

EDITORIAL

Court's verdicts 5 to 4, again

A couple of courts held the spotlight this week — the Supreme Court and the World Court.

Chief Justice Warren Burger's last days on the court will be remembered for a while to come. In a 5-4 decision that is somewhat difficult to understand, the court held that an insane inmate on death row may not be executed as it may be considered cruel and unusual punishment. Of course if there is anything that is cruel, or at least unusual, is the twist in the law, which maintains that when and if the inmate regains his sanity, then he gets back in line for the chair, chamber or gurney.

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In a related decision upholding Victorian morality, the same court decided 5-4 that the right of consenting homosexual adults to engage in sodomy is not protected by the Constitution. The same court did not say whether the same law could be used to prosecute heterosexuals for doing the same act.

Writing for the majority, Justice Bryon White rationalized the move by referring to the "ancient roots" of English common law where such activity was considered criminal. Some folks got on a boat going across the Atlantic to get away from those "ancient roots."

Maybe Justice White thinks we need to get the pillory and dunking stool out of the museums and back onto Main Street. While we're at it, let's lock up people who think that the Earth is round and think that it revolves around the sun. Tradition for tradition's sake, yeah buddy.

Seriously, the court by failing to rule on the Georgia law for people of both sexual preferences, left the door wide open for discrimination against gays and lesbians. The scant

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enforcement of sodomy laws in the 24 states that still have them gives one reason to believe that such laws are only on the books in order to place a degrading badge of second-class citizenship on homosexuals in a manner that the notorious Plessy vs. Ferguson "separate but equal" case did for the American black population.

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President Reagan complained this week that Senate Democrats were playing a partisan game with his nomination of ultra-conservative Daniel Manion for U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago claiming that they oppose him merely on ideological grounds. I take that statement to mean that Manion should be approved regardless of what he believes if he has a presidential cachet on his resume — a resume full of grammatical and spelling errors at that.

Ideology suddenly became of paramount importance when the World Court handed down its decision that the United States was liable for \$378 million in damages to the Nicaraguan government because of the U.S.-sponsored contra war the Reagan administration so dearly loves. The World Court has no place in judging the United States, announced a State Department spokesman. After all, he said, they have a Soviet and a Pole on the court.

I move that the Senate accept the Manion nomination with the precondition that Reagan pay the

damages to the Sandinista government and end support to the contras. He gets his ideologue which he will get a version of eventually anyway and we stay out of a war.

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One of the latest controversies has to do with the insurance companies' wishes to set limits on the amounts awarded to plaintiffs in lawsuits. This scheme has pain and suffering maxing out at \$500,000 and punitive damages going for the same in North Carolina. That cases differ from each other makes no difference under this proposed law. It gets more interesting, though.

Shearon Harris, everybody's favorite nuclear reactor, has a total of \$665 million of coverage, just like every other reactor in the country. Now there is legislation to increase that coverage in the U.S. House of Representatives. The nuclear industry favors a bill that has maximum liability set at \$2.1 billion, while others in the House favor \$6.3 billion, while still others favor unlimited liability.

The way I figure it right now, CP&L would be able to pay for 665 peoples' increased chances of cancer, etc., if there was an accident, or 6,300 people's injuries and suffering under the more liberal bill. But something tells me that there might be more people and more injuries if there were an accident. If the nuclear industry is so sure that an accident can't occur, then why don't they and the insurance companies go for unlimited liability? Unless of course, they know something we don't.

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Travelers should fear groceries, not guerrillas

James Burrus

Staff Writer

"Should I stay or should I go?" are not only the lyrics to a song by The Clash but are also the words echoed by many college students this summer when contemplating a trip to Europe.

I returned from the old country three weeks ago and like most naive students who have never traveled abroad before, I had some concerns. The biggest question, of course, was: Is traveling in Europe safe? I obviously thought that it was or I would not have gone and I was right to a certain degree because I made it back to Chapel Hill alive. By writing this editorial I am not trying to persuade people to cross the Atlantic, even though Margaret Thatcher would like me to do so. Instead, I merely want to provide students interested in traveling Europe with some information from someone who has been there recently, in contrast to the U.S. press' overexposure of terrorism and undercoverage of Chernobyl.

The American press spent the whole spring covering the terrorist attacks in Europe and hence firmly convinced many U.S. citizens to stay put and travel at home. While this is helping our own country by keeping the dollar inside our borders, the American press' coverage greatly distorts the real picture of Europe. Brace yourselves, mommy and daddy, but Europe is safe from terrorism.

While I was in Europe I never felt threatened or scared simply because I was American. The people I met did not hate Americans. They were all very friendly and quite a few went out of their way to assist me either my offering a place to stay or giving directions to the nearest hotel. Of course, some were displeased with the foreign policies of President Reagan, but they did not associate their hatred for him with me. Europeans are not afraid of terrorism. In fact, they think Americans' reaction to it is quite ridiculous and exaggerated.

As far as terrorism goes, I was not worried. Being a student traveler, I was not in a large group of Americans. These huge masses of Americans, namely servicemen, are the most vulnerable to terrorist attack. Khadafy and other terrorist leaders

will try to kill as many Americans as they can with one bomb. What better target than soldiers of Reagan's army? As a student traveling alone or in a small group, one does not have to worry about being a victim of international terrorism.

However, there is reason to be hesitant about exploring Europe. It's radiation. The radioactive cloud of Chernobyl passed over almost all of Europe, contaminating fields of vegetables and poisoning pastures of cattle. The governments of these European nations came out and said that the radioactive level was too low to pose a threat to food and dairy products. This comes from the same governments that did not even warn their own citizens that the poisonous cloud was overhead for fear of anti-nuclear demonstrations. Researchers are just now learning some of the effects of Three Mile Island and it will take many more years before anyone finds out the actual effects of radioactive poisoning in large and small dosages. The American press should have exploited this issue as a danger to travelers as they did terrorism. At least this way, they would be deterring American travelers for a more relevant reason. Remember the radiation is all over Europe; the bombs are only in a few select cities.

For one month I avoided eating salad vegetables and drinking milk and water. For just one month, avoiding some foods was a sacrifice I was willing to make. In twenty years, I pray my body is not the thing being sacrificed. The biggest question all aspiring student travelers need to ask themselves before embarking is whether they are willing to risk radiation poisoning to experience Europe, not whether they will be blown up by a bomb.

James Burrus is a junior from Cary who is a staff writer for the Summer Tar Heel.

