

The Daily Tar Heel

94th year of editorial freedom

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Editorials

The madness of the NRA

Monuments as venerable as the U.S. Constitution are not immune to occasional abuse. One of the most notable offenders of such atrocities is the National Rifle Association, whose leadership has repeatedly so exploited the intent of the Second Amendment that congressional members continuously succumb to Washington's most powerful lobby.

The latest manipulation came this week during debate over the Firearms Owners' Protection Act, which proposed virtual revocation of the 1968 Gun Control Act. The focal points of the new act are to greatly weaken federal regulations on gun dealers and to allow interstate sale and transportation of firearms.

The Senate has already passed that package by an overwhelming margin. Fortunately, the House's watered-down version displayed some degree of rationality. That amended version now goes to the Senate for approval.

But this week's lobbying on both sides of the issue was quite disturbing. On Wednesday, the gun lobby had apparently overcome vigorous politicking by every major national police organization when the House voted not to continue the ban on the interstate sale of firearms. A weaker amendment, limited only to handguns, passed Thursday with the police organizations' approval.

What is so twisted about all this? The foundation of the NRA's argument against gun control is the Second

Amendment, which features that belabored phrase, "the right to keep and bear arms." However, the phrase does not refer to the citizenry. Daniel Pollitt, UNC professor of law and an expert on civil liberties, said that statement applies to the "well-regulated militia" established by the Constitution. That's the Army, not the duck hunters.

This is not just Pollitt's interpretation of the constitution. "You can put your finger on 20 decisions that say there's no right to bear arms. It's indisputable," he said. Those decisions have been made in the state, federal and U.S. Supreme courts. Not one decision has favored the anti-gun control lobby, Pollitt said.

So why is the NRA so powerful? With a membership of about 3 million, including President Reagan, this special-interest group is a most effective user of scare tactics. It convinces owners that Congress is going to take away a hunter's right to own a rifle, or a collector's right to display his cache.

All 11 N.C. Congressmen supported Wednesday's measure to not lift the interstate ban. The representatives' reasoning offered no more than ridiculously weak attempts to hide the NRA's influence on their voting. Rep. Stephen L. Neal of Winston-Salem confessed he talked to no one to find out anything about opposition to the bill.

When the NRA snaps its fingers, legislators jump. They've shown it this week, and there is little to stop the NRA from snapping again.

Good show, PBS

A recent PBS documentary, aired Wednesday by the UNC Center for Public Broadcasting, paints a vivid, two-and-a-half-hour portrait of the Palestinian-Israeli dilemma, arguably the most important and probably the most protracted of struggles. It's too bad many Jewish groups protested the documentary, as its airing can only contribute to the understanding of the complex conflict between Israel's Jews and Arabs, at least here in the States.

The guiding concept of the program, titled "Flashpoint — Israel and the Palestinians," is similar to that of the op-ed page of many American newspapers. Opposing viewpoints are offered side-by-side, each given approximately the same space. The reader, or in this instance the viewer, can better decide which side has the better case — or indeed, whether either side has a case at all.

"Flashpoint" features two half-hour, pro-Israel (i.e., Jewish) films and one hour-long, pro-Palestinian (i.e., Arab) film, each produced by a different source. A point-counterpoint segment between a member of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) and a Columbia University professor closes the program.

Of course, the same old charges pop up: X is persecuting Y, Y employs terrorism to achieve its ends, X belongs

in territory claimed by Y because it is X's homeland. The joke is that both sides make the same claims — an irony the PBS special punctuates.

The documentary isn't worthless, however. "Occupied Palestine," the program's pro-Arab and most controversial segment, forcefully depicts Palestinian unrest in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip, northwest of Israel on the Mediterranean shore, and in the West Bank, along the Jordan-Israel border. One Arab father, after the slaying of his daughter by Israeli troops, laments that if the bullet weren't in his daughter's head, "it would be in someone else's." The incident may be overblown — after all, even justified occupations are rarely bloodless — but it does offer a working gauge of the area's strife.

In another scene, thousands of Palestinians fill a West Bank street, chanting, "We shall fight!" — undoubtedly a horrific image to the Jerusalem administration headed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Many Jewish Americans apparently didn't like it either, which gave some PBS stations pause — six of them, in fact, refused to air the documentary. But 159 others did; they realized the importance of disseminating information that takes account of both sides.

On mad dogs, veep's about-face, Mayor Clint, peace talks

Terrorism reared its ugly head again last week, and the United States began working out a hard-line response against the country it suspects of supporting terrorists — Libya.

A bomb in a Berlin disco that killed a U.S. Army sergeant and a Turkish woman and wounded 230 others was immediately suspected to be the work of Libya's leader, Col. Moammar Khadafy. The Reagan administration says it has amassed considerable evidence that Khadafy is in part responsible for many recent acts of terrorism. Reagan warned in a news conference that as soon as it knew who was responsible for a terrorist act, the United States would retaliate.

Khadafy, the "mad dog of the Middle East," denied that he was involved with any terrorist acts. He reiterated warnings that any American strike against Libya would be met by acts of aggression on foreign soil.

The White House called on some of its allies to expel Libyan diplomats from their countries. Wednesday, the West German government expelled two Libyans, apparently because of terrorist connections.

Crisis in Israel

A rift developed in the coalition between the

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Labor and Likud parties threatened the stability of the Israeli government. After Likud Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai said that Labor Prime Minister Shimon Peres knew nothing about economics, Peres announced that he wanted to dismiss Modai. At first, Modai agreed to resign as finance minister, and Peres promised him another place in the cabinet. But Likud party leaders said they would not allow Modai to be dismissed, forcing a confrontation with the Labor party.

A scheduled cabinet meeting Sunday is expected to be the scene of the 19-month-old government's break-up.

Nicaragua gets the blame

Peace talks by Latin American ministers that aimed at bringing peace to the region collapsed after the Nicaraguan government rejected all proposed agreements, including a plan to sign a peace treaty by June 6.

According to the Nicaraguan government, the new proposals differed substantially from those agreed on at a meeting in January of the

Contadora nations — Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia. That agreement took a harder line against U.S. aid to the Contras.

Congress responded to the collapse of the talks by reconsidering the president's \$100-million contra aid plan. A second House vote is planned on the package April 15. In a nationally broadcast news conference, President Reagan said that Nicaraguan intransigence showed more than ever the need for strong U.S. support for the contras.

Bush clarifies oil policy

Vice President George Bush spent much of last week trying to juggle the interests of Mideast allies with the oil policy of the Reagan administration. At first, Bush had said that oil prices needed to stabilize; Reagan, however, has said that the workings of the free market take precedence over special interests.

In Saudi Arabia, Bush said that the interests of the United States and Saudi Arabia do not coincide when it comes to oil prices.

According to some Senate Republicans, this added instance of Bush's quick ability to flip-flop and toe the White House line over his own belief has helped tarnish his reputation as a potential presidential candidate in 1988.

Tar Heel Forum

Conservatives stifle liberal activism

Eddie Swain
 Guest Writer

Now that the shanties are gone, the "Wall" has been torn down and student unrest has been quieted. I think that the events of the past few weeks at UNC need to be analyzed very thoughtfully by all members of our University community. The events that have happened really have more to do with a clash of ideologies on this campus than with a handful of students protesting for or against one cause or another. This clash scares me, as it should scare every other thinking individual in our community.

First of all, we need to examine the events, then we can examine their implications. The Anti-Apartheid Support Group, a politically liberal organization, built some shanties in order to protest the University's involvement with apartheid. Then a group of students from an opposing political corner built a model of the Berlin Wall, saying that they wanted to show the University that other peoples are being oppressed. This second group also wanted the shanties removed. Monday morning, the chancellor granted their wish. The shanties were removed.

We need to analyze the motives and beliefs that would cause conservatives on this campus to behave in such a manner. Many aspects of the wall symbolize the general attitude most conservatives seem to have. This attitude, and the fact that conservatives are receiving so much attention and admiration, is what scares me.

The conservatives built the wall for one reason — to stifle the voice of an opposing group. There is no way they can defend their actions as being in the least bit altruistic. They did several things to show that they really did not care about anyone except themselves and their own beliefs.

There was really no point in building the wall in the first place. UNC can do absolutely nothing about communist oppression in East Germany. The shanties were a protest of UNC's hypocritical participation in apartheid. The University preaches freedom and equality, then makes a profit from slave labor. Therefore, the shanties were a justified protest, demanding something practical from the institution at which they were aimed.

The wall, on the other hand, was a slipshod symbol of something the University cannot and should not do anything about. Contrary to the wishes of conservatives, the University does not preach the glories of capitalism, or the need to abolish communism. Therefore, the wall had no real purpose except, of course, to stifle the support group.

Also, the conservatives proved they did not care about oppressed people by leaving their wall unattended. On many occasions, the support group repaired or defended the wall to protect the conservatives' right to free speech. The conservatives even painted "Isn't this all very silly?" on their wall, blatantly admitting that they were protesting for the sake of protesting, and that they do not really care about the oppressed people of East Germany or South Africa. It also shows that they believe free speech is silly.

The most interesting aspect of the whole protest is the fact that the shanties were a symbol

of the oppressed and the wall was a symbol of the oppressor. Through the shanties, the University community was able to get a better idea of exactly how oppressed blacks in South Africa actually live. The wall gave us nothing except a blockade to the shanties. This is representative of the fact that liberals are concerned with people and protecting the rights of the masses, while conservatives seem to be concerned solely with protecting themselves and their own ideas.

The conservatives used a very interesting approach to satisfy their own intolerance for other people's ideas. They did not care about oppressed people in South Africa or in East Germany, they just wanted the support group to leave. I feel that conservatives as well as liberals have rights to free speech, but the conservatives on this campus have twisted that right into their own means of constraining others.

The events of the past few weeks show that we have at least two major ideologies on this campus. A struggle between conservatives and liberals has been building over the past several years, and this struggle is bound to become more intense. Liberals are accustomed to thinking of the University as a place where they can express their free thinking without fear and with hope. However, conservatives are now threatening this place as a haven for freedom and logical thinking. I do not wish for the conservatives to leave. I just want them to be honest, and to say what they mean, so that it will be possible for both ideas to be presented and so that open and free debate will be possible.

Eddie Swain is a senior education major from Ahsokie.

No 'light' at all

To the editor:

It struck me as a rather ill-conceived notion that Allen Taylor (or anyone else) should find companies in South Africa the "shining light of democracy." ("Board delays on divesting," April 7). These bastions of responsibility (Union Carbide, Bophal, India) and defenders of democracy (ITT, Chile 1973), otherwise known as multinational corporations, are in South Africa to make a profit — and, mind you, not a small one.

If these corporations were truly concerned with bringing about change in the apartheid system, they would have precipitated its downfall long ago. For years these conglomerates have made tidy sums for themselves and their investors by adhering to a policy of increased investment. Instead of active intervention to help end the system of apartheid, these multinationals, in their search for profit, have helped to perpetuate the status quo.

Through their investment activities, the "American companies" have served only to strengthen apartheid. The multinationals have entered into a structural economic relationship with the barbaric South African government. Far from being "the shining light of democracy," the multinational corporations have formed a symbiotic alliance, making themselves accomplices to this brutal regime.

Paul Weisbecker
 Senior
 Economics/Latin American
 Studies

Eat your greens

To the editor:

As a student of ecology whose interests lie (not yet "lay") in herbivory and grazing of marine communities, I read with great pleasure, "He only eats renewable resources" (April 9). It's nice to see the paper taking a scientific turn.

For more information concerning *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, the said flower species, consider signing up for Dr. Massey's Introduction to Plant Taxonomy class (Biol 103) in the fall.



And for those of you terrestrial herbivores, you might peruse Euell Gibbon's "Stalking the Wild Asparagus" before trekking into the parks or woods. "Ciao."

Kathy Heinsohn
 Graduate
 Biology

Path of protests

To the editor:

Waiting in a welfare office in New York in the late '60s when the U.S. Postal strike had delayed my rent assistance, working as a landscaper full time for my landlord (who charged me more for my rent than I made in wages), I noticed a sign: "Please feed the hungry and oppressed children in South Carolina."

After my second mugging and enough Yankee winters, I went back home to crash in the Arboretum. A sign near there had beckoned me, a homesick soldier turned homesick vagabond, in search of an America no longer there: "O Lost and by the wind griefed, ghost come back again." I felt safe there at night, because nobody went there. People still talked of the murder that occurred ten years before.

When the evils of our Industrial Heartland seem to be coming home to us, is the only solution

Letters to the Editor

giving our attention to another land and its politics?

I don't have a sheepskin because the Veterans Administration has more than once sabotaged my education, and my senators and congressmen, who seem to have no real interest in the subject, are of no help. I cannot know for sure, but I believe those who say the oppressed fight each other.

So, I ask all you "shanty dwellers," where is your concern for the black family farmers in Orange County? And I say to the other side for offering token education to blacks in South Africa, "Shame!" No wonder the prisons here are overflowing and we fear to walk the streets.

"We won't be fooled again," goes the song. At least I do not want to fall into the traps of left- or right-wing politics, which would be ignoring real issues.

In the Daily Tar Heel article "UNC joins universities in protests" (April 7), Herman Bennett was quoted saying what seems to me to be slogans in pure cliché: "They're eating tea and croissants." Before you stop a student walking by again, I ask you to consider this, Bennett: Cycles do not necessarily repeat themselves. As protesters in the '60s, we

obviously were not part of the solution then and I suggest we might just add to another country's problems. No matter how much some claim theirs to be the new Woodstock or the new '60s, those myths and slogans ring as hollow as so many betrayed revolutions.

Our parents should have gone to class, if they could have. Not all flower children were drugged hippies or politico yuppies. Nor should historic accounts merely say that Franklin Street was once invaded by "beatnik" craftspeople. The best of those times seem lost in the record, some of us just extras misplaced in our parts in less than a generation.

So we are silent — this can also be a symptom of oppression, for some of us do not even have the end titles (postscripts) on that long dark wall in Washington. Aren't we weary of reruns?

In my mind's eye, I never stopped standing in vigil (but not in protest) on Franklin Street. Thus I saw a great deal; perhaps I learned a little more geography than most students . . .

Leonard Otto
 Puzzle inventor and
 Candle vendor

The Week in Quotes

• "It's a hit movie at the moment."
 — Actor-politician Clint Eastwood Wednesday following his massive victory in the mayoral race for the town of Carmel, California. Eastwood campaigned on a platform calling for a better treatment of the business community without injuring Carmel's unique character. Defeated incumbent Charlotte Townsend criticized the race as being "totally out of focus and so abnormal."

• "The outlook for new Coke is becoming increasingly cloudy."
 — Securities analyst Emanuel Goldman about the decision by the McDonald's and Hardee's restaurant chains to switch from New Coke to the Classic brand. Coke Classic is outselling the New Coke in retail stores by 5 to 1. Coca-Cola, however, responded to the decisions by saying that it remained committed to New Coke.

• "We need to continue the dialogue, we need to make progress on the issue's before us."
 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in a private letter to President Reagan about the need to develop talks that would substantively lead to arms reductions. After departing Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin delivered the letter to Reagan, the two men agreed to lay the groundwork for a summit meeting in the United

States later this year. Gorbachev set no conditions on the meeting except the need to produce positive results.

• "People come in and say they were supposed to go to Greece or Italy, and now they don't know why they want to spend so much time traveling abroad when things are so good at home."
 — Hotel owner Nick Monte, speaking about the trend of American travellers to stay on home ground rather than venturing abroad. Because of lower gas prices, vacationers have decided that it is worthwhile to travel around the country by car. Rising fears of terrorism in Mediterranean countries has also led many Americans to prefer safer vacations in the United States. In addition, the dollar is not so strong as it was in past summers, making it less of a bargain to travel overseas.

• "If we can help them with good shopping, why not good sex? . . . I say, no."
 Jim Jacobson, editor of the Birmingham, Ala., News, expressing his opposition to a speech by Dr. Ruth Westheimer on creating "a sexually literate society." Dr. Ruth made her comments before a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Compiled by Stuart Tomkinson, a senior English major from St. Louis, who is associate editor of The Daily Tar Heel.