

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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Reacting responsibly Protest fails to focus on discrimination

One of the most divisive issues on this campus — religion — came up again last week in an ugly way, when Student Congress Rep. Sam Bagenstos protested calling a Joyner Residence Hall gathering a "Christmas" party. Bagenstos was upset about the supposedly religious theme of last Thursday's party and the use of Residence Hall Association funds to buy a Christmas tree, saying that this promoted a specific religion improperly. While he was right to be upset about the exclusion of beliefs in the party's theme and the governmental support of that, Bagenstos took his complaints to the extreme.

Bagenstos had gone to RHA President Liz Jackson in November to request an amendment to the RHA constitution that would prohibit the use of association funds for religious activities. RHA passed the amendment, but the vote was so recent that many dormitory leaders were unaware of it. Rather than working things out with RHA, Bagenstos filed a complain with the Student Supreme Court, asking also for a restraining order to postpone the party.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Asa Bell denied hearing the case, pointing to a 1983 case that defined a religious event as one that has a primary purpose of converting a person through prayer or scripture reading. While the name of the party may have been insensitive to other religions and should have reflected a more general holiday theme, it was certainly not intended to convert people, or even to exclude.

Bagenstos, who is Jewish, had — both this year and last, when he expressed concern about Morrison's purchase of a Christmas tree — a reasonable complaint with RHA and its lack of notification of its officials. When he found out about the party Wednesday, Bagenstos called first the Joyner presidents and then Jackson. When Jackson was unable to get in touch with the presidents and stop the party or

board opinion

change its theme by noon Thursday, Bagenstos filed his complaint.

Bagenstos says he did not want to turn to the court but that he had no choice because of the time constraints. While his desire to stop the party was understandable, taking the case to court, rather than trying to work it out with RHA leaders, only detracted from his argument. In avoiding confrontation, his argument would have forced people to focus not on the court case but on the fact that people of other religions are offended by such symbols of Christmas and other Christian holidays.

To some, a Christmas tree is a secular symbol, not a symbol of Christianity. But to many non-Christians, the tree means Christmas, which connotes Christianity and is therefore offensive. Had the party been called a holiday party, with more of an end-of-the-semester/New Year's theme and no tree, more people may have felt welcome to attend. Bagenstos is right to want to sensitize people to this, especially since student fees were used for the tree.

But taking this case to the Supreme Court will not sensitize people; rather, it appears confrontational, even if Bagenstos felt he had no choice. Conquering discrimination of any kind requires tactful, calm negotiation and effort. Going to court creates hard feelings where none need exist.

Student Congress members have not exactly set a good example in how to avoid confrontation lately. This is the second case this semester that students have tried to bring before the Supreme Court; both times the matter could have been resolved in less antagonistic ways. In this case, as in the last, the concern was valid. But in forcing a showdown, Bagenstos has put the Supreme Court foremost in people's minds, rather than the need to be sensitive to differing views. As we near the end of the semester, we hope student leaders will alter this semester's confrontational tone, focusing more on diplomatic ways to resolve issues for the good of the campus.

Bumping basketball Shorten season to emphasize studies

Imagine a basketball season at UNC when the die-hard fan is unable to attend those nerve-racking, sweat-soaked matches against basketball powers such as Central Florida and Pepperdine. Those scantily-attended, low-profit games might be cut from the basketball schedule if a proposal from the Presidents' Commission of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to shorten the length of the basketball season is accepted. The proposal,

which will be presented before the NCAA in a January convention, calls for pushing the initial practice date back a month and lowering the number of basketball games from 28 to 25. While the proposal has the right motives to help alleviate the stress

of the sport seasons for the players, the actual numbers are too weak and should be altered to be truly effective.

According to last year's figures, the UNC men's varsity team played 37 games, a fairly hefty load. Just by looking at that week's hectic schedule for the team — starting with three games in the Maui Classic over the weekend, flying back to Chapel Hill by Tuesday afternoon and then taking off again to Alabama on Wednesday only to play back-to-back games back at UNC during the weekend (whew) — it appears the team spends more time out of class than is healthy. By moving the first practice one month later and playing fewer games, basketball players would be given the chance to explore other sides of the University than basketball — such as classes.

However, this proposal has raised concern from coaches and other athletic administrators

across the nation, including UNC's Dean Smith. Their fears of compacting the season into an over-intensive, three-day-a-week schedule are valid. As the commission's proposal stands now, if the first practice date is pushed a month back but only three games are cut from the schedule, an obvious dilemma exists. Such a tight schedule would only keep athletes away from the classroom more often in a week.

Other concerns from athletic personnel also plague the proposal. Athletics at UNC rakes in the most money from ticket sales and television contracts, with the rest of the budget coming from student athletic fees and boosters. These profits help support non-revenue sports at

UNC. Canceling low-income games, not the bigger revenue, televised games, would obviously cut down on ticket sales, but the loss of profits could be compensated for with tighter budgeting elsewhere, such as expenses for away games.

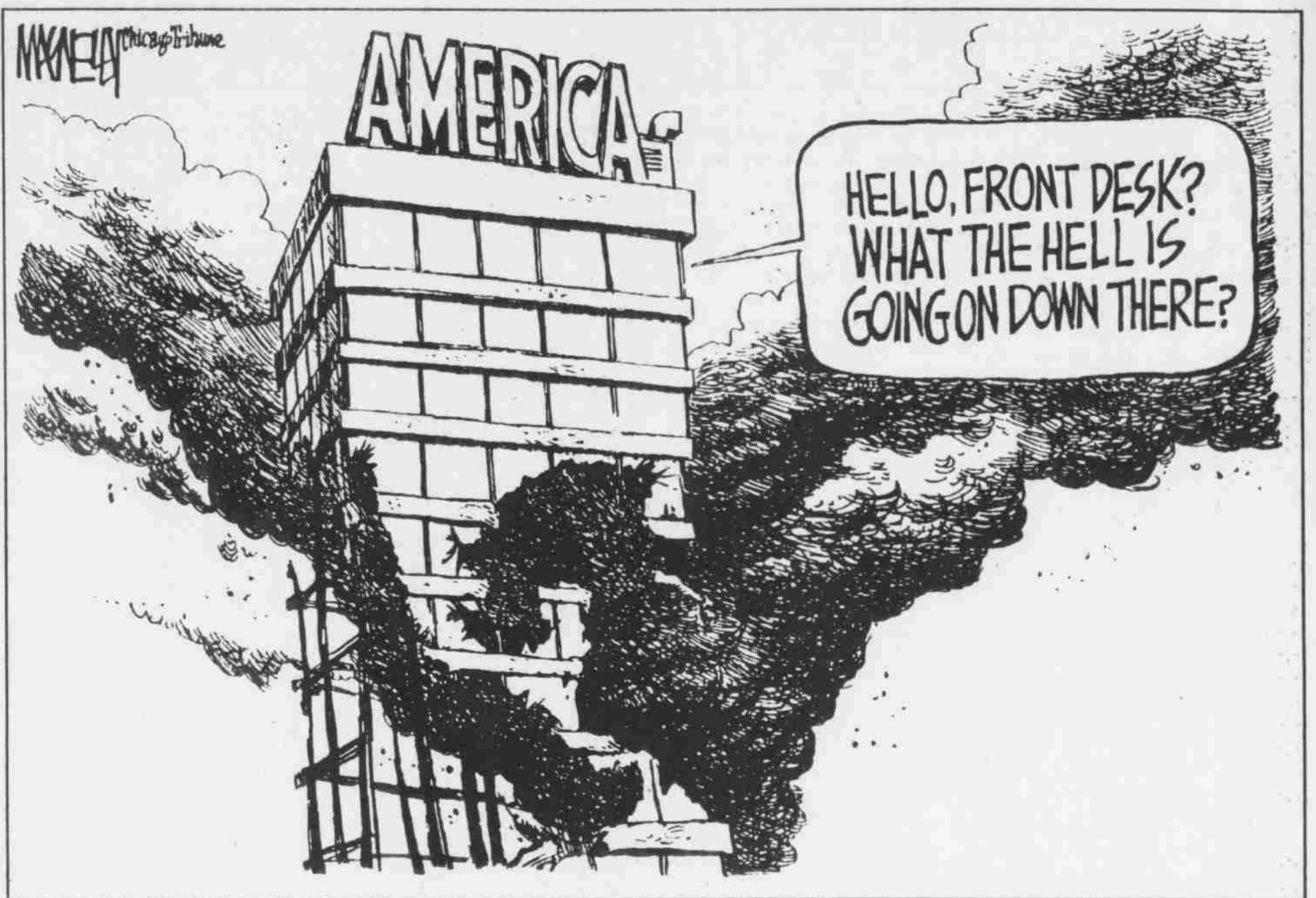
But even cutting the season slightly will not cure the academic troubles of most athletic teams. Stronger academic programs and coach's support must accompany the changes. At UNC, the men's basketball team is in generally good academic shape. While the proposal would focus on improving the players' grades, it also gives these athletes more time to enjoy their studies and life at UNC. By limiting the basketball season to one semester, players could have a chance to get ahead in the off-season. While fans may notice a slight difference, it shouldn't be enough to matter when academics are at stake. — Jennifer Wing

Reappoint Cell But don't ignore minority concerns

The UNC Board of Trustees meets today, and one of the most important votes of the semester will come before it. The Daily Tar Heel has said before that Dean of Arts and Sciences Gillian Cell should be reappointed, and when they vote, the trustees should see that this happens.

Based on past experiences, students should fear that certain trustees will use this as a chance to ignore racial concerns and point up the mistakes in the arguments of those who

protested Cell, rather than accepting their frustrations as valid. While it is unfortunate that the debate over minority recruitment and retention had to center around her, it has given students and faculty a chance to bring this important issue to the foreground. The trustees should follow Chancellor Paul Hardin and reappoint Cell; in doing so, they should surprise us, showing that they can face the issues that protesters brought up with a clear vision and purpose for the future. — Sharon Keschull



Another borscht recipe for peace

Daniel Conover
Conover's Kitchen

I planned this week's menu in honor of last Friday's historic Papal-Pinko summit in Vatican City. It starts off with borscht and winds up with fish, so Gorbachev should feel at home and John Paul II won't be breaking any of those Catholic rules, which I understand include fish-eating on Fridays. Go figure.

Borscht, for those of you who helped drag North Carolina's SAT score into the national basement, is a cold soup-like dish made from beets. Beets are a root, not typically eaten by Tar Heels and other native Southerners. However, beets are popular in Russia, where they serve, along with turnips, as the staple foodstuff in the Soviet diet. This may strike you as plain fare, but remember, we're talking about a nation that makes an egg-flavored liqueur and chases straight vodka shots with pickles and raw onions.

GorbEEtchov Borscht:

Peel and grate four medium beets and one medium apple and combine in a large pot with two grated carrots, one grated onion, the juice of one lemon and two teaspoons of dried dill. Add enough water to cover the ingredients, boil, cover, lower the heat and simmer for 45 minutes. Slip it in the icebox until chilled. Top each serving with a decadent, Czaristly big dollop of sour cream.

Mmmm. Goodski. I have no idea whether this recipe was included in the Vatican virtuals last Friday, but it's too bad if it wasn't. Food is such an important, albeit uncelebrated, element of world diplomacy. A well-fed world leader is less likely to blow up, and in the nuclear age that's a major consideration. What if Khrushchev had suffered heartburn during the Cuban Missile Crisis? We'd all be speaking cockroach. If you want to get anywhere, pay attention to the details. If you want world peace, make sure the head honchos eat well.

Of course, Gorb's eating habits on his diplomatic jaunts are probably a hot topic back in the USSR, where the Soviet people must discuss something to stave off boredom while queuing-up for snow boots. With this in mind, Gorb may be a very cautious eater. It doesn't

take too much conspicuous consumption in the Soviet Union to start looking like Leona Helmsley, and that's something Mikhail just can't risk. He may be staking his claim to a biographical TV mini-series in the West, but his reviews in Minsk are mixed.

This is too bad if you ask me. I'm all for this reform stuff, what with commies the world over finally coming to their senses and taking an interest in life, liberty and the pursuit of whatnot. For Russians, Poles, East Germans, Czechs, Lithuanians, Latvians, Moldavians, Estonians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Azerbaijanies and Uzbeks the most important pursuit this year is the pursuit of groceries, followed closely by the pursuit of a good pair of sensible shoes. The people may own the means of production in these countries, but they sure aren't producing very much.

We must introduce our new Soviet friends to the all-out pursuit of happiness slowly. Americans took centuries to develop a society based on the pursuit of happiness, and the culture shock produced by hitting the Russians with too much fun right off the bat could be devastating. Socialist entertainment tends to run along plot lines like "Boy meets tractor, boy loses tractor to international capitalist conspiracy, boy leads the masses in armed class struggle to win tractor back." Let them start with Goofy-Golf and "Who's the Boss?" reruns. We'll move them on to the hard stuff later.

In the meantime, the Soviets will be wise to reacquire themselves with religion, long considered the opiate of the masses in Marxist circles. Maybe Gorb figures a good opiate can't hurt a nation with a three-year waiting list for windshield wipers. Plus, if the population stays really stoned maybe it won't notice how broke it is (which, come to think of it, sounds like one of Reagan's old tactics). Unless, of course, it gets the munchies. I've got a damn

fine recipe for nacho dip in case it does, but that's another column.

This fish recipe is probably unheard-of in Poland, Pope John Paul (George and Ringo) II's homeland, but this is a modern Pope, and rumor has it he has a varied palate. If he likes it, maybe he'll stop by Harker's Island, NC, (where this recipe originates) on his next world tour. Like the Poles, Harker's Islanders consider themselves an oppressed, captive people, victim to the whim of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Just a thought.

Charcoaled Jumpin' Mullet à la Pope: First, get yourself enough mullet for all your friends, because this is a piece of work and you don't want to waste all that time on just a few people. Split, but don't scale, enough mullet to feed the lot, then remove the heads and gut. Rinse, drain, pat dry and lay the fish on waxed paper.

Next, salt those suckers down on both sides and let them sit for four hours, turning once. Start your charcoal grill or smoke pit while the fish are aging and off you go. Allow about 20 minutes for each side. Holy Jumpin' Mullet!

I recommend Duna Merlot '85 as an accompaniment. It's a truly nasty little pre-glasnost Hungarian vintage with a distinctly proletarian nose and bad teeth. Purists may object to serving a red wine with fish, but it comes in other colors if you want to be a snob about it and is readily available wherever fine \$2.99-a-bottle wines are sold.

I considered adding a George Bush dessert to honor the Summit at Sea, but at the urging of the State Department I've held off. The White House staff has not been fully briefed on the summit, and we don't want to do anything hasty. Wouldn't be prudent.

Remember, you can send your socially relevant and politically correct recipes to Conover's Kitchen, c/o editor, The Daily Tar Heel. Until next time, keep your feet to the street and bon appetite!

Daniel Conover is a senior journalism major from Carrboro.

Readers' Forum

McKinley needs to be consistently moral

Editor's note: Woodlief is senior editor of the Carolina Critic.

To the editor: I never thought I'd see the day when someone called The Daily Tar Heel conservative. However, in his recent letter ("DTH needs to give all students access," Nov. 30), Dale McKinley did just that, comparing the DTH to the "reactionary Carolina Critic."

McKinley, while I certainly admire your efforts to expose the atrocities committed by the CIA and by death squads in El Salvador, I must say that you are a hypocrite. Aside from the fact that you never seem to stray from the Marxist line on anything, you seem content to overlook the atrocities of your beloved left-wing, comfortable in your seemingly endless stint in graduate school. We at the Critic are willing to expose all violations of human rights, be they the result of left or right-wing criminals. Meanwhile, you and your mindless cronies sing the praises of groups like the Marxist SWAPO in Namibia, which maintained brutal concentration camps in Zambia and Angola. While rightly decrying the atrocities of the United States-backed Christian government in El Salvador, you ignore the terrorist activities of the communist FMLN, chastising those who mention it. McKinley, you even ignore the human rights abuses in your own country of Zimbabwe.

Perhaps one reason the DTH doesn't print more of what your group writes is because it generally tends to be a mindless diatribe of distorted facts, with a boringly predictable message. Carolina students are tired of hearing that everything from world poverty to jock itch is somehow the result of evil American imperialism. The

Critic tries to explore the real reasons behind world events, and if you believe the DTH is starting to look more like us, then more power to them. It's inspiring to see a little open-mindedness on the left for a change.

There's something to be said for pointing the finger at injustice. There's little to be said for someone who does so only when it doesn't conflict with his ideology. Who is reactionary, Critic staff members, who hold firm beliefs in individual liberty, or a Marxist ideologue specializing in selective moral condemnation? It seems to me that someone who can't acknowledge the human rights abuses of the left because of his ideological blinders ought not to be so free with the word "reactionary."

To be moral is to be consistently moral, McKinley, and I'm afraid you don't pass the test. So don't lecture to the editors of the DTH, who are to be commended for printing views different from their own. And please, McKinley, don't insult our intelligence by pretending to understand the meaning of reactionary, or to wrongly apply it to the Critic. Instead, why not examine your own politics, and come to grips with what about them is so compelling that you are willing to overlook human suffering to further an outdated worldview? Who knows, when that happens, we might even let you write for the Critic.

ANTHONY WOODLIEF
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Political Science

Astrology does not fit in rational society

To the editor: I was appalled at the interview with an astrologer in the Nov. 27

issue of The Daily Tar Heel ("Astrology offers worlds beyond horoscopes and fortune-telling") for two reasons: It was a highly uncritical, one-sided account of astrology, and it provided free advertising for the astrologer.

Astrology is a pseudo-science and in many respects a cult religion based upon ancient superstitions. It has no place in a society which must strive to establish and live by rational standards of behavior. Professional astronomers deplore the ignorance of the general public, a substantial fraction of which in our own country not only accepts astrology as a valid science, but forfeits its own judgment in having decisions made for it in many important areas of life. This reached the highest levels of government when Nancy Reagan was in frequent touch with an astrologer (at no small cost) to determine "propitious" times in the schedule of the president.

At our university hundreds of students take a course in astrology each term where they are given a grand, synoptic view of the universe. This includes a sweep of the history of science, revealing how our understanding of nature has evolved from the archeoastronomy of the Mayans and the Stone Age builders of Stonehenge, through the Ptolemaic and Copernican revolutions, to exciting, contemporary cosmologies. In summarizing astrology, the textbook in use today at UNC says, "Perhaps it is best to treat astrology as an interesting part of human history, the seed from which modern astronomy grew, but of no more practical significance than the advice in a fortune cookie."

For anyone interested in more background and references I highly recommend an article in the August 1989 issue of Sky and Telescope (available in the library) by Andrew Fraknoi of the Astro-

nomical Society of the Pacific entitled, "Your Astrology Defense Kit." He asks astrologers 10 embarrassing, but profound, scientific, philosophical questions such as: What is the likelihood that one-twelfth of the world's population is having the same kind of day? Why is the moment of birth, not conception, crucial for astrology? If astrologers are as good as they claim, why aren't they richer? Why do different schools of astrology disagree so strongly with each other? Fraknoi's answers to these and the other questions are worth pondering.

MORRIS S. DAVIS
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Department of
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We goofed

In Monday's letter, "Cell has shown ability and attentiveness," the end of the first sentence contained a typing error. The phrase should have read, "I wish to put to rest two very serious misconceptions." The Daily Tar Heel regrets the error.

Also, in Monday's editorial, "Release the records: Public documents should be disclosed," the statement about the Coalition for Animals and Animal Research's support for a lawsuit by the Students for Ethical Treatment of Animals may have been unclear. It should have noted that, while CFAAR agrees that SETA members should be allowed to see public records, it does not think that research protocols fall under this classification.

Letters policy

Letters should include the author's year, major, phone number and hometown.