

# Editorials

## Safety belts

### Should they be required?

By Loukia Louka

Consider this: everytime you ride in a car, you will have to wear a seat belt or face a penalty. A mandatory seat-belt law? North Carolina is one of 40 states that may make buckling up mandatory in the near future. Six states have already adopted the requirement.

Why adopt such a law? Because studies of 36 countries and areas which do have seat belt laws show a great reduction in highway deaths and injuries. In this state alone, officials say that 70 percent of the people who die in highway accidents would have survived if they had been wearing safety belts. Overall, in the United States, there are over 400,000 moderate-to-serious injuries and 2.8 million minor injuries caused in automobile accidents.

All of these figures concerning the effectiveness of seat belts and their life-saving purpose is not without its conflicts. Many civil-libertarians are insulted by the idea of "forcing" someone to wear a safety belt. Does it infringe on personal liberty? On people's constitutional rights? Should individuals have to accept reasonable restrictions on their freedom for the common good?

Supporters of state laws that require motorists to wear seat belts, believe that the issues of reduced highway deaths and injuries and dollars saved are more important than worrying about individual rights. Opponents of mandatory-seat-belt laws believe that such laws intrude into the private scope of drivers—that the government has neither the right nor the responsibility to decide the proper conduct to citizens in their best interest.

Should people be able to decide for themselves? Hardly. If the issue of mandatory seat-belt laws was an isolated issue, an issue of "private domain," I would probably object regardless of how enhancing it was. Driving, however, is not a private issue. It is, in fact, very public. Automobile accidents almost always involve others. It is a social problem that disrupts lives and families.

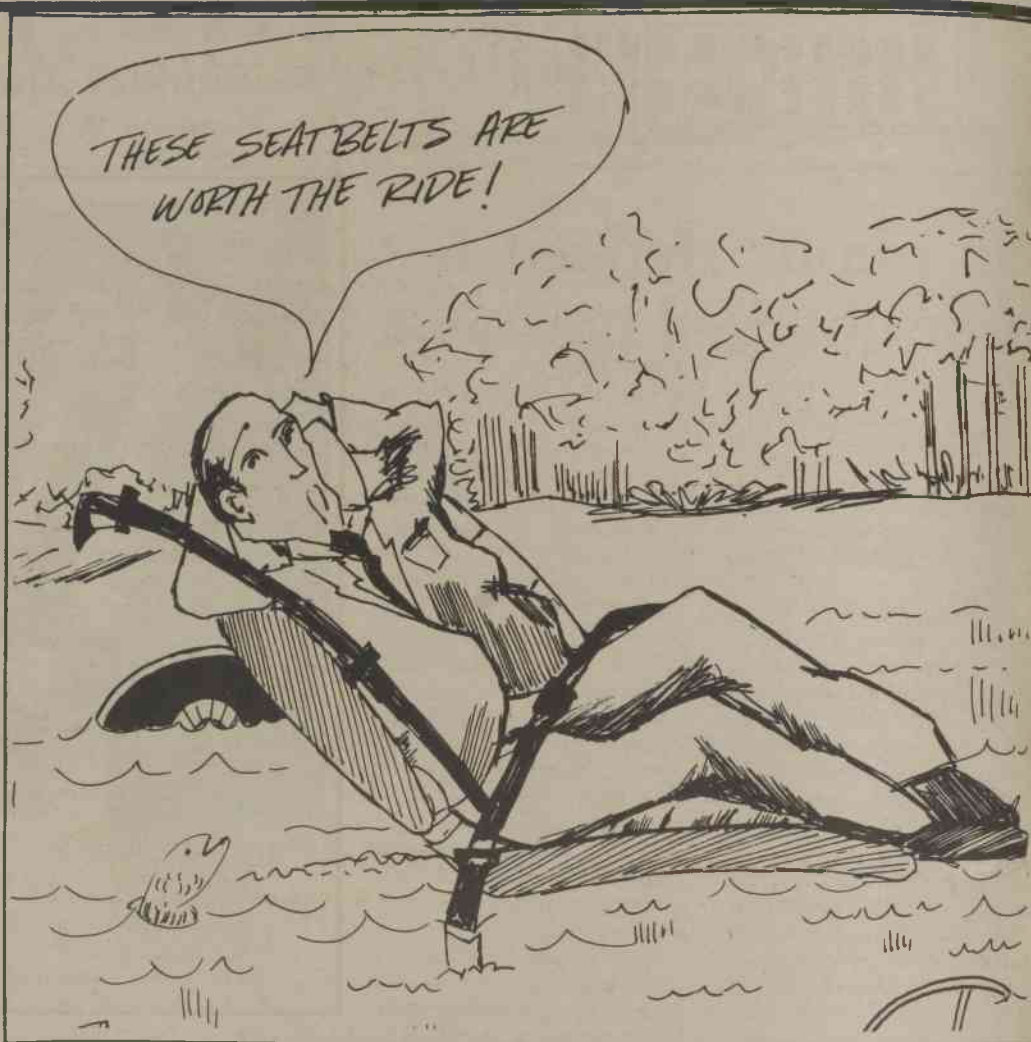
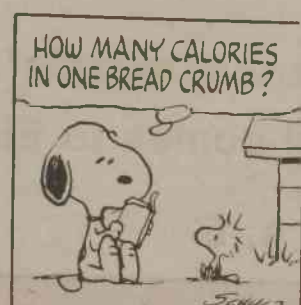
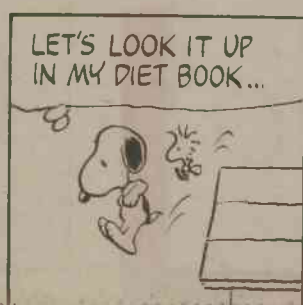
Is there a difference between stopping at stop signs, or at red lights? Is it one thing to make motorists stop at a red light or impose speed limits and making drivers wear seat belts? New York State Assemblyman Michael Nozzolio (New York is the first state to pass a mandatory-seat-belt law) opposes the law.

"Such laws will be extremely difficult to enforce," says Nozzolio. "You're going to see a lot of court litigation on whether or not a driver can be held guilty of negligence if the passengers in his car failed to buckle up and an accident occurred. Nozzolio generally prefers voluntary measures such as public-service announcements and driver-education courses to create a pro-seat-belt generation.

There exist many views to the issue: educate drivers, pass a mandatory-seat-belt-law, don't infringe on personal freedom, there is no such thing as personal in driving, and an endless list of in and outs. Should motorists wear seat belts or should education instead of compliance be brought on?

Michigan State Representative David Hollister says, "Voluntary compliance has never worked. In this country, its only about 12 percent. In those countries that have passed mandatory laws, compliance has gone from 11 percent to 70 percent." It may be what U.S. citizens need to realize how much is at stake on our highways everyday.

PEANUTS® by Charles M. Schulz



### Letter to the Editor

## Vandalism hurts college image

An open letter to the campus vandals:

I'm sure that you think that the actions we have seen on the Elon campus this year are funny. The ripping up of trees, the damage to classrooms, offices, stairwells and fountain, the poisoning of an aquarium set up and maintained by students—all are symptomatic of a means not characteristic of the majority of Elon's student body.

Each act of vandalism reduces the amount of funds available for teaching supplies, and equipment used to assist students in the learning process. Each act of van-

dalism tears down the reputation of those who would uphold the ideals of Elon and seek to have a

school which has a reputation for something higher than drugs, alcohol and vandalism.

Perhaps you think that by destroying the campus and its buildings, you can get back at

those against whom you have a grudge. You can't! The only result of this vandalism is to reduce yourself to something

lower than a worm. A person is known by whom he is and what he does. The vandals on this cam-

pus will sooner or later show their true colors, and they will not be maroon and gold.

Herbert W. House  
Associate professor of biology

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