

editorials

Collective Assessment

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Most of us, somewhere in our upbringing, have acquired a system of values that keeps us from destroying and/or stealing common property. A small percentage, however, either never acquired these values, or somewhere along the way lost them. In this bracket fall those who rip telephones off of the wall, steal dorm furniture, and generally make their presence, if not immaturity known. Collective assessment is one of the things that protects us from these people, assuming that you fall into the other category.

Collective assessment, in case you are unfamiliar with the term, is charging the residents of a given area for anonymous damages. Unfair as it may seem to some, it has two advantages: first, that it should make someone think twice about doing and believing that he will get away scot-free; second, that it creates peer pressure that in theory will keep people from letting others get by with these acts.

The campus community of Mars Hill is designed in such a way that many people have to use the same facilities every day. They are, in fact, **ours**. That's you and me. So think of collective assessment this way—when someone decides to somehow deprive us of the use of campus facilities, he is ripping us off twice. First, by denying you the privilege of their use, and then by making you pay for it.

Collective assessment is a necessary system for replacing damaged or stolen articles, but it's your responsibility to see that they remain here in the first place. Otherwise, we all suffer.

David Bowerman

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Mr. Knight is off once again in his linguistic antics. However, his personal problems are not my concern at this point, rather the editorial in the last paper titled, "What Is Honor?"

I only have three major problems with the past article. Number one, there is an assumption in "honor" that there is a distinguishable right and wrong. Or even, that there is right and wrong in human relationships. Surely Mr. Knight is not advocating the absurd hope for self-evident truths on this campus? Human affairs are gray, never black and white. "Right" and "wrong" are always legislated by the administration in an academic community.

Second, honor as "doing right," assumes total consensus, or agreement by the members of this strained community. We can not even bring ourselves together for a community meeting (a celebration of community).

The last assumption weaves together the first two. It is that the general student population is capable spiritually, intellectually, and morally to embrace and practice an honor code. It does require an intelligent commitment. As of right now, I have not observed either of the qualities to the degree necessary for success.

In short, the previous article displays a serious lack of thought and consideration (or naivety) in facing up to the issue of an honor code. It was a simplified definition and explanation. It pictured "honor" as something natural and easy. It ain't!

name withheld by request

Dear Editor,

In the recent community meeting held on Wednesday, September 12, 1979 at 10 a.m. in Moore Auditorium, our beloved President, Dr. Fred B. Bentley addressed the College community on the topic of "Faith and Our Future."

In this speech the President outlined, among other things, a new direction for the College to undertake. The President said, "I am convinced that while we must have a commitment to our own region, we have an equal commitment beyond the region. Appalachia is important to us, but it is not the world." He then went on to explain that he feels the College should concern itself specifically to "third-world countries" i.e. Latin America, by re-packaging current academic programs.

In my opinion this would be a tremendous mistake. This is not to say that I feel the College should ignore the world; over population, world hunger, or the problems of oppressed nations. However, I do feel that the College, in the last four or five years, has finally awoke from its sleep-like state and noticed that it wasn't located just **anywhere** in the United States and that it needed to be concerned with problems of this area. That there were issues and problems all around the College that needed our attention, that we needn't go thousands of miles away from Mars Hill in order to find problems to solve.

I feel that the programs being developed in the area of Appalachian studies, are just beginning to make a difference, in issues of importance to this community

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I remember in grade school when someone would draw something dirty or scribble some misspelled obscenity on the blackboard when the teacher was out of the room. Upon her return, the teacher would invariably spot the graffiti and then order the culprit to stand forth "like a man" (for a girl could never perpetrate such a heinous crime) and own up to doing the dastardly deed.

Of course, no one ever did stand forth. The teacher would then threaten the entire class with no recess for a week if somebody didn't tell her who did it. Unfortunately, the person who did it was always the biggest student in the class and possessed the awesome capability of reducing your fall to cubed steak. I never told, and neither did anyone else who treasured his proffill.

So, here I am in college. Dastardly deeds are still being committed, and the dastards are still getting away with it. Only now, instead of staying inside for recess, were being forced to fork over money. Giving up recess is one thing; giving up money so some jerk can have a good time breaking windows is an entirely different matter.

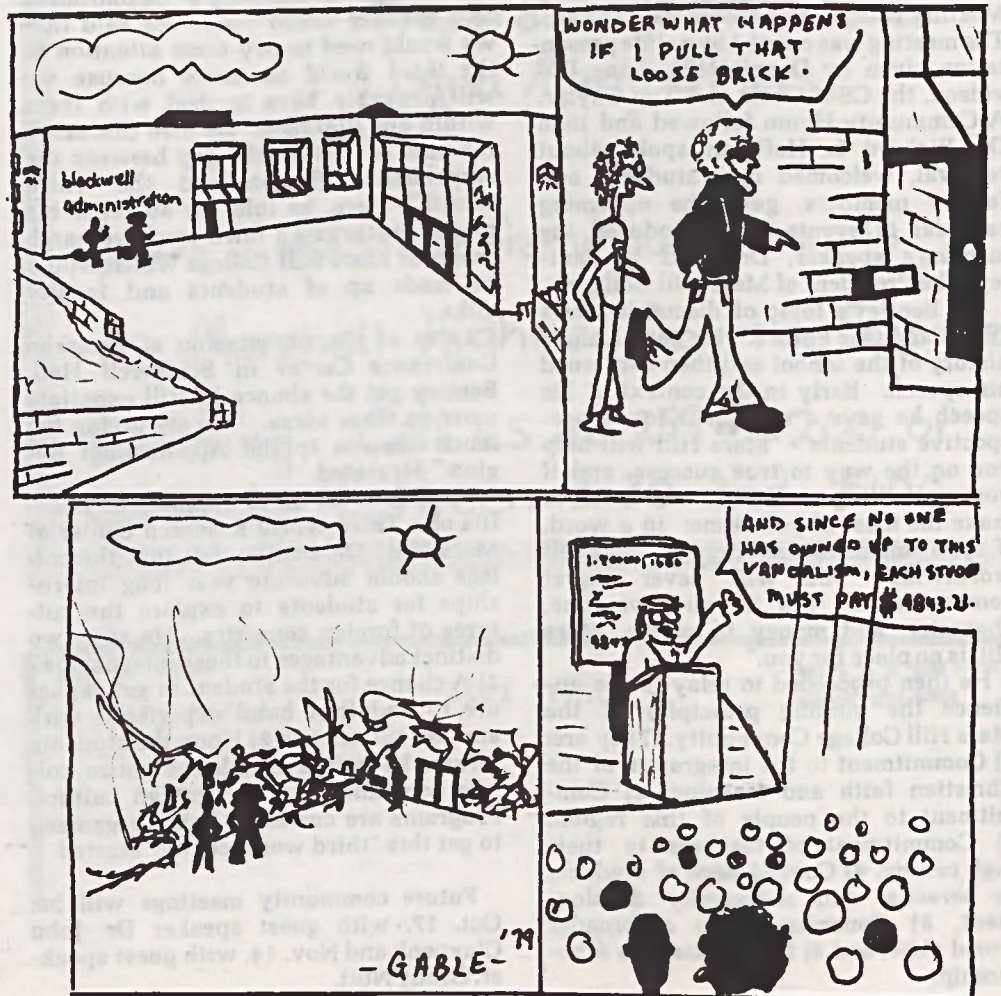
The fact that people **do** get away with breaking windows and bombing johns, however, is as much a tribute to the ineptness of the people whose responsibility it is to prevent those occurrences as it is to the vandals who cause them and their friends who ignore them. After all, were paying the residence hall staff to do something other than just occupy space aren't we? Discipline in the residence halls is the responsibility of the R.D.'s and R.A.'s, a responsibility they accept when they take that first check from the Business Office. If they can't prevent repeated instances of vandalism then they are not doing their job and should be replaced. In short, the money which you and I, the students of Mars Hill, have provided is not being earned; it is being stolen.

Collective assessment (or collective ass. for short), however, is **not** the way to prevent vandalism. In my opinion, it does exactly the opposite in three ways: (1) the real perpetrator of the crime gets to destroy several hundred dollars worth of property but only has to pay a very small percentage of that in collective assessment; (2) there is a certain thrill in destroying property which is intensified by the knowledge that if you are sneaky enough you won't have to pay; and (3) collective assessment provides a continuous supply of articles to be destroyed.

The peer pressure theory is also a lot of bunk. There is no peer pressure quite as acute as the fact that you will loose all your friends if they find out you told on them.

So my solution to the problem is to do away with collective assessment and quit replacing the damage. Instead of replacing every broken window and chair, perhaps we should leave them as a reminder to the entire dorm. You can never teach a child to pick up his toys by walking behind and doing it for him. When we can't walk any longer for the mess, he'll figure it out for himself and won't be so apt to take for granted the fact that it will always be done for him.

Darryl Gossett



- GABLE '79