

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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Bring rights out of the closet

Today is Blue Jeans Day, a day when wearing blue jeans is supposed to stand for support of gay rights. Before running home to change, however, think about what those blue jeans really mean.

Take a good look around campus. Many people are wearing shorts, khakis, skirts — anything but blue jeans. This is the one day of the year when most of UNC makes a conscious effort to leave the Levis and Generras in the closet, perhaps wishing that homosexuals would go back there themselves. The reactionary dress code for Blue Jeans Day stands in mute testimony to the attitudes towards homosexuality on this campus: hands-off tolerance at best, but nothing approaching acceptance.

Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association's Awareness Week traditionally ends with this "demonstration." Opponents justifiably argue that most people wear blue jeans out of ignorance, but in many ways they are missing the point.

Blue Jeans Day admittedly is not an accurate measure of student support on this campus, but it can force people wearing jeans to feel self-conscious — if only for a minute — giving them a sense of how many homosexuals spend their entire lives.

Taking amateurs to the hoop

The great tradition of international amateur athletics in the United States is in jeopardy. The FIBA, the international basketball federation, voted overwhelmingly last week to allow professionals to participate in the Olympics and other international competitions.

Individual countries must now choose whether to apply the proposal, which passed 56-13 despite U.S. opposition, to their own Olympic programs. For example, the American Basketball Association must decide if National Basketball Association players will play in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain.

Dave Gavitt, president of the ABA, was ecstatic about the vote. He predicted that the ABA would approve the eligibility change and even guaranteed a U.S. basketball gold medal at the 1992 Games.

But in their quest for Olympic domination, the advocates of professional athletic eligibility have lost sight of Olympic ideals. Admittedly, other countries — most notably the Soviet Union — have enjoyed an unfair advantage in world competition by fielding teams of athletes who are indeed professionals by Western standards. This inconsistency, however, should not obligate us to do the same.

The Olympic Games are an opportunity for American amateur athletes

to showcase their talents for the world. Competition is what counts; winning is of secondary importance. Isaiah Thomas expressed his concern that pro players would bring a "win-at-all-cost mentality" to international competition, and he's right.

UNC basketball coach Dean Smith was also disappointed with the decision, saying, "I'd rather have the excitement, the enthusiasm of a college player who is realizing the dream of making the Olympic team." Desire is indeed a large part of what makes the Olympics special, and an Associated Press poll suggests that NBA players as a whole are not overwhelmed by the chance to participate. Only 58 percent said they would be willing to play in the Games.

Even Michael Jordan, one of the NBA's most enthusiastic players, said he will not be suiting up for the U.S. team. Playing in the Olympics is not worth risking injury to a body worth millions of dollars or losing the little off-season recuperation time that pro players have.

Although no commitments have been made, it seems that professional eligibility in world competition may be just around the corner. The ABA should come to its senses before a proud tradition of amateur athletics in this country comes to an end. — Louis Bissette

Readers' Forum

Fetus at least deserves status of an animal

Michael Evans
 Guest Writer

In lieu of the animal rights movement, which seeks change in the present use of animals for scientific research and for profit by the fur industry, a fundamental precept among popular attitudes must occur in order to ensure the eventual success of this cause. That is, people must first begin to see animals as valuable creatures in their own right who possess the inalienable right to be free from suffering and death resulting from the specific purpose of furthering exclusively human concerns, ranging from dire medical needs to frivolous fashion.

With this re-orientation in the making of viewing the animal as a life form of substantial integrity which is protected from human activity (except for the purpose of self-defense in the case of an attack or in the pursuit of sustenance by way of nature's food chain — of which all creatures are a part, both human and non-human), this mindset should logically entail a re-examination of the present status of the biological anomaly, the human fetus. Given the raised conscious-

ness of those who advocate animal rights, there ought to follow that the criteria for basing any biological entity's right to freedom from suffering and death, resulting neither from self-defense nor a need for biological sustenance, should be extended beyond that which is human to that which is animal. No longer, therefore, should the pro-choice argument rest on the contention that a developing fetus is not yet human, but that the developing fetus is not yet animal.

If our culture is going to begin to recognize that it is wrong to make coats of rabbits or neurosurgical patients of rats and monkeys, then for the sake of our own consistency and authenticity of motive, we had also better re-examine and seek to determine not when a human fetus

becomes "human," but when it instead becomes "animal," according to our most accurate scientific definition, and then draw the line for justifiable termination at this point, lest mere personal gain at the expense of another life form characterize our treatment of the human fetus as it has characterized our treatment of (other) animals.

Given that this developmental sequence from fertilized zygote to biological entity on a par with that which we call animal likely occurs very early in human pregnancy, I would suggest that those concerned about the lives and welfare of exploited, helpless animals also seek to bring the human fetus into the fold when it has developed substantially enough to attain this status as well, and so elevate it from its present condition of endangerment to at least the rising level of the rat, monkey and rabbit.

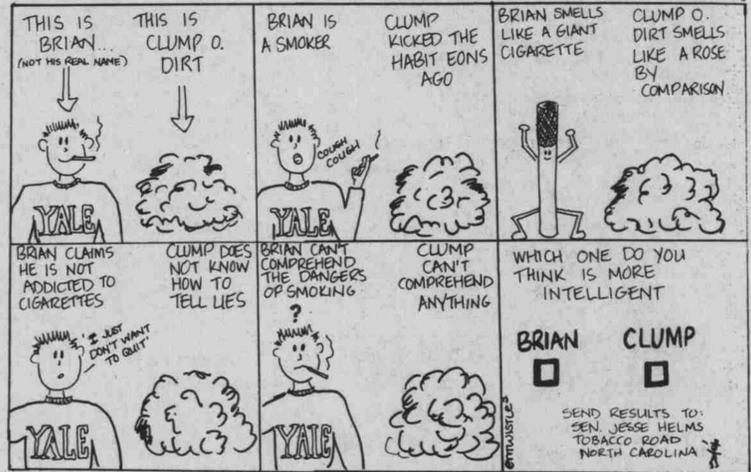
Michael Evans is a graduate student in education from Greensboro.

Preregistration tests patience

To the editor:

As one of many students frustrated with UNC's present adviser system, I was appalled to learn that the staff of Arts and Sciences advisers, obviously understaffed and overworked, does not extend its limited office hours during the week of preregistration. After waiting in line 20 minutes on two different days last week, I was answered with a delightful "Your adviser isn't taking anyone else today; her office hours end in 30 minutes." The first rejection was bearable; however, on my second day this reply was infuriating. Because I was unable, on account of my classes, to arrive any earlier the next day, I was again turned away. Now I am forced to ask the advice of other students and hope that I selected the courses I need. Why do our advisers not extend their inadequate office hours for the one week of preregistration, when we need their guidance the most? I am sure other students have also been turned away because of unavailable advisers, and, as a result, have made their course selections ignorantly.

AMY THORNE
 Sophomore
 International studies



Comic meant to be funny

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Tanya Person's letter concerning the Herschel comic strip ("Comic strip in poor taste," April 7) which she said was "ill-humored" in dealing with the black Greek system. Can you not take a joke? At the very beginning of the school year, Adam Cohen made fun of white sorority rush in a series of Herschel strips. Most of them were quite harsh, to say the least, but I could see the humor in his opinion.

As a member of a sorority, I consider Greek life very important, but I can understand why someone would laugh at the way formal sorority rush is handled. The point is that a joke is a joke. I'm sure that Mr. Cohen did not explicitly say anything bad about the black Greek system for fear of being labeled racist. Herschel is supposed to be funny, and my advice to Ms. Person is to lighten up. Being able to laugh at yourself is one of the noblest qualities you can possess.

LAURA-LEIGH GARDNER
 Sophomore
 RTVMP

All letters and columns must be signed by the author, with a limit of two signatures per letter or column. Name, year in school, major and phone number must be submitted. All letters must be typed, double-spaced on a 60-space line, for ease of editing. A maximum of 250 words is optimal. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity, and vulgarity. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.

Oil spill should show Bush's true self

To the editor:

I enjoyed Mike Soehnlein's analysis of the recent Exxon Valdez accident ("Oil spill an illustration of deeper problems," April 7). Mr. Soehnlein's elucidation of the implications for maritime shipping was clear and to the point. However, the release of 10 million gallons of oil into the pristine waters of the Prince William Sound invites even deeper investigation into the murky waters of policy-making that allowed the Valdez to be off the Alaskan coast in the first place.

Exxon retained Captain Joseph Hazelwood even after discovering that he had a drinking problem. After successfully completing an alcohol rehabilitation program, Hazelwood was back at the helm. Nine hours after the first gallon of oil began spewing from the Valdez, test results showed that Hazelwood's alcohol blood level was above the limit set by the Coast Guard. Exxon has promised that they will no longer employ captains with substance abuse problems.

While taking out full page apologies in several publications such as Newsweek and The Washington Post, Exxon, which has more resources than any other American oil company, managed to recover less than 4 percent of the 240,000 barrels spilled. After it became evident that Exxon could not handle the cleanup, the operation was federalized. The oil slick has, of course, spread to the point that meaningful clean-up operations are impossible. According to Alaskan Gov. Steve Cowper, the amount of shoreline that has been inundated is equivalent to the entire California coast. A large part of the cleanup will consist of collecting dead fish, birds and animals as evidence for the still-rising flood of lawsuits that have been filed against Exxon and the various governmental agencies involved.

Indeed, the federal government is a partner in the negligence that led to the spill. According to the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Coast Guard is responsible for planning and monitoring spill containment procedures. The Coast Guard contracted the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company to handle oil spills in the Prince William Sound area. That company boasted that it could handle spills such as this one, even in adverse weather. The Coast Guard, along with the rest of the state of Alaska, believed it.

On a more disturbing level, The New York Times reported that the Interior Department censored warnings about the inadequacy of technology for cleaning up oil spills. Reports from several agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Fish and Wildlife Service,

were ignored in a final report issued outlining the risks involved in exploratory drilling. Rep. Mel Levine, D-Calif., obtained documents that show that high-level pressure was applied to keep the public unaware of the inherent dangers of increased off-shore drilling and shipping off the Californian coast.

J. Steven Griles, Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals (part of the Interior Department), upon seeing a memorandum from the Fish and Wildlife Service, complained that it could "... prove very damaging to this sale (of drilling rights)." As a result, certain sections of the FWS memo were ignored (they were said to be "irrelevant"), including this one: "Minerals and Management has inaccurately painted a picture of a routine operation with few potential impacts when in fact offshore development in Northern California is a high risk operation in rough seas, in a geologically unstable area, with potentially devastating impacts on coastal resources." Another FWS report, one that questioned the construction of a causeway to facilitate oil development in northern Alaska, was simply destroyed. Rep. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who brought the incident to public attention, said that the Interior Department wanted to "cover up the truth and drill at all costs."

Besides illustrating the extreme hazards involved in the handling of crude oil, the Valdez incident has also reminded many of the curious relationship that we Americans have with scarce resources. We are a country addicted to gas and oil. In addition, there are many wealthy and powerful people who make billions of dollars from the oil trade annually. Everybody wins.

Many experts predict that the world's oil resources will be depleted in 75 years. As major sources of oil dry up, oil companies have to go looking for new supplies: they go off-shore, off to Alaska and into national parks. Both the environmental and financial costs of recovering oil increase as supply dwindles and demand remains constant. Industry advocates and others support further exploration for U.S. oil to decrease American dependence upon foreign oil supplies.

That would make sense if the oil were earnestly being used to develop alternative sources of energy and conservation techniques. Several estimates indicate that raising the gas mileage for private cars from the present average of 27 miles per gallon to 40 miles per gallon would save the equivalent of estimated reserves beneath the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, 3.2 billion gallons of gas, in the first two years. The

Reagan administration slashed funds for energy conservation and alternative energy research and development. Reagan supported the opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a currently protected expanse of pure wilderness near Prudhoe Bay (from whence the Valdez oil originated). President Bush supports opening the ANWR for oil recovery.

If Bush, like Reagan, cuts funding for alternative energy development and energy efficiency, using up the Alaskan oil reserves makes little strategic sense. While more Alaskan oil would decrease American dependence on foreign oil in the short run, it would ultimately leave us begging foreign countries to satisfy our undiminished oil addiction. Researching, developing and switching to new energy sources requires significant amounts of fuel and considerable amounts of time; if we wait until we have run out of American oil to begin the changeover, we have waited too long. Then we will really be at the mercy of foreign oil producers. We will be forced to either accept life without oil, pay the prices demanded by foreign suppliers or go to war.

All too often American policy is reactive; that is, it reacts to a problem, instead of preventing it. In environmental matters this is particularly true. It is very difficult for a legislator to cast a vote which, though it might be scientifically justified, threatens to do anything but enhance the "quality of life," or income, of his constituents. Only after a graphic blunder like the Valdez spill do the majority of politicians get serious. Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner told Congress he thought that an "over-optimistic" attitude had existed before the spill. Now everyone has learned his lesson, right?

Wrong. President Bush still supports drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He claims that the Valdez spill is an entirely different matter than the drilling issue. In a way, he's right: we can prevent the development of the ANWR and save its delicate ecosystem; we can't save the Prince William Sound. The question before Bush is whether he wants to undermine our long-range strategic position by keeping oil prices low and thus feeding America's oil addiction, all the while increasing the chances of another disastrous spill. He campaigned as a Texas oil man. He also fashioned himself as environmentally concerned. His decision in the wake of the Valdez spill will allow the real George Bush to emerge.

BLAN HOLMAN
 Sophomore
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The Daily Tar Heel

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