

Opinions

February 23, 1995

The Blue Banner

The student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville

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Editorial

The Children Must Be Protected

Trends have been a part of American society for centuries. Today, we find a new trend that is quite different from that of bell-bottomed jeans or nose rings. The latest trend is killing one's own children for the sake of convenience, and it is sweeping through this country. It must be stopped.

Most people would agree that killing one's children is the most vile form of human action that could be imagined. There are people who plea insanity or believe that an abusive past excuses a horrible crime such as killing one's own child. This may be true, but, on the other hand, how much is our society to blame?

Susan Smith is considered by many to be the most recent person to bring this issue to the national forefront. Since her arrest, and especially in the last week, several other cases of parents killing their children have taken place that go beyond the darkest thoughts of most Americans.

Take, for instance, the case of the woman who tossed her two children from a bridge. Or, how about the man who shot and burned his children in eastern North Carolina?

Our children are the most innocent, precious resources we have in this world today. Protection of these resources is essential if we are to continue living and growing in this world.

The Blue Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Carmichael Hall, room 208-A. Our telephone numbers are (704) 251-6586 and 251-6591. Our campus e-mail address is UNCAVX::BANNER.

Nothing in our editorial or opinions sections necessarily reflects the opinion of the entire Blue Banner editorial board, the faculty advisor, or the university faculty, administration or staff.

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of the Blue Banner editorial board.

Letters, columns, cartoons and reviews represent only the opinions of their respective authors.

The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication.

All submissions are subject to editing and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste and timeliness.

Letters must be typed, double spaced, and must not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA.

THE PHILISTINE CONNECTION

David D. Marshall

Columnist

Republicans wish you to believe their push to destroy the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is about slimming down government, about cutting costs and saving money. Don't believe it for a second. As Michael Isikoff points out in a recent *Newsweek* article, "Nobody pretends [to believe] that eliminating the NEA, NEH, and CPB will save much money; together they are costing \$630 million this year, barely a blip in a \$1.5 trillion budget."

This political crusade against the arts and the humanities and against public television and radio marks yet another battle in the culture wars being waged in America today. And, as in all wars, the innocent fall victims to the slaughter.

Led by Newt Gingrich, the new Republican Congress will attempt to terminate the country's last symbols of our intellectual and artistic spirit. By successfully eliminating these three agencies, Congress will perpetuate the growing belief among Americans that the arts constitute an unnecessary or dispensable part of our lives. Such is the power of the legislature to determine our cul-

tural identity. Sadly, our philistine representatives in Congress possess no concept of what that kind of message can do to the morale, not to mention the heart and soul, of a nation.

In their haste to shut down the "blasphemous and obscene voices" exhaustively represented by Robert Mapplethorpe's admittedly distasteful photographs and, more recently, the performance art of Ron Athey, detractors of the NEA are violating the spirit of an open and free society.

Some years ago, a Supreme Court justice elegantly opined that the First Amendment particularly protects offensive speech, because there exists no need to protect the other kind. Gingrich argues that although freedom of speech is reserved for individuals, there exists no need for art that offends to be subsidized by taxpayers' money. Some advocates of the arts would contend, however, that if freedom of speech is a good enough virtue unsubsidized, then it takes on a more credible existence as a national belief in its subsidized form. A subsidy has a legitimizing effect; by subsidizing art as a model for freedom of speech, we recognize the national values inherent in the Bill of Rights. To

uphold those rights in a gesture of subsidy says much more about this country's ideological strength than any rhetoric or symbol ever could.

A single B-1 bomber costs more than the total budget of these three agencies. Money for 10 more B-1 bombers has been recently earmarked by Congress. What does this say about our national priorities?

The critics of federal funding for the arts and humanities miss the point on some key issues. As Ms. Alexander, chairwoman of the NEA, stated in an interview, "The Federal role is small but very vital. We are a stimulus for leveraging state, local and private money. We are a linchpin for the puzzle of arts funding, a remarkably efficient way of stimulating private money." Ms. Alexander was intimating a process whereby a partnership is formed between the public and private sector. For every dollar spent by the NEA an additional \$11 is generated for the arts from other sources. The arts-sponsoring infrastructure relies on NEA funds for this public-private partnership to occur. Although defunding the NEA would result in a taxpayer "savings" of \$167.4 million dollars a year, the end result is an actual loss of over \$1.5 billion for the arts. Similar funding structures exist in the NEH and CPB.

I am angry for having fallen for the "Contract with America"

rhetoric. I seeth at the pretentious "common man" persona Newt Gingrich and his co-conspirators affect in order to garner class resentment when they describe PBS as a "sandbox for elites," a plaything for "rich, upper-class people" who produce "biased television." If "Arts & Entertainment is not up here lobbying" for government handouts, Gingrich complains, why should PBS? Robert Wright points out in *The New Republic* that on a given day the schedule for A&E included "Columbo," "Rockford Files," "Lou Grant," and "Law and Order." In a moment of what can only be characterized as impressive journalistic restraint Wright fails to mention those ubiquitous, mind-eroding commercials so much an imprimatur of private television.

Newt Gingrich and company would like us to buy in to the lie that the arts and humanities will flourish in the hands of the private sector—that what's good for a Chrysler advertisement on "privatized" public television is good for America; that a dose of good old American philistinism will cure our national fiscal woes; and that they, and only they, have the power and the enlightenment to unilaterally determine our national cultural identity. You have to admire their consistency, though. No matter what the subject, it's always politics as usual for these bold visionaries.

"The very purpose of existence is to reconcile the glowing opinion we hold of ourselves with the appalling things that other people think about us."

Quentin Crisp

The Ultimate Burble

Erin Ryan

Columnist

ESSAY QUESTION: Discourse freely upon the topic of pencil lead.

(tick tick tick)
(sweat sweat)

"You will have 40 minutes to complete this essay. Begin."
(Oh, my God! PENCIL LEAD? That's the only one I didn't study for!)

(scribble scribble tick tick scribble)

(What are they writing? If only I could see ... oh, come on. Think now)

Pencil lead has, across the centuries, been one of the most important

(important ... important ... important what?)

resources

(tick tick tick)
in our history.

(— augh! No it hasn't!)
(Shuffle shuffle cough squeak)

(Er ... OK, I've got it now.)
Throughout the 19th century and the centuries beyond

(oh, wait)
The 19th and 20th

(no no no)
The past 200 years have been a period of

(oh, I don't know. Forget it.)
(tick tick)

(Well ... it says discourse freely. I wonder how freely. Freely. Maybe I could do free-verse.)

Pencil lead, o pencil lead
Thy sharpened tip
Is black as

(Black as what that rhymes with lead. Black Black Black)

lead.
(No!!! That doesn't rhyme. I already said lead. Besides, then it wouldn't be free-verse. Hey - said ... lead ... hm. I may have something)

"Hello, my dear," I said.
"Today you look like lead.

"You should have stayed in bed
"For now you shall be

(sweat sweat I'm hyperventilating)

dead."
(Oh, this is so stupid. Oh, God, I'm running out of time. Okay. Okay. Calm down. I'll make an outline, that's what I'll do.)

Pencil Lead
I. Origin of Pencils

A. Lead sources
B. Erasers

1. rubber plants
2. elasticity

II. Uses of Lead
A. artists

III. -
(-Oh wait, you can't have an A without a B. Oh what am I going to do? There's only 15 more minutes ...)

(Light Bulb)

(Hey! Yeah!)

Pencil lead has played an important part in U.S. history, though its role is often pushed to the sidelines of our history books.

(I am just on a roll)

Pencils have been an invaluable asset to the authors of important documents; for example, what would Thomas Jefferson have done if he had gone to write the Declaration of Independence ... and not been able to find his trusty pencil?

(Actually that doesn't sound right. What about the quill aspect? Oh, who cares.)

So, we could, in fact, say that pencils were directly responsible for the formation of the United States of America!

(I am so brilliant. I stun myself sometimes.)