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The Daily Tar Heel

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BOARD EDITORIALS

Absentee Ballot

While students were away last week, the Board of Governors raised their fees. Students should have been included in the decision.

Perhaps students didn't notice that the Board of Governors raised student fees last week.

After all, classes were recessed for Spring Break. Many students left Chapel Hill, hitting the beaches or heading home.

How utterly convenient it was for the BOG to raise the price tag of attending UNC by about \$70 without student input. After all, just a few months ago, students protested against a tuition increase proposed by the Board of Trustees. When the cats are away, administrators will play.

And while in past years students have supported such fee increases, which fund health services, athletic facilities and campus technology, the BOG should not automatically assume students approve of such measures.

Instead, the BOG should include students in discussions about fees, which should take place while fall or spring semester classes are in session.

Ironically, a student, Nic Heinke, UNC's student body president, shares the blame for not making the student body aware of the issue.

The fee increase is sizable. For students, that money can buy a lot (including Spring Break airline tickets) or save them from taking out more loans.

As president, Heinke should alert students a fee increase is being discussed and let them

decide whether they do or do not support the measure.

Heinke should not dictate the issues the student body discusses. He admitted to The Chapel Hill Herald that he wasn't surprised by the increase. But he should have realized that students outside of student government politics might be concerned and let them know what was going on.

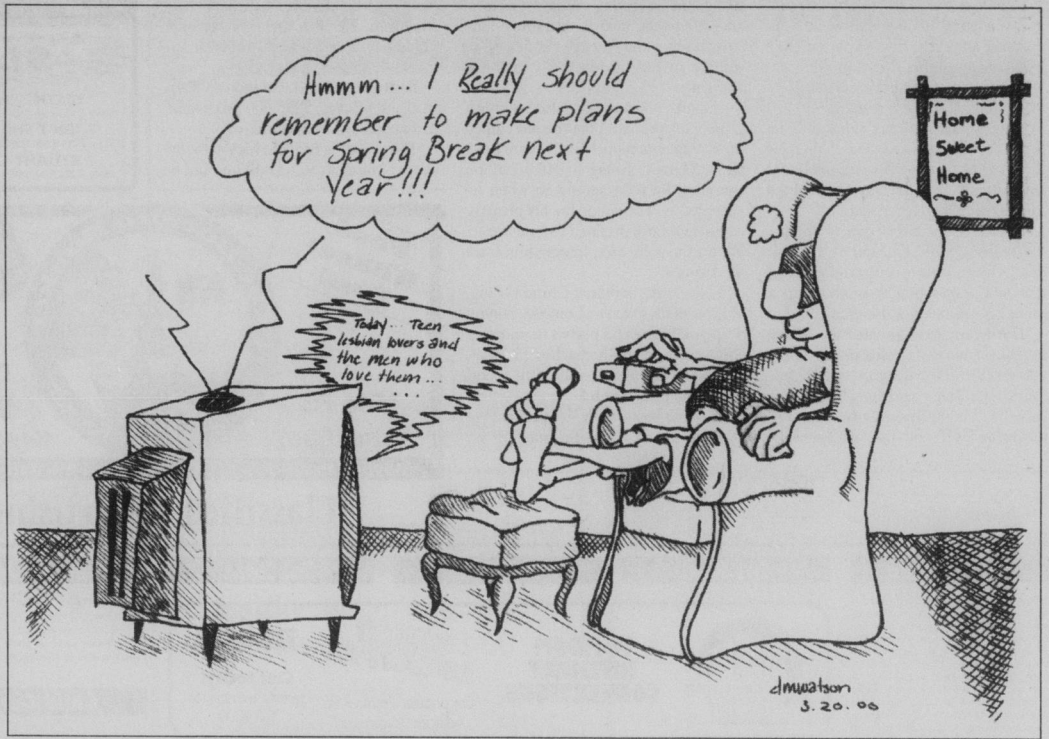
Any fee increase, expected or not, empties students' pocketbooks. Students deserve the chance to respond, and Heinke and the BOG robbed them of that opportunity.

In the future, Heinke and Brad Matthews, student body president-elect, should actively solicit student input regarding where students would like their fees spent. Students should be given an opportunity to rate the University services they pay for and identify areas of possible improvement.

By including student input, improvements such as the previously proposed reverse Point-2-Point route, which was hindered by the University's budget crunch last summer, could come to fruition.

University services should have to make their case publicly about why they need more funds and where those funds will go if approved. They must be held accountable to students.

Decisions made for students should not be made without them.



Paying (High Prices) at the Pump

Upset about the price of gasoline? Maybe you'll feel better after hearing that, adjusted for inflation, the price of gasoline is well below its 1981 peak of close to \$2.50 per gallon, or that gasoline prices in most European nations are still well above what drivers pay in America.

Or maybe you won't. Such statistics offer little consolation to American drivers who are paying an average price of more than \$1.40 per gallon nationally, almost 50 percent higher than just one year ago. In my hometown in New York, gas is about \$1.60 and expected to exceed \$2 this summer.

To better understand the situation, let's look at what causes price fluctuations.

Normally, in a market-oriented economy, the price of an item is the link between producers and consumers. If producer supply exceeds consumer demand, there is a product surplus, and prices fall to encourage consumers to buy the remaining items. Conversely, when consumer demand exceeds producer supply, there is a product shortage, and prices rise to encourage producers to supply more of the item.

The current oil situation, however, is the result of a conscious effort on behalf of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to restrict oil supply and drive the price upward.

Now, before we understand what steps we might take to make the situation better, let's identify some steps that won't.

To all those truckers who, despite loyally reading this column, have called on Washington for price controls: Bad idea, fellas. When the government puts a "price ceiling" on a commodity, it inevitably induces a shortage.

The results are dismal, as per the massive gas station lines and assigned fill-up days of the 1970s.

Another proposal (and a truly idiotic attempt at civil disobedience) is to participate in a "gas out," whereby people would agree to boycott purchasing gasoline for a brief period of time and perhaps stage a demonstration.

It's fairly obvious we will eventually need gas to fuel our cars and heat our homes, and



JONATHAN TRAGER
THE LIBERTARIAN LETTERS

so the long-term price of gasoline would be unaffected by such an action.

Fortunately, despite the fact its energy policy has been largely nonexistent, our current administration does have a plan of action to stimulate oil production. Its ingenious strategy relies on aggressively jawboning OPEC leaders to increase production (for those unfamiliar with political euphemisms, substitute "jawboning" with "begging").

Suffice it to say that in addition to being a long shot, such an endeavor would make us look pathetic and foolish (not that Clinton has a problem with that).

Many mainstream press members, who also happen to be Clinton apologists, are quick to absolve our administration of any responsibility. After all, our government can't control the actions of OPEC, so aside from setting price controls, what else can be done other than wait for OPEC to change its production quotas?

Actually, I think a lot can be done, and economists such as Ball State University's Mark Brandly seem to agree.

"The answer to high prices is not increased government interference, but tax cuts, the deregulation of oil producers and allowing oil producers both here and abroad to respond to higher prices with higher production levels," Brandly said in a February article for the Ludwig Von Mises Institute. "Less government is the appropriate solution."

Accordingly, let's construct a feasible plan of action.

Step 1: Cut taxes. According to the American Petroleum Institute, gasoline taxes average more than 41 cents per gallon and have increased 54 per-

cent in the past decade. In North Carolina, these taxes account for a whopping one-third of the pump price of gasoline. Such taxes may be skimmed off the top for a dramatic price reduction.

Step 2: Cut regulations to increase domestic oil production.

A percentage of all revenue from oil produced on federal land goes to the federal government in the form of royalty payments. Oil producers and the federal government contractually agree to these percentages, but efforts on the behalf of the Department of the Interior to unilaterally increase these payments has pushed potential oil producers out of the market.

Strict regulations on oil exploration and drilling also increase prices. In particular, the region of Anwar, Alaska, boasts oil reserves comparable to Saudi Arabia's, but various fees and regulations have made realizing these reserves way too expensive for potential producers. Repealing such regulations would do wonders for our domestic oil supply.

Step 3: Lift the trade sanctions on Iraq. Iraq has more than 100 billion barrels of oil reserves. Eliminating sanctions would encourage foreign investment, and Iraq would be able to increase its oil output some 4 billion barrels per day. Such an action would not only increase our overseas oil supply, but also help innocent Iraqi citizens rebuild their economy and force other Middle Eastern producers to respond to the competition by cutting their prices.

The bottom line is taxes, regulations and trade sanctions drive up costs. If you want to bring prices down, you must repeal such burdens and be willing to endure the angry protests and condescending attitude of individuals like Al "Earth in the Balance" Gore, who view the combustion engine as a tool of the devil.

Otherwise, just cross your fingers and pray, but don't bitch about the situation.

Jonathan Trager is a senior journalism and mass communication major from Long Island, N.Y. who owns no oil company stock. Please send angry letters concerning the Exxon Valdez to trager@email.unc.edu.

Good Things Aren't Free

A poll of N.C. voters found that they want better schools — but not if they have to pay for them. Someone has to pick up the tab.

Good things don't come cheap.

Parents across the nation have repeated the cliché time and again, but apparently a good number of N.C. residents weren't paying attention.

According to a statewide poll conducted by Your Voice, Your Vote, a partnership formed by 15 N.C. news organizations, N.C. voters want better schools but not the corresponding tax increase.

A whopping 34 percent of those surveyed cited education as the single most critical issue facing the state. No other topic was mentioned by more than 6 percent of respondents, not even health care, crime, taxes or urban sprawl.

But despite the fact that 44 percent also said education was the one area where the state should spend more money, the poll also showed that voters are less enthusiastic about education improvements if they have to pay higher taxes for them.

In fact, the most popular source of new money for schools is a lottery.

But as a lottery faces strong opposition in the N.C. General Assembly, and in a year when North Carolina's coffers are strained because of a string of natural disasters, the state has few options other than raising taxes if it plans to meet the education priorities outlined by Gov. Jim Hunt and evidently endorsed by N.C. residents.

In a speech at the 12th annual meeting of the state's education governing boards last Thursday, Hunt reiterated his goal of making North Carolina's schools — regarded for years as among the country's worst — first in the nation by 2010. He also said the state would give itself an annual report card starting this fall to help guide the state's efforts to make improvements.

Among Hunt's priorities are increasing teacher pay and expanding the preschool program Smart Start, and both plans carry a hefty price tag.

For example, Hunt has said he wanted to spend an extra \$275 million on teacher pay next year to bring salaries in line with the national average, a measure that 52 percent of survey respondents said they would not support if taxes were raised to pay for it. Hunt also would like to boost spending on Smart Start by almost \$90 million.

One survey respondent suggested cutting state programs in other areas to pay for better schools, but that is not an option the state should consider. Improvement in one area should not come at the price of reduced services in other areas.

The simple truth is someone has to pick up the tab for education, and if N.C. residents truly care about making their schools better, they should be willing to shell out the necessary cash.

READERS' FORUM

Union Desk Worker's Comment Not Made Without Context

TO THE EDITOR:

When Jermaine Caldwell published his article on the Union desk ("Strange Tales from the Union Desk Files," March 7), I was warned by several co-workers to expect a knee-jerk reaction from those who would misinterpret the story relayed therein. I hoped, however, that people would take the piece as a whole and see the greater underlying issues. Perhaps this letter will do a better job of illuminating those.

Yes, racism is still (unfortunately) alive and well. However, what I see as an even larger factor in this instance is the way in which we choose to react to our world. One of the greatest powers we have as human beings is the ability to use humor to heal the ills of our society; by taking life and ourselves less seriously, we reclaim the psychological power that others have over us, becoming stronger people in the process.

All this aside, of course I didn't leave the interaction at that. After both the teacher and I laughed, I gave her details on pertinent campus organizations. But please give Jermaine a little credit: Artistic license and a sense for flair allowed him to end the article without the boring details.

Susannah Kirby
Student Union Building Supervisor

Ticket-Happy DPS Officials Need to Cut Students Some Slack

TO THE EDITOR:

I hate to be rudely sarcastic, but I didn't know that long-distance hiking was a requirement of UNC. In response to the article in The Daily Tar Heel on March 8, "UNC Police Get Tough on Tickets," apparently parking enforcement thinks it's reasonable to have to walk, run, bus and swim to get to class.

I'm glad to hear that the Department of Public Safety is so excited about unfairly pocketing the hard-earned money of stu-

dents.

I know firsthand that giggles roll out of the bellies of parking officials as they look upon out-of-state students attempting to watch and pack their blinking vehicles single-handedly in under 60 seconds. And of course you know the end result: As you grab that last bag and are out the door, there's a lovely going-away prize waiting under your wipers.

If I could pack my car from the PR lot, I would.

If you think that it's not important or necessary to have a reliable and time-efficient means of transportation as a collegiate upperclassman, than think again. Maybe the Department of Public Safety should be a little more concerned about offering fair and ample parking instead of whipping out their pens before we get the doors locked.

And if those students who do have passes weren't restricted because of "special events" that, most of the time, aren't even beneficial to students, maybe we wouldn't need such a ticket-happy bunch of officials.

Educate students on parking and offer reasonable options, rather than reminding

us that there are other schools that have an overwhelming amount of parking, like community colleges.

Deidre' Stokes
Junior
Journalism and Mass Communication

GPSF Transportation Committee Officials Seek Student Suggestions

TO THE EDITOR:

The Graduate and Professional Student Federation Transportation Committee seeks student input on improving bicycle and pedestrian safety on and around the UNC campus.

Students and other concerned community members are welcome to submit their suggestions for improving problematic campus walkways, bikeways, crosswalks and intersections to GPSF Transportation Co-secretary Nate Macek at macek@unc.edu. Responses will be compiled into a report to be submitted to members of the Chancellor's Pedestrian Safety

Committee at its next meeting. Student representatives will lobby this influential committee for further improvements.

The 14-member Chancellor's Committee on Pedestrian Safety was convened late last year in the wake of 27 accidents involving pedestrians (including one fatality) on the UNC campus over a period of 20 months. The group has discussed experimental pedestrian improvements at a number of busy intersections. In addition, the committee has recommended the installation of fluorescent yellow-green pedestrian crossing signs and the enforcement of "no parking" regulations on campus sidewalks.

We look forward to receiving your responses. Together, we can improve pedestrian and bicycle safety on campus.

Nathan M. Macek
and Drew Gold
Co-secretaries
Graduate and Professional Student
Federation Transportation Committee

Macek and Gold are both members of the Campus Pedestrian Safety Committee.



The Daily Tar Heel 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. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: editdesk@unc.edu.