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# The Daily Tar Heel

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BOARD EDITORIALS

## Keep It Close

The Orange County Board of Commissioners should take a stand on an outlying site proposed for an expanded IFC shelter.

The Orange County Board of Commissioners has a golden opportunity to step up and voice its opinion on homelessness in Chapel Hill.

That's because they will soon vote on a resolution that could affect where the next Inter-Faith Council shelter and kitchen are located.

The resolution suggests removing a piece of county property on Homestead Road from a list of possible sites for a revamped and expanded IFC shelter. A task force is currently looking into viable sites - including the Homestead site - for the larger shelter. The task force has been looking into the possible relocation of the shelter since July.

The commissioners need to make the only logical decision and vote for the resolution, taking the Homestead property off the table.

Because of its lack of access to public transportation, the shelter would be extremely difficult - if not impossible - to get to for those who need the IFC's assistance most.

The homeless rely heavily on the centrality of the current 100 W. Rosemary St. location. For most, the shelter is their best friend in the struggle to get back onto their feet and slide back into a stable life off the streets.

Many have jobs washing dishes and

sweeping floors for the multitude of businesses that line Franklin Street. A location such as Homestead Road, then, which is miles away from the main hub of business in Chapel Hill and has no public transportation outlet, seems ridiculously inadequate to serve the needs of Chapel Hill's less fortunate.

The board should be commended for taking the initiative in recommending that this unsuitable site be knocked out of contention. There are other sites on the IFC task force's list, such as Chapel Hill police headquarters off Airport Road or an office building on South Elliott Road, and simply expanding the current Rosemary Street location remains an option.

The focus of the IFC shelter's new location should not be based on how far away from visibility the county can push its homeless residents. The paramount question of importance is which location can best utilize its services and promote the interests of those who use the IFC shelter.

Homestead Road is as far from being the best piece of land for the IFC's relocation as a shelter there would be from Franklin Street.

Orange County commissioners: use logic as well as compassion and vote to table the Homestead Road location.

## Cockeyed Caucus

Early primaries and caucuses mean that other states don't get an equal voice in deciding who gets to be president.

To most people, the state of Iowa conjures up images of cornfields, pig farms and little else. But every four years, the Hawkeye State hosts the nation's first presidential caucus.

This is the first real contest for candidates vying for their parties' nominations. Unfortunately for the other 49 states, it's also the last important contest in many respects.

By the time North Carolina holds its primary May 2, 35 other states will have held primaries or caucuses, and the race for the nominations will be all but over.

Although some states have always held primaries late in the election year when most of the suspense has dissipated, this year's political season is even more accelerated than previous ones.

By mid-March, 25 states will have held primaries, effectively excluding voters in other states from the nomination process. The problem of a front-loaded election season is sufficiently serious for both the Democratic and Republican parties to establish commissions to study the effects of the problem and recommend possible solutions.

"There has been increasing concern that a front-loaded nomination system that ends almost as soon as it begins raises barriers to all but the best-connected and well-funded candidates," according to a report by

William Brock, chairman of the Republican National Committee. "Perhaps more importantly, it may not allow voters adequate time to consider the quality of various candidates and their views on the issues."

The process is also flawed because it places more importance on voters in large states with early contests. This causes candidates to tailor their positions to voters in those states, even when those voters are not necessarily representative of the country.

Iowa, for instance, is a predominantly white state with a large number of farmers. Candidates therefore spend a lot of time discussing ethanol subsidies and other agricultural issues that have little meaning for voters in Hawaii or Washington. Thus, George W. Bush and Al Gore's victories Monday should hardly be considered an accurate predictor of the entire nation's political preferences.

Several solutions to the lack of participation in the primary system have already been suggested. Among them are a rotating series of regional primaries and a primary system that allows the smallest states to go first and the biggest states last. The primaries would also take place over a longer period of time.

Whatever the decision, something should be done to prevent the presidential race from ending before most people have their say.

### Student Government Wannabe? Then Listen Up!

The Daily Tar Heel editorial board endorses candidates in all student races. The DTH will not consider endorsing any candidate who fails to fulfill all the requirements in the endorsement process, which might include an interview, a questionnaire, a platform or any combination of the three. Candidates should be aware that they need to be able to provide that information to the DTH at any time until Feb. 8. For more information, call Editorial Page Editor Scott Hicks at 962-0245.

## READERS' FORUM

### 'Two Cokes a Semester' Not Too Steep a Price For Benefits of USSA

TO THE EDITOR:

It is important for students to understand concretely what the U.S. Students Association does for the 3.5 million students it represents nationwide and why it is important for UNC to join through a referendum. USSA is the nation's oldest and largest students organization, the board is made up of students from all over the country, and each member school gets a number of votes determined by the size of the school and the level of membership.

The foundation of USSA is built upon the idea of student self-governance - that students should learn to represent themselves, to organize campaigns on their individual campuses and to use their own voices to make changes in local, state and national policies. USSA lobbies in Washington, D.C., and wins concrete victories for students - like a \$400 increase in

the maximum Pell grant (1998) and a 0.8 percent decrease in the interest rate on federal loans (which will save the average student receiving federal aid \$500).

But working for students on financial aid is not all that USSA does. USSA field organizers travel all over the country providing technical assistance and organizing expertise to referenda schools working on campaigns like fighting tuition increases.

Many of the key organizers of the Campaign for Education Access (including Nic Heinke, Erica Smiley and others) have been through USSA's Grass Roots Organizing Workshop, which teaches students to think strategically and develop organizing skills. Currently GROW is something that campus organizations and student congresses have to pay for but we would get for free as referenda members of USSA. With this level of membership, part of what we pay to USSA would come directly back to UNC in to facilitate organizing campaigns on our campus (like the Campaign for Educational Access that has been fighting the proposed tuition increase

at UNC since last fall).

These are some of the most important benefits of joining USSA through a referendum, and none of these things would be accessible with the limitations of a \$1,500 membership. As referenda members of USSA, UNC would be the only university represented from the Southeast. We would also be one of the most powerful voting members of the organization.

With those votes, we could get the USSA to focus on winning more federal aid for students affected by Hurricane Floyd or on other regional issues that are currently not represented in Washington. The USSA is the only national student organization that is funded by students, run by students and accountable to students. Two Cokes a semester is not too much to pay for this kind of representation.

Sandi Chapman  
Freshman  
History and Economics

The length rule on letters was waived.

### Barranger Never Quit Her Post as Professor, Chairman Clarifies

TO THE EDITOR:

We in the Department of Dramatic Art were pleased to note your regretful admission Thursday that several of the premises on which you based your Jan. 19 editorial "Silent Hatchet Job, II" were erroneous.

However, your readers deserve to know that your correction itself was misleading. Dr. Milly Barranger has "resigned" only from her administrative positions. She remains a valued and respected member of our faculty, currently on a research leave completing her book on the producer and director Margaret Webster.

As she herself said in recent greetings sent to the faculty and staff, "I look forward to rejoining you in 2001 as a member of the faculty and as someone who treasures her undergraduate seminars! With best regards to all of you in this amazing new century ..."

Your readers also should know that Professor David Hammond, whom, in the same editorial, you defame with innuendo (ombudsman, take note) routinely enjoys overenrolled classes and exemplary evaluations. His recent productions of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Love's Labors Lost" for which, in the casting process, he had to turn away many hopeful student actors, were two of the most rewarding experiences for cast and audience alike in recent memory.

Your readers may find it ironic that the atre practitioners must remind journalists that what "seems" should not be mistaken for what is.

Ray Dooley  
Associate Professor and Interim  
Chairman  
Department of Dramatic Art

### Got Opinion?

Then submit a guest column for The Daily Tar Heel's weekly Viewpoints page. For more details, call Editorial Page Editor Scott Hicks at 962-0245.



## Big Issues Don't Merit Junk Mail

Since moving into my Chapel Hill address in August, I've been the lucky recipient of an impressive amount of junk mail. Pre-approved credit cards, free carpet cleaning, millions of dollars - all mine if I'll just send back the enclosed. Predictable, unremarkable and uninteresting, most of it gets forwarded directly to the wastebasket.

Three pieces of mail, however, I reread with great interest, even devoting a couple of days of careful consideration to how I would respond (hence this column).

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and The Washington Spectator sent me long, excited letters full of bold print, underlining, italics and fonts designed to look like the scribbling of an alarmed friend.

Planned Parenthood notifies me that I need to "resist pressure from religious political extremist groups" that seek to "undermine family planning."

The ACLU warns me of members of Congress who seek to take us back to the days when blacks "were often lynched," women "basically were limited to the kitchen and the bedroom" and "disabled people were almost ... furtively hidden."

The Spectator offers "A Guide to Religious-Right-Speak: Pro-Choice Advocates Are 'BABYKILLERS.'" I don't even have to open that one; it's right there on the envelope.

All three letters use the same strategies: Select the worst possible example of your enemy's behavior. Use that example to characterize a group as large as possible. Frighten the living daylight (and hopefully some cash) out of any normal person by suggesting that everyone except you and your reader holds these extreme views.

Planned Parenthood's approach seems most purposefully dishonest. The letter focuses on religious extremist efforts to restrict "family planning information" and "outlaw contraceptives," forcing women into back-alley abortions. Such a focus carefully distorts the actual issue.

While many groups, religious and other, oppose abortion, few if any oppose family planning. Even the most conservative main-



TARA ROBBINS  
SMALL PRINT

stream religious group on reproductive issues, the Catholic church, offers family-planning courses in many of its parishes. Though Catholics might disagree with Planned Parenthood on specific family-planning methods, they do not oppose family planning.

They certainly don't wish back-alley abortions on anyone. In fact, they really don't wish any abortions at all on anyone.

The ACLU's letter also makes some provocative leaps of logic. First, it defines a group of "New Puritans" who seek to control everyone else's morality. No doubt there are people out there who wish to do that. (Sometimes I do - don't you?)

But the ACLU tells me that these New Puritans actually control Congress. Control Congress? Republicans control Congress. Are all Republicans in fact New Puritans? Apparently so, along with a Democrat or two named in the letter. And they want to bring back the 1950s-era of lynchings.

Now, Republicans may have different political objectives from those of the ACLU, but it is dishonest to the point of absurdity to suggest that any men or women serving in Congress, Republicans or Democrats, would actually support lynching or wish "furtively to hide" disabled people.

Finally, The Washington Spectator writes that the definitions printed on its envelope were taken from an actual Washington convention; in other words, someone at a conference once actually used the term "Baby killer." Not surprising.

What is surprising, however, is that the Spectator can claim to be "a sane, well-informed, nonprofit newsletter for open-mind-

ed people" while suggesting in its letter that conservative politics as whole should be characterized by the use of these terms, as if no thoughtful person of integrity could hold a conservative point of view.

Although these examples illustrate irresponsible language used by liberal groups (they're the ones that sent me the mail), conservatives are also guilty, perhaps even more egregiously so on many occasions.

But everyone knows about the conservatives, and they don't claim to be "open-minded." In that sense, their language is less threatening than that contained in these letters, which insist on their own fair-mindedness.

The Spectator example makes the dangerous yet commonplace suggestion that a liberal agenda has less potential for fanaticism than a conservative one.

The truth, however, is that by our very nature as people, we all have within us the potential for zealotry, ideological arrogance and the refusal to recognize the benevolent intent of those who disagree with us.

Every one of us feels strongly about some things to the exclusion of others, desires some social goals above others, wishes the world operated differently based on our own beliefs and wants to change things.

The difference between conservatives and liberals is the outworking of this impulse, but the impulse itself is neither conservative nor liberal; it is human.

This (I believe God-given) desire to see things change is the source of human progress. It was the power behind the development of the rule of law, the abolition of slavery, the end of the Holocaust and the civil rights movement. When corrupted and unchecked, it has also been the power behind tyranny, slavery, genocide, and bigotry.

To harness this desire for good, we need humility, clear-eyed vision and fair and accurate political rhetoric - not the kind of junk mail propaganda used to sell credit cards, carpet cleaning and magazine subscriptions.

Tara Robbins is a graduate student in the Department of English from Millville, N.J. Reach her at trobbins@unc.edu.



The DTH welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Bring letters to the DTH office in Suite 104 of the Carolina Union or email them to editdesk@unc.edu.