

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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Smith suspension shows class

Dean Smith could've caught a lot of flak had UNC lost its basketball game against UCLA Sunday night. The coach suspended junior J.R. Reid and junior redshirt Rodney Hyatt for one game after they violated curfew by "a few minutes" Friday night. UNC won, so Smith escaped criticism — but regardless of the outcome, his decision was commendable.

Reid and Hyatt went out after the UNC victory over Southern in the first round of the NCAA tournament and did not return until after 1 a.m. The team curfew is 1 a.m. two nights before a game and midnight the night before a game.

The suspension came as a shock to many fans who were eager to see the Tar Heels advance in the tournament, and it certainly shocked Reid, who was anxious to play against the much-improved UCLA team.

Smith has taken disciplinary action against his players, including Reid, in the past. Reid and Steve Bucknall were not allowed to dress out for the 1987 season opening game against Syracuse because of a scuffle at a Raleigh nightclub. Even though it was a big game between two pre-season favorites, it was early in the season, and the loss of the two players did not affect the entire season.

But Sunday's UCLA game was

extremely important. The Tar Heels embarrassed the Bruins earlier in the season by handing them their worst loss in history, and the matured Bruins wanted revenge.

The pressure on Smith to win is incredible. Though he has earned the respect of virtually everyone in and out of the basketball world, years of success can be easily forgotten, as former Dallas Cowboy coach Tom Landry recently discovered.

Though Smith is not in any danger of being fired, his actions Saturday undoubtedly annoyed and even alarmed a large number of Tar Heel fans. But his decision demonstrates firm commitment to developing responsibility among his players.

The rules governing the players are made by the seniors on the team, and they were all consulted before Smith made the suspension. Reid and Hyatt clearly broke the rules and should suffer the consequences.

Despite the significance of the game and the importance of a player like Reid, Smith enforced a rule which could have easily been overlooked. By sticking to the rules which were clearly spelled out to all players at the beginning of the year, Smith has increased the integrity of his already worshipped basketball program. — **Chris Landgraaf**

Rifle ban barely enough

In what appeared to be an abrupt policy reversal by the Bush administration, the government has banned imports of semiautomatic assault rifles indefinitely, pending a review of whether the weapons are being used for sporting purposes. While this is a step in the right direction, it is hardly sufficient, and the motives behind the decision are questionable.

The ban was announced by drug czar William Bennett, who apparently lobbied President Bush hard for the decision. Bush, a member for life of the National Rifle Association, previously said he would not impose any bans on semiautomatic rifles in a year in which requests to import the weapons are already triple the number for all of 1988.

This ban may not last, because the White House is calling it only a "review" of importation policy subject to change in the future. The ban only stops the importation of foreign-made weapons, doing nothing to hinder the production of domestic models or remove the estimated 88,000 weapons already in the hands of private owners.

The decision is a blow to the NRA, which fought a losing battle against a similar measure in California. The group has said it supports the government's review because it would put a stop to the "media hysteria" surround-

ing the issue, although it is unlikely to support a permanent ban. But even the NRA admits that a distinction between semiautomatic "assault" rifles and sporting weapons would be difficult to make, so the review proposed by the administration is not feasible.

The ban is also tenuous because it seems to be politically motivated. The Republican Party is reeling after the rejection of John Tower as nominee for defense secretary, and the party wants to regain its momentum. Finally, Republicans are responding to public opinion polls that show the country strongly in favor of controls over semiautomatic weapons. Realizing that assault rifles are associated with drug traffickers and violent crime, even the most conservative politicians should find it difficult to oppose the ban — at least for now.

As far as it goes, the ban is a commendable effort to fight the proliferation of weapons this country has seen recently. But a complete and comprehensive ban on the production, sale and use of all semiautomatic assault rifles is the only logical solution to the subjective process of determining who uses semiautomatic rifles for sport and who uses them as weapons. — **William Taggart**

the last word

Just about every day, those of us who work on the editorial page get a phone call or two from anxious letter writers, eager to know when their letters will be published. Although we frequently run a brief letters policy as a part of our Readers Forum, we realize writers want to know the odds of getting printed before taking the time to produce a typed, double-spaced manifesto to drop in the little green box just outside the DTH's door.

Editor Sharon Keschull and editorial page editors Louis Bissette and I decide early each afternoon which letters to run. We try to run as many different letters as possible and to present a wide cross section of views.

While we welcome letters expressing diverse opinions, we do have some criteria that we stick to when deciding whether to run a letter. We do not run hand-written or anonymous letters. Nor do we run personal attacks on people; criticism of a person's actions is one thing, but we give no space to name-calling.

Most of the letters we get adhere to those standards, leaving us with numerous letters daily that are worthy of ink and newsprint. Due to space limitations, however, only about half of the letters we receive actually appear in print. This is a pretty good track record, considering that many newspapers only print 20 percent to 30 percent of the letters they receive.

Choosing from the "eligible" letters can be difficult, but when we make our decision,

we consider whether the issue is timely, how much attention it has already received on the editorial page, whether it is an issue of which readers need to be aware, and how big of a "hole" we have to fill.

How well the letter is written also matters in our choices. Well-written letters express an idea or opinion clearly and intelligently. While we do reserve the right to edit letters, this usually means simply correcting grammatical or spelling errors or cutting a few lines to make the letter fit the page. We cannot and will not rewrite a letter just to clarify the point.

Once we've decided what to print, one of us will always verify letters — we don't want to print letters under assumed names. But a call to verify the letter is no guarantee that it will run — we will never promise to run a letter. Writers can call to check that their letter was received, but we cannot guarantee anything.

Finally, despite our best efforts, sometimes good letters never make it to the editorial page. A letter that doesn't run right after we receive it may still be used in the next few weeks, but eventually it loses its timeliness.

Don't let any of this discourage you from writing a letter to the editor the next time something inspires you to share your opinion with your fellow DTH readers. It's definitely worth the time — after all, opinions are what the editorial page is all about. And we do value your opinions. — **Mary Jo Dunnington**

Readers' Forum

Justice not in sight for average workers

To the editor:

In his letter to the editor March 9, Lee Newcomb expressed support for the Bush administration's decision not to intervene in the management-labor dispute at Eastern Airlines. While Mr. Newcomb is certainly entitled to his opinion, I feel the need to respond to some of his contradictions.

As is typical of Americans, especially in this Reagan and post-Reagan era, the unions are portrayed as bad guys who betray their members and, in the bargain, make life difficult for the rest of us. It would be easy enough, I suppose, to point out a number of examples to satisfy this interpretation; at the same time, however, I believe it is a fundamentally bad reading of history to find this to be the final judgment of American labor organizations.

My sense is that if we must find bad guys, they are more recognizable by their

pin-striped suits and boardroom seats than by their blue collars or banners expressing working class unity. Our basic history texts do not do justice to the actual events which mark the trials of workers in this country. Much mention is made of strike disruptions and the like, but little is made of employee lock-outs, management-inspired racial and ethnic tensions, horrendous working conditions, starvation wages, work-related diseases and child labor, while such "unnecessary" extras as security, dignity and meaningfulness are trivialized.

These conditions have long been supported by the political system in this country, often to the point of using official force to maintain the status quo. Adherents of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* sometimes forget that basic requirements of our liberal economic structure are provided or supported by the political sphere — for example, the legal code, law and order, the monetary system, fiscal policy, etc. In

more specific cases, this doctrine has perhaps been honored in the breach as often as in practice; its application has been rather selective over the course of time, and often against the interests of workers.

The Eastern employees are tired of dealing with incompetent management which is all too willing to redress its mistakes at the expense of the workers. Frank Lorenzo, with his emphasis on breaking the unions rather than trying to put the airline back on its feet, has simply been the focus needed to rally the workers in support of just demands long overdue.

Will justice never roll down like waters for the average worker in this country, or has this too become subject to "trickle down"?

HUGH SINGERLINE
Graduate
Political science

Respect goes both ways

To the editor:

We agree that in the incident Mia Davis (DTH, March 9) and her sisters endured while performing the Greek rite "The Death March," the racial slurs and physical violence should never have occurred. Certainly we would never condone these actions under any circumstance.

However, if respect is "due courtesy or tolerance for things I may or may not understand," please educate us. Why do some fraternities and sororities insist on interrupting our studies or waking us at all hours of the night and morning with dancing, singing or chanting? No one minds a good show, and few would be disrespectful to a group participating in a "sentimental and sacred" event if it were done within our hearing at a time other than "12:40 a.m."

Perhaps Miss Davis and her sisters, as well as other Greeks who participate in this sort of event should reconsider the time of night at which they begin their ceremonies. And perhaps, too, they should rephrase their definition of "respect" to include the idea that showing respect for others does not mean giving up one's own right to study or sleep in peace and quiet in one's own room.

BRENT WALSTON
Sophomore
Education

MINDY STINNER
Junior
Education

Peepholes not necessary

To the editor:

The \$10,000 going to waste for gates around the arboretum is nothing compared to the cost of installing peepholes in dorm doors. Just like the gates around the arboretum, installing 3,400 peepholes in dorm room doors appears to be a good idea. However, once the cost of such an undertaking is considered, this good idea turns into an extremely expensive one. According to the housing department, the cost per door, including labor, is \$5. This works out to be \$17,000. Spending \$17,000 and 850 hours (15 minutes/door x 3,400 doors) to install peepholes is ridiculous, since most college students are smart enough to ask who's at the door before they open it. They are also smart enough not to open the door for strangers. My apartment door does not have a peephole, and I have no prob-



Sister Sam

lem asking who's at the door before opening it.

The age-old practice of asking who's at the door before opening it has apparently worked very well up to this point. According to a fairly recent DTH article, Kathleen Benzaquin, the associate dean of students, knows of no reported rapes in UNC dorm rooms. And though "dorm rooms are thought to be the frequent site of date or acquaintance rape," it should be blatantly obvious to anyone that peepholes will not prevent rapes when the victim knows her attacker.

I suspect the main reason for the installation of the peepholes in dorm doors and the gates around the arboretum is to lessen the school's liability from suit-happy students who might sue UNC if they were raped or assaulted. It's sad that the University has to spend \$27,000 to protect itself from students who don't have the common sense not to walk in unlit places at night or to ask who's at the door before opening it. Neither peepholes nor gates will save any lives or prevent any rapes. People who let strangers into their room now will continue to do so, and people who cut through the arboretum at night will continue to do so. The only thing the peepholes and gates will help prevent is a successful lawsuit.

JIM HOCK
Senior
Journalism

Intervention sometimes good

To the editor:

In a March 9 letter, Lee Newcomb makes the claim that *laissez-faire* "is and has been the

fundamental doctrine of the American economy for over 200 years." We're not economists majors and so we're not sure if this is true or not. However, we do know that there have been instances where the U.S. government intervened in economic matters.

For example, the government intervenes in the marketplace of secondary education. Those of us who attend state-supported schools tend to think that this is a good thing. Perhaps Newcomb feels that such obvious violation of *laissez-faire* is a bad idea. Perhaps Newcomb would rather try to get an education in the open marketplace, seeing as public education is jeopardizing the right to free competition for schools like Duke and Harvard. Imagine how low private college tuition would be in a perfect, unsubsidized educational marketplace, free of nasty government interference!

Newcomb also criticizes the AFL-CIO for being self-centered. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* states that there's nothing wrong with self-centeredness. The theory is that if each member of a society acts in his or her self-interest, then benefits will naturally flow to everyone. Perhaps Newcomb should reread "The Wealth of Nations" and check out a history book or two as well. The Great Depression, for instance, is a well-documented example of the marketplace's potential for spectacular failure, where the total collapse of Western civilization was prevented only by government intervention.

potential for sabotage, apparently on the part of union members. In the interest of relevance and fairness, we

won't bring up the violence perpetrated by management in the history of labor relations. But we'd like to point out that there has been no mention of sabotage by the union and it's quite unfair to accuse them of planning any, unless Newcomb has some evidence that isn't available to the rest of us.

True, the AFL-CIO is in a position to perpetrate sabotage, if they want to, but who says they want to? George Bush is in a position to blow up the world in five minutes, if he wants to. However, we wouldn't dream of accusing him of wanting to, even for the "moment of glory" Newcomb says the union is after.

ARTIE SPARROW
Senior
Undecided

T. RISTIN COOKS
Junior
Journalism

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters to the editor, please follow these guidelines:

■ All letters must be signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter.

■ All letters must be typed and double-spaced, for ease of editing.

■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.

■ Place letters in the box marked "Letters to the Editor" outside the DTH office in the Student Union.

Criticism of Congress unclear, unfounded

To the editor:

I am writing in response to the March 7 editorial "Congress constricts Yack." The opinion in this article is that the Student Congress does not have the right to tell the Yackety Yack what to print. I find it hard to believe that an editorial stating the board's opinion is so unclear and ignores important questions that the reader may have.

First of all, the board says "There is a fine line between responsible financial influence and editorial control." The board goes on to say that Congress crossed that line by decreasing funding of the Yackety Yack. Here, the board makes the false assumption that the audience agrees with it on where the fine line is between financial influence and editorial control. This line may be drawn in different places depending on how much of the funding comes from Congress, which leads to my next point.

The board leaves out some figures that are essential to this editorial. For example, it does not tell the reader what percentage of the Yackety Yack's funding comes from Student Congress. Since the reader does not know this, he is unable to establish

a position on the issue. For example, if the Student Congress funds 10 percent of the Yack, then it would be ridiculous for it to oversee the printing; however, if it funds 90 percent, it is in more of a position to tell the yearbook what to do. Also, the editorial talks about "the predominance of white Greek organizations at the expense of smaller, more diverse groups." Here, the reader wants to know the ratio between white Greek groups and smaller, more diverse ones. Figures such as these would be very helpful in convincing the reader.

Later, the board states that "the book isn't what Congress thinks it should be." This statement does not support the thesis because it is not followed by details; therefore, the reader is left clueless as to what Congress thinks the book should be. Also, it implies that Student Congress is using its funding power to coerce the Yackety Yack into printing what it says.

Unclear statements within the editorial cause confusion and make the argument even less convincing. For instance: "Just because the Yack must charge for its publication does not mean Congress should tell it what to do with that money."

The board is actually trying to say that just because Student Congress funds the book does not mean it can tell them what to print, but the wording of the statement is hard to understand.

Also, the board overlooks an obvious analogy, therefore making this argument weak. The federal government funds the roads and for this reason, it oversees the maintenance, building and usage of the roads. The board needs to tell why the funding of roads is any different from funding the Yack.

Though the editorial has a strong point, the argument is weakened by vague statements and false assumptions. The readers are not given enough information to make their own decisions, which makes the argument very one-sided. The function of the board is to inform the readers and give them a chance to agree or disagree with the board's opinion.

LISA BARBOUR
Freshman
Undecided