

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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When a majority is a minority

Stephanie Bass, a former aide to former Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt, recalled a strategy meeting during Hunt's 1984 Senate campaign, in which the governor turned to Bass — the only woman in the room — and asked, "What do women think?"

This quote represents the attitude of many male politicians toward women in politics, and women are tired of it. They are especially tired of being treated like a special interest group in North Carolina, because women are a majority of the population in this state.

This is why women in the state legislature, primarily Democrats, are so vocally protesting their low status in the party. When state party Chairman Lawrence Davis suggested earlier this year that the party reconsider its stance on abortion, more than 50 women marched to state party headquarters to show their disagreement. And last Saturday, they urged that the party's executive council ensure that women are on statewide tickets in 1990 and 1992.

North Carolina is one of only three states in this country that has never elected a woman to a statewide executive office or to a full term in Congress. Even Virginia, that last great bastion of white male supremacy, elected a black man as lieutenant governor and a white woman as attorney general in 1986.

The state Democratic Party must bear the brunt of the conflict because

the current dearth of women office-holders is largely its responsibility. Republican women, oddly enough, have a better chance of being nominated for statewide office than Democrats because their party is the challenger and has less to lose by putting female candidates on the ticket. Several female candidates from both parties have run successful campaigns for seats in the state legislature, but not for statewide offices.

For women to be able to run and win, they must first run and lose. But each party's hold on the state is so tenuous right now that neither is willing to offer seats to women candidates — sacrificial lambs, if you will — to lose for the greater good.

But they must. It is entirely possible that there are more than a few men and women living in this state who believe women have no place in politics — that they only belong at home in the proverbial kitchen. Those people are wrong. There can be no doubt about it.

Perhaps these sexist beliefs can only be expected from a state that is represented by Jesse Helms, a state where it is still legal for a man to rape his wife. But it's hard to believe that a state with a female majority is unable even to take a stab at fairly representing that majority among its elected officials. Both parties must accept their obligation to change this, and change it by 1990 — the next election. — Kimberly Edens

Dealing with a sticky subject

The state Senate Judiciary Committee passed a bill which would give lawmakers the power to ban bumper stickers they consider indecent. When the bill comes before the full Senate, it must be opposed because it would blatantly infringe on North Carolinians' right to free speech.

Sen. Aaron Plyler, D-Union, wants all profanity removed from bumper stickers, saying they are in bad taste and can adversely influence minors. The bill would ban stickers containing "indecent words describing sexual acts, excretory functions, or parts of the human body or a visual depiction which is harmful to minors." Senate leaders have said the bill will probably pass because the public feels strongly about it.

There are undoubtedly many bumper stickers which are offensive and obnoxious, and it would be nice if people would exercise good taste when displaying bumper stickers. But the bill clearly violates First Amendment rights and sets a dangerous precedent. The state has no right to legislate taste or decide what slogans on bumper stickers are harmful to minors. Suggested amendments to the bill include judging obscenity based on

"prevailing community standards" among adults, but who determines what the prevailing standards are?

In this age of Rambo and violent television, bumper stickers are not likely to seriously affect minors. And impressionable children will not read an indecent bumper sticker outside the presence of an adult, since most stickers are seen while in the car. If questions arise, parents should be able to answer them.

If the bill passes, the legislature would have the jurisdiction to determine what is in good taste and what is decent. Under these conditions, bumper stickers which simply express radical ideas or criticisms of the government could be banned because they were deemed harmful to minors. The law could also likely be extended to censor items such as T-shirts and hats. States would have a hard time deciding where the intervention would stop. Censorship may seem innocuous, but its implications can be huge.

Unfortunately, people will choose to display "indecent" expressions in public, and even if it seems unpleasant, the right to free speech must be protected, even in extreme cases. — Chris Landgraff

Telling UNC cashiers where to park it

First of all, I'd like to know who peed in the Fruit Loops of the folks in charge of UNC parking this week. Did anybody see what I saw Monday? Legions upon legions of tow trucks descended upon the town like the ancient armies of Rome, thousands of guys in polyester jumpsuits with the name Elmo embroidered on the front pocket on a college Children's Crusade to convert the heathens to the eternal truth of UNC parking regulations. And of course, all their trusty devil's apprentices, the student parking lot lizards in their day-glo orange Red Lobster bibs, were out in full force — flocking like fluorescent ants that carry twice their body weight in carbon parking tickets — a banner day for the forces of good over evil!

Ironically, Monday was one of the few days this year when I didn't get a ticket, but that was probably because the challenge for them was gone. Either that, or they were still awash in the glow of the stunt they pulled last week when I parked in a "State Owned Service Vehicles Only until 7:00" spot at 6:50. I had put my hazard lights on since I was only going to be a few minutes, and since I knew how anal those parking lot lizards can be — but they had completely outdone themselves when I returned. Some hodad wearing the bib was crouched over my Volkswagen, furiously writing on his carbon clipboard like he was composing my automotive requiem, cackling with fire in his eyes.

"Now wait a minute," I said. "I was only gone for three minutes and I had my blinkers on."

"Tell it to 'th' judge," he said. God, I hate it when people say that.

"Look, I realize that this is your job and all, and I'm sure that you pay for your meal plan and your botany textbook with all the money you rake in from making other people's lives miserable, but it is a scant few minutes away from seven o'clock, and I think you could spare . . ."

"Th' tow truck's already comin'."

"What? Have you got a Cellular One on your bicycle, for god's sake?"

"Yer parked in a North Carolina Official Space," he announced pompously. "By law, I have to keep you from obstructin' state officials."

"What, in case Jim Martin has to use the Union potty real bad?"

Ian Williams Wednesday's Child

"Plus," he went on, unamused, "you are what we call a Repeat Offender. So you're just gonna have to wait here for the tow trucks to come."

"Yeah, right. And could you drive bamboo shoots underneath my fingernails while I'm waiting too? Forget it!"

So, before I left, he kindly explained to me how I was going to get a citation for being a repeat offender and for the tow truck no matter what: which basically means I got hosed thrice — I got a ticket, a ticket for getting a ticket, and I paid for a tow truck that existed only hypothetically. And ya know, I sure learned my lesson, and gosh if I'm not liable to think twice about messing with that megalith of power and entertainment that all the kids at home call the UNC parking department. Ha!

What is it about this school that encourages that kind of petty bureaucracy? Are we students such bad little brats that we are going to have to sit at an emotional kiddie table for the rest of our college existence?

The worst example of this sort of feudal oppression is made painfully obvious in the wild preregistration process on the savannahs of Chapel Hill. It seems you can't take a whiz during preregistration unless the College of Arts and Sciences approves it, and even then they'll act like they're doing you a favor by even getting your folder.

I stood in the rain, and then I stood in the humid, slime-soaked stairwell of Hanes Hall awaiting my redemption at the pearly gates of the "Cashier Clearance" table for an hour and a half like a Dickens character begging for gruel. When I finally got to the front of the line, the lady filled me with interpersonal joy and warmth by calling me by my social security number.

"It seems you owe the cashier a little money," she said in a voice that sounded like a chain saw going through a metal pipe. "You're going to have to go to Bynum and get this straightened out."

"You mean I just waited in line to find out I have to wait in line?"

"Well," she giggled, "if you want to put it that way . . ."

So I slogged across the quad to Bynum through the drizzly tundra that has been this Carolina spring, and as I opened the doors to the cashier building, I was surrounded by the sights and moans of what looked like a L.L. Bean leper colony. Hundreds of kids with raingear dragging from their waists formed a single file line that wound its way in a labyrinth up and down staircases, around corridors and through janitorial spaces. All of the people looked at me with hollow-eyed despair, too drained to speak, mustering up the strength to advance six inches every five minutes. I found my spot at the end of the line, under a shelf holding a vat of ammonia in a work closet on the second floor.

An hour and three-quarters later, I was reading the subscription information in my Psychology Today magazine for the fifth time, when suddenly I advanced my next few inches and actually saw the light of my financial Messiah — Bynum basement, Carolina cash central! With the last of my strength, I stumbled into the office where there were two, count 'em, two cashiers serving the financial obligations of 22,000 students. Walking up to Agnes, I called myself by my social security number.

"Ah yes, Mr. Williams, that will be five dollars."

My mouth hung open. I started to shake. "Fi . . . five dollars?"

"That's right," she gently intoned.

"Five dollars? Do you mean to tell me I have waited all afternoon to pay UNC the amount of a kiddie meal at Shoney's? I can't graduate unless I give UNC enough to send Dean Boulton to a movie?"

"Well," she smiled, "if you put it that way . . ."

"Just tell me," I said, "please tell me what is that I'm paying for?"

"Let's see — five dollars . . . UNC parking. It seems you stopped your car in a No Parking spot in front of a State Owned Service Vehicle Only space."

I aged three years that day.

Ian Williams is a music and psychology major from Los Angeles who got a ticket while typing this damn column into the computer.

Readers' Forum

Letter proved cartoon's point

To the editor:

I am writing to comment on Tanya Person's response ("Comic strip in poor taste," April 7) to the April 3 comic strip "Herschel," in which he labors over a potential strip about black sororities. Ms. Person proceeded to blast the strip's author, Adam Cohen, claiming that he "indirectly" ridiculed the black Greek system, especially black sororities. Not only did she misunderstand Mr. Cohen's comic strip, but she also blew it entirely out of proportion.

If you would come out from behind your defensive wall, Ms. Person, you might realize that Mr. Cohen was only trying to make a non-specific statement: when a DTH cartoonist or editorialist simply mentions any campus organization, (s)he will undoubtedly see a negative response shortly thereafter. The comic strip would have meant the same if he had mentioned white sororities, the marching band, or the men's water polo club (now I'll probably get a letter from one of each). Thus, by writing your unnecessary letter, you even helped to prove Mr. Cohen's point. He probably appreciates that.

Please don't misunderstand me, also. I do not oppose any particular campus group or organization, including something "so sacred as Greekdom" (nice word coinage), which Ms. Person glorifies and defends to the death. But I wonder how it can be so sacred if she feels obligated to defend it so vehemently. Her letter alone suggests that this Greek system may not be as sacred as she thinks. Then again, no topic is sacred as far as I'm concerned.

So thanks, Ms. Person, for submitting your letter. In doing so, you made Mr. Cohen's comic strip funnier than it was in the first place. Yes, that's right, I was laughing, and I'm sure a lot of other people were, too.

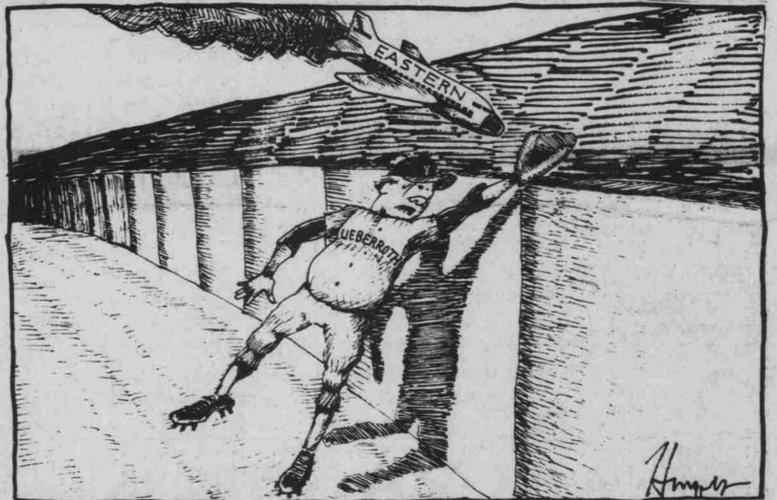
CHRIS BOWMAN
Junior
Psychology/pre-dental

These locks not key to safety

To the editor:

After learning in an April 7 Daily Tar Heel article of the housing department's tentative plans to install keyed bathroom locks in dorms all over campus, we'd like to encourage director Wayne Kuncl not to waste the money.

As residents of STOW, we



are particularly affected by the new locks recently placed on our bathroom doors to "increase the level of safety," according to Kuncl. We agree wholeheartedly that STOW residents need better security, but locking our bathrooms is not the way to achieve it.

It's true that a majority of females in STOW supported the idea before fall break. But the show of hands was taken at the end of long, mandatory security meetings, which frightened many residents with horror stories about dorm crimes around the United States.

We agree that sometimes we need to be scared for our own good. But most dorm crimes are thefts from a person's room. The point of the seminars was to encourage residents not to prop open doors to the buildings or to leave their rooms unlocked so that strangers

might enter. Keying the bathroom doors has little to do with this.

In addition, the doors may have locks on them, but they are not used very often. Residents find fiddling with a key to use the bathroom so inconvenient that someone nearly always props the door open. We don't know the cost of keying STOW's bathroom doors, but money which pays for something so seldom used is not wisely spent. Does this remind anyone of our peepholes?

Now, we are not attempting to discourage the housing department from trying other means to increase security. Resident safety is a very real need, especially for STOW, with its location in the corner of campus. But please don't waste the money locking bathrooms all over campus.

Start with securing the outside of the buildings. Lock the strangers out of our dorms, not residents out of our bathrooms!

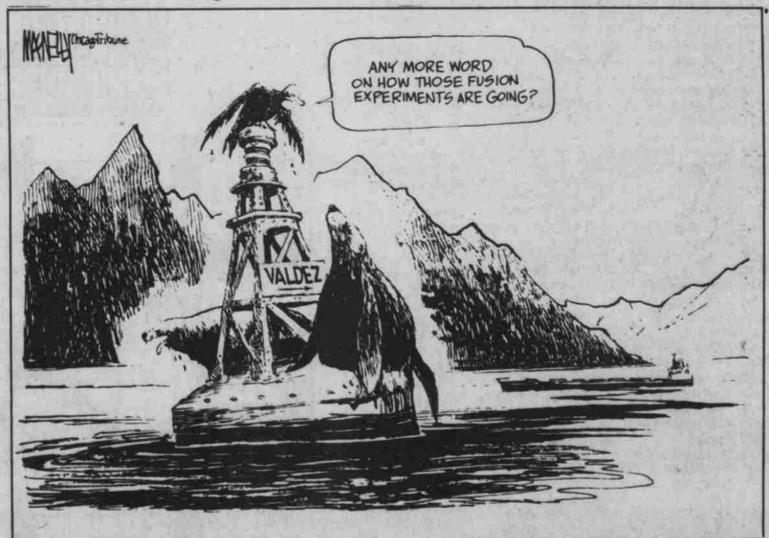
ASHLEY ARMSTRONG
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speech communication

LORI RAY
Sophomore
Physical therapy

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The Daily Tar Heel

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