

The Daily Tar Heel

94th year of editorial freedom

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Editorials

So much for 'bright' ideas

The recent light bulbs that lit up above N.C. legislators' heads regarding the state's selection as host for the Southeast's next low-level radioactive dump don't represent bright ideas at all. Indeed, some of their ideas are quite embarrassing to those North Carolinians who haven't forgotten the meaning of "commitment."

The very day North Carolina was chosen for the waste site, strident objections arose from Raleigh. Some lawmakers were outraged that North Carolina had been "singled out" for the dump. They and others suggested withdrawing from the Southeast Compact Commission, the body that selected the "lucky" state to host the site. One legislator declared that joining the commission was a mistake in the first place and asked for an immediate, special session of the General Assembly to discuss the matter.

Gov. Jim Martin nixed the move, saying the issue could wait until the 1987 regular session. Since the dump — wherever it will be located — won't begin operation until 1992, Martin's

decision was wise; the cooler heads needed to deal with the state's selection will likely prevail at the regular session.

Few of those who demand the state leave the commission seem to have considered the serious consequences of such an act. In fact, the two N.C. delegates to the commission have said that, should the state pull out of the group, North Carolina will still have to build a dump to handle low-level radioactive waste produced by the state. And any such dump would be permanent — unlike that proposed by the commission.

Perhaps at the General Assembly's 1987 session, certain N.C. lawmakers will remember the commitment made when North Carolina and seven other states joined the commission. That commitment — to locate a dump somewhere in the Southeast, then have another state in the region host the next site — was reasonable, if a little disconcerting. To pull out of the commission now, after that group has mulled a dump site for months, would tarnish the state's reputation and give cooperation a stinging slap in the face.

The freedom fad

One of this country's most popular methods of remedying an unfavorable situation involves designating a week to "heighten awareness" or "educate the public" about a problem. This fad has spread to such ridiculous extremes that the first week of each year hails as "Week of the Week," designed to "call attention to all the weeks of importance in the forthcoming year," according to Chase's Annual Events.

Today marks the beginning of a week that, after the work of some well-meaning but misguided neo-conservatives, has unfortunately become necessary. September 22-28 has been dubbed National Banned Book Week by national literary types, including the American Library Association and the American Book Sellers Association. Several events will be conducted on campus this week to inform students and faculty about the dangerously realistic possibilities of censorship and its advocates.

This week also marks an anniversary, albeit one that lacks spectacle but is noteworthy. It was 296 years ago this Thursday that Benjamin Harris put his neck on the line and his opinions in print. Harris published the U.S.' first newspaper, Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic, in Boston on Sept. 25, 1690 — under the threat of censorship and possible

arrest by Massachusetts authorities.

The nation has traveled full circle. Whereas the pariahs in the debate over free speech three centuries ago were fighting for the creation of First Amendment rights, a small but vocal handful now strives to limit the exposure and discussion of ideas. For example, a county school board in Kentucky voted last week to return William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* to school library shelves. The book had been pulled three weeks ago after one parent objected to the book's references to abortion and use of profanity.

Other works that are not only informative but constructive in personal development fall prey to the wrath of book banners. These censors can only find fault with the issues dealt with in books such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or *Rosemary's Baby*. As a typical argument goes, these heady subjects are only products of evil and simply perpetuate society's immorality.

The free exchange of ideas promotes thought and challenges the individual. As the groundswell of support for this intolerance slowly strengthens while the rest of the American public takes its basic civil liberties more and more for granted, stronger efforts must be employed to protect them. Maintenance of these rights is essential to avoid slipping into an Orwellian abyss.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Tar Heel Forum

Human error a risk to nuclear future

David Starnes
 Guest Writer

Since CASH's protest last Monday morning and the debate over a testing waiver for Shearon Harris, the concerns of the letters and columns in The Daily Tar Heel have shifted somewhat. Even though drinking rights, homosexual rights and ethics in American foreign policy are still favorite campus controversies, nuclear power is a grave issue to the residents of North Carolina. It is one fraught with danger and growing more pressing each day that Shearon Harris moves closer to active operation.

The true dangers of nuclear power were revealed on April 26 at Chernobyl, in what has proven a classic example of man and technology unable to control what they had wrought. This nuclear "incident" was truly a "worst-case scenario," a horrifying indication of the magnitude of destruction that a nuclear accident entails. Proponents of nuclear energy dismiss Chernobyl as the result of crude technology and worker ineptitude, yet the design of Chernobyl's water-cooled, graphite reactor is still considered the safest in the industry today. The only significant addition in the last few years has been the containment shell, which designers admit could only serve in case of a leak and would prove useless in the event of a major failure. At any rate, the emphasis seems to be on the idea that an accident such as Chernobyl could never happen here in America, where our technology is more "advanced" and our workers more "professional."

Don't believe it for a moment. A Nuclear Regulatory Commission report gives the chances of an occurrence of a nuclear accident similar to or worse than Three Mile Island in the next twenty years at 45%, or nearly even odds. Even those who argue the

statistic claim that nuclear safety is just too uncertain a prospect to accurately judge. A short history of failures in American nuclear power plants is thoroughly convincing evidence.

Since Three Mile Island, which itself ranks as the worst accident in American nuclear energy history, the industry has hardly had the glowing service record that caution, one would think, should have demanded. On Aug. 7, 1979, 1,000 people were contaminated in Erwin, Tenn. by a uranium spill. On Feb. 11, 1981, eight workers were contaminated at the Sequoyah 1 plant, where 110,000 gallons of radioactive water leaked into a containment vessel. On June 9, 1985, at least 16 equipment failures and worker mistakes began a chain reaction similar to Three Mile Island, halted only by auxiliary water pumps. And on Jan. 4 of this year, one worker was killed and 100 hospitalized when a cylinder of uranium hexafluoride was improperly heated at McGee Nuclear Power Plant in Gore, Oklahoma.

This list details some of those accidents involving injury, and it can easily be amended to include insult. For instance, at the Diablo Canyon plant, it was discovered that the site rested atop a geographical fault, and in attempting to reinforce the structure, blueprints were reversed and supports installed backwards. To this day, the plant remains unable to withstand a severe earthquake and operates on the theory that one simply will not occur.

Perhaps the worst record of all, though, belongs to the infamous Tennessee Valley Authority and its five plants, all currently inoperative. Plagued by workers pushing wrong buttons and leaving warning panels unattended, TVA nonetheless continued operations, until at Browns Ferry Nuclear Power Plant in Athens, Ala., a worker who didn't have a flashlight inspected electrical wires with a candle, starting a nearly disastrous fire in the highly flammable insulation. It climaxed years of suspect safety standards and worker controls, but the greatest loss suffered by TVA and the public came in the form of tax dollars, as billions of dollars was lost in what amounted to an energy experiment. TVA plants will not run again until 1989, if at all, and even when they were in "operation" they had difficulty running at capacity long enough to contribute to the area's energy supply. TVA hoped to rely upon an advancing science to create a safe, effective energy supply, a hope that, along with the technology, failed miserably.

Indeed, one wonders if in the area of nuclear energy, technology can succeed. The rule on nuclear power seems to be that no one is quite sure how safe it is, and no matter how hard one tries, it can never be safe from human fallibility. The more modern plants may be equipped with backup emergency systems and systems yet behind those, but all told, it is a disturbing admission that they are needed. And, as was demonstrated at Chernobyl, man can only fly in the face of reason for the pursuit of progress so long before disaster strikes.

David Starnes is a freshman English and history major from Huntsville, Ala.

Diverse dignity

To the editor:

This past summer a group of concerned students formed the Anti-Discrimination Coalition, seeking to create more diversity and tolerance at UNC. We are working to eliminate forms of social and institutional prejudice so that all members of the University can live in dignity, free from fear of discrimination.

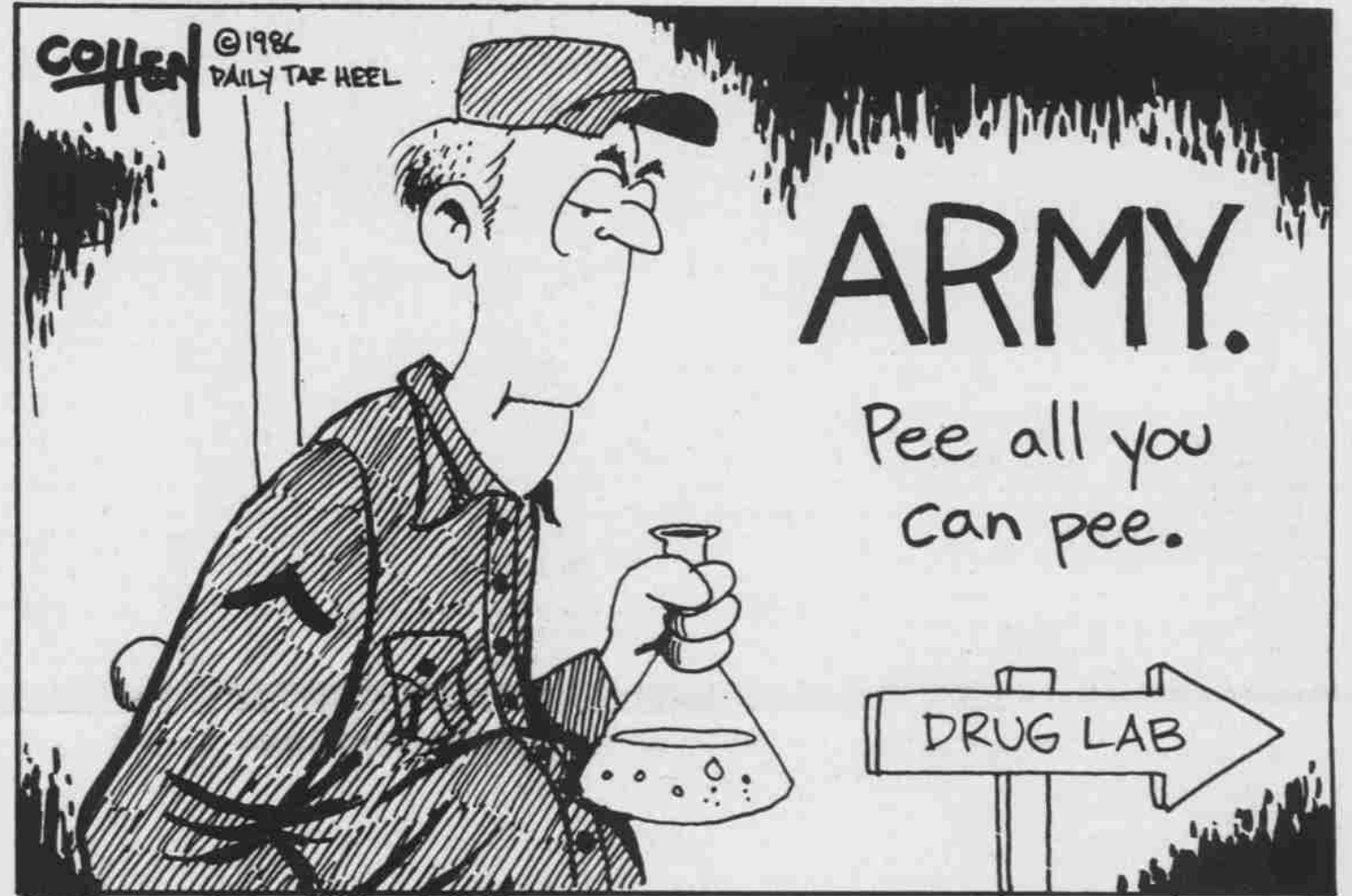
We have sensed that this campus has become increasingly intolerant of political, religious and social differences. Examples of this certainly include the recent attacks that some students have launched against the Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association.

We believe that for all students, staff and faculty to develop to the fullest potential, we must learn and work in an environment that encourages diversity and tolerance, protecting the civil rights of all individuals. The University currently states that it is "committed to the equality of educational opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or handicap." We believe that discrimination on these bases does exist in some forms on this campus, and we are working to review and evaluate the University's policies and practices so that we can work to help the University achieve its stated objectives.

One of the goals of the ADC is to amend the UNC non-discrimination policy to include sexual/affectional orientation. We anticipate that as our coalition continues to grow, act and receive attention, the debate on campus may become heated. Issues that challenge values will almost necessarily pull at emotions. We know that our efforts have the potential to polarize this campus and that this could be counterproductive to our goal to minimize intolerance. We are challenging the campus to engage in mature dialogue on this issue.

We want to stress that we are working to eliminate many forms of discrimination. Amending the University's policy to include protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual/affectional preference is a unique goal simply because that group is not yet protected.

We sincerely want to work with the University on these issues. Thankfully, there are many organizations that have goals and values similar to ours. We do not claim to be the only people working on these issues. Some of these people are the same few that other students and staff have looked over the past several years every time a "minority" issue has surfaced. We hope that the ADC will not burden these people with "one more committee." By sharing resources and working together, we can spread the work and burden; we have ideas, resources and a commitment to work hard. We want the University to know



Letters

that this is a serious priority for many students.

We believe that the American ideals of individual freedom, liberty and responsibility for one's own actions support our claim that all human beings deserve fair and equitable treatment.

Any person who is interested in learning more about the ADC is urged to contact us through Box 40 of the Union or to come to our next meeting, Monday, Sept. 29.

MADLYN C. MORREALE
 Senior
 Public Policy Analysis/Physics

MICHAEL R. NELSON
 Senior
 Political Science

Violent tale

To the editor:

I am writing because the story I have to tell was absent from any local newspaper and it ultimately affects campus security.

The incident occurred at University Square at about 2:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 7. I and a handful of others witnessed the brutal attack of three young men by a seemingly teen-age black man wielding a billy club.

The first victim was a 16-year-old male who was out with an older-looking friend. By the time my friends and I got to him, the assailant and his four buddies had backed off and began congratulating themselves. The 16-year-old had a serious gash behind his ear. He and his friend or brother then left, presumably to seek hospital care.

While one member of our group went to call the police, the rest of us kept an eye on the attacker and his friends. Shortly, two men, who seemed about 20, approached the attacker's group. The two appeared to be friends of the group at first, but suddenly one of them was hit on the head with a billy club. He ran.

The other man tried to reason with the group, but he was hit in the face with the club. He was hit at least once more as I ran to a nearby phone and told the police to hurry.

Shortly after that, the second victim then staggered toward our group. We got rags for him to stop his bleeding nose, which was clearly broken. Behind his ear was a gash that went from his ear lobe nearly to the top of his head. Of course, we called an ambulance for him.

I've witnessed plenty of violence both on TV and in the real world, being from a big city and having worked at an inner-city hospital. But I've never seen anything as violent and gruesome as this totally unprovoked crime.

The reason I haven't spared the gory details is because I want to point out the severity of this act of violence. Somehow the town of Chapel Hill and the students of UNC should have been notified.

Nobody wants to feel that UNC is New York City. Maybe University and Chapel Hill police should step up security a bit. I do hope the town will post a police officer at the University Square.

ELIZABETH DICKMAN
 Senior
 English

Fairness needed

To the editor:

The rejection of Marty Leary for a position on the Food Service Advisory Committee is a distasteful act by University administrators.

Leary, an honors student in history and a distinguished member of the history department's Undergraduate Studies Committee, did the campus a real service last year by bringing attention to the abuses perpetrated by ARA both against customers and employees.

When Marriott took over from ARA in the spring, the company, either by design or

inattention, neglected to rehire workers who had loyally served the University community for over 20 years. Leary was one of a handful of students who fought successfully to get these jobs back. A caring person with a critical mind but gentle style, Leary is exactly the sort of representative we ought to treasure in positions of University responsibility.

Charles C. Antle, associate vice chancellor for business and finance, would prefer not to make labor-management relations "a big campus issue." But donning a blindfold is surely no way to solve problems. At the Defense Department and many corporations, we are used to the rough treatment accorded the "whistleblower." We expect better from this university.

LEON FINK
 Associate Professor
 History

Playboy twisted

To the editor:

I want to respond to Curtis Hedgepeth's Sept. 17th letter, "Koop out of it." Hedgepeth says, "as far as Playboy and the like are concerned, I think they're okay." I disagree.

One of the problems with pornography is that it objectifies women. Pornography makes women things to be owned and controlled by men and infers that this is rightfully so. Playboy is considerably more subtle than some raunchier publications, but the objectification is certainly there.

The bow around the model's neck or the ribbon falling gracefully across her waist makes her a pretty present to be opened and owned by men. The method is less disgusting than methods used by other "men's magazines" but the result is the same.

JOY MARCUM
 Graduate
 Social Work