved would not be incomprehensible.

In fact the mood of the two superpowers may augur such an outcome. The Soviets, despite recent overtures by Gorbachev, continue to prepare for the military confrontation with America which they consider to be all but inevitable. Here in the United States, there is a continuing emphasis on defense spending in order to close the so-called "window of vulnerability" left by the Carter administration. This despite the fact that the United States was just as capable of destroying the world then as it is now.

Obviously the summit is not taking place at the most propitious moment. Neither superpower appears particularly interested in arms control, and since that is the issue to be discussed in Geneva, the outlook is bleak. This should be a cause of concern for the entire world. Ours is a small planet which has been made even smaller by the fact that we now possess destructive forces capable of ending life on Earth as we know it. The summit in Geneva therefore, involves all of us. It places in jeopardy everything in life that is meaningful and important. These are the real bargaining chips to be haggled over. At stake are all the wonders of this vibrant, nurturing planet; the many centuries of human achievement, the perfect balance of unspoiled nature, the art, the literature, the architecture, and ironically, the extensive knowledge of man

which has culminated in such perfect killing devices that we have now reached a point of mutually assured destruction if a nuclear war is ever allowed to happen.

Unfortunately for all of us, man has never proven capable of avoiding war. Despite the tremendous advances made by the human race, we have failed to outgrow the primeval urge for combat. That the Soviet Union and the United States have avoided open conflict in the forty years since World War II is heartening. Yet we have played around the fringes of war for too long. We can only weather so many Cuban Missile Crises.

That is why the Geneva summit is so important. It is at least a chance to begin the slow process of developing an understanding between two vastly different nations. Chances such as these do not come along that often. And with each failure we move one step closer to Armageddon. The negotiators in Geneva may realize this fact, yet more than likely they are limited by their narrow aims and goals. Nonetheless, without overstating the significance of the summit, it must be noted that in trying to bring some sanity to the suicidal chaos of the arms race, the negotiators in Geneva are in effect, trying to preserve life on the only planet in the vastness of the universe known to support it. If the Geneva meeting fails, then we are all the poorer for it. And buried beneath all the post-conference talk of the tactical gains and propaganda victories will be a much greater loss.

John Gibbs is a junior history major from Lynchburg, Va.

The Daily Tar Heel

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