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Don't Settle for Less

Despite potential increases in federal funding, UNC-system officials must not back down from efforts to increase state financial aid.

Right on the heels of a \$600 tuition increase, UNC-system officials have taken the ridiculous step of slashing their proposed financial aid package by a whopping \$5.8 million.

Part of the motivation for the cut is a proposed increase in federally funded Pell Grants. UNC-system officials claim that cutting their aid package is a logical step in response to the potential increase in federal aid. But rather than slash \$6 million from the proposal they've already devised, they should push for the whole \$36 million package and thus help thousands of students pay for college.

It's great that Uncle Sam is set to step up and shoulder a larger share of financing higher education. UNC-system officials, however, seem to be missing the point.

Instead of following the federal government's lead and working to increase desperately needed state funding for North Carolina's public universities, UNC-system officials are simply passing the buck.

Granted, this has been a horrible year for the state budget. Hurricane Floyd and various tax fiascoes have put the N.C. General Assembly in a budget crunch they had no way of anticipating. And UNC-system officials are correct to think that it will be easier

to pass a cheaper bill. But that's obvious.

What's also obvious is that UNC-system schools do not currently meet the full demonstrated financial need of its students, often falling painfully short.

An increase in Pell Grant funding compounded with UNC's traditional aid package, however, could make powerful inroads in closing that gap between need and aid.

But that's apparently not what UNC officials have in mind.

They should take advantage of this opportunity to ease the financial burden of many of its students, especially in light of tuition increases that might not cover the entirety of the corresponding increase in financial need.

Besides, the tuition increase and financial aid proposal are two totally separate bills. Lawmakers could approve the tuition increase and junk the financial aid package — leaving students further in the lurch.

The federal government has given North Carolina a great opportunity to strengthen its commitment to higher education.

Let's hope that UNC-system officials realize this and put up a strong fight for students.

It's a fight that's necessary to help meet the increasing financial need that UNC-system officials helped to create.

JONATHAN CHANEY — EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

Peace-Loving Noncents

Chapel Hill residents are hopelessly out of touch when it comes to the necessity of U.S. military spending.

The results of the annual "penny poll" held in front of the Franklin Street post office Monday goes to show just how out of touch some Chapel Hill residents are with reality.

The Orange County Peace Coalition organized the tax day poll to show how much of the federal budget goes to defense spending. The intent is to incense taxpayers with the misguided notion that their money is wasted with missiles and helicopters instead of spending on the environment and education.

In the poll, residents chuckled more pennies into the jars for education, health care and the environment than for the military.

Instead of bemoaning the number of pennies spent on the nation's defenses, the state of decay in our nation's military should inspire local residents to put even more money into it. According to President Clinton's budget for 2001, only \$292 billion will be spent on national defense. That's a mere 16 percent of the total budget.

For me, that's not a bad bargain for national security. But military spending should not involve bargain shopping.

The sad truth is that during Clinton's watch, our military has deteriorated to a critical point. Recruitment is far below quotas for all branches of the armed services. The pay for servicemen and women is abysmal, with 12,000 currently on food stamps.

The only prospect for serving the country

is as a policeman in a ravaged foreign nation such as Bosnia, Haiti or Somalia.

The reason the military has become the redheaded stepchild of the nation is simple. The United States is at peace. The economy is booming. With the Soviet Union out of the picture, we have a false sense of security.

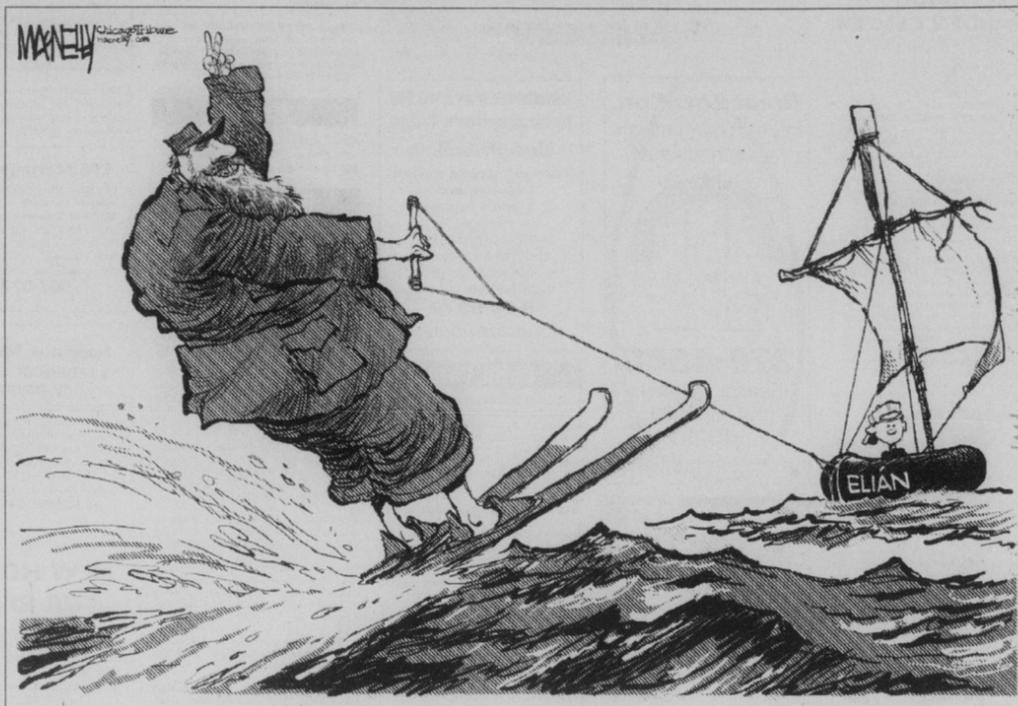
But trouble looms on the horizon, my friends. China, which President Clinton seeks to give permanent normal trading relations to and thus help the country gain entry into the World Trade Organization, has been rattling its saber at Taiwan since the tiny island nation elected a pro-independence president March 18. The United States is obligated to defend Taiwan against China under 1979's Taiwan Relations Act.

The communist nation admits that it lacks the capability to invade and control Taiwan in an amphibious assault at the present time. It is currently laboring to modernize its military and biding its time.

"We need a decade or two of peace," a Chinese military expert told Newsweek magazine this week. "Then ... maybe."

Now is not the time to be lulled into a peaceful slumber. More money must be pumped into our nation's military to support hardware upgrades, increase troop pay and encourage recruitment.

A few pennies now will save us a lot more in the future. That's just my two cents.



Elian Uproar Obscures Other Woes

The question of whether little Elian Gonzalez should return to Cuba has received thousands of inches of printed newspaper coverage recently.

Given that children live and die every day in communist countries with many Americans giving little thought to their existence, our absorption in his case is worth exploring.

We have enjoyed a peace and a level of economic comfort in recent decades that have made it easy for us to forget the constant dangers faced by millions of men, women and children every day. Because the Soviet Union no longer presents a military threat, we have become ignorant and apathetic toward conditions in the remaining communist nations.

Elian, however, reminds us that all is not well. And perhaps on some level we believe that doing the right thing in his case will mitigate our guilt in failing to remember the immense suffering experienced by children in other parts of the world.

Even if we are divided about whether or how the U.S. government should involve itself in other nations' internal politics, we know that our consciences as human beings should be stirred.

Our reluctance to return this child to Cuba is not merely a cultural snobbishness toward countries whose politics are different from ours; the Cuban government under Castro has indicated that the boy might be required to spend time in re-education camp to counteract the effects of his time in America.

Returning him to Cuba does not only mean reuniting him with his father.

It also means consigning him to a life where the state will seek actively to control his mind and where little boys like him stand a decent statistical chance of going to bed hungry many days of their lives.

In spite of these considerations, we might still believe that his best interests are served by placing him with his biological father, but we need to look realistically and conscientiously at his options.

Such facts are often neglected by those who assert that it is capitalism that is brutal or uniquely unjust.

In North Korea, for example, the govern-



TARA ROBBINS
SMALL PRINT

ment has instituted a policy that requires citizens to eat only two meals per day. The state absorbs disproportionate amounts of the materials produced, so that the workers whom communism claims to serve are not permitted to receive the benefits of their labor. They work endlessly to support the enormous expenses of a military that keeps them from expressing their ideas or their material creativity with any freedom.

Likewise, in Vietnam and China, the gains promised at the outset of communist revolutions have not materialized. People who might otherwise have had meaningful work, decent food and sound housing live today in squalor because the system failed to provide the prosperity their leaders prophesied it would.

The leaders who have perpetuated the idea that communism is better for workers even as they have siphoned off the best of the products of those workers should be held responsible for the hunger and disease their people suffer.

Because these injustices rarely afflict Americans (unlike, for example, terrorism), it is easy for us to forget that in many other countries around the world, people are still violently attacked and imprisoned for holding religious and political convictions that differ from those dictated by the state.

Houses are still raided in the middle of the night, fathers and mothers are arrested and taken from their small children, and husbands and wives are separated for years at a time with little or no word of each others fate.

This is not a metaphor, a sentimental melodrama or American political propaganda; it is a present reality, painstakingly documented

by organizations like Amnesty International, the Voice of the Martyrs and the United Nations.

Even liberal periodicals such as The New Republic have recommended a reading of The Black Book of Communism, the first comprehensive study of the horrors of 20th-century communist regimes, as integral to any serious understanding of communist philosophy.

Moreover, this reality has been vividly envisioned and thoroughly explicated in George Orwell's "1984" and "Animal Farm." In these novels, George Orwell describes the abuses of power by the communist state, and the virtuosity of his critique makes the existence of those regimes all the more damning because there can be no excuse of ignorance on the part of those who acquiesce to them.

Capitalism provides an answer to some of the material problems engendered by communism, but it does not provide a spiritual answer. Capitalism accurately describes the way that people, acting out of natural human self-interest, will work to create things that they and others want so that society as a whole produces what it needs.

But problems with capitalism occur when our material choices begin to dominate our lives and when our desire to acquire more property eclipses our humanitarian and ethical imperatives.

We have the freedom to become monstrous in our material acquisitiveness. Capitalism does not take food from anyone, but the free market allows us to choose not to share it.

We can become as murderously selfish privately as the communist state, not only in the economic decisions we make but also in the moral imperatives we elect to follow or to ignore.

We make our own choices, and, sadly, we might choose to remember to care for only one little boy.

Tara Robbins, a graduate student in the Department of English from Millville, N.J., dedicates this column to George Orwell's biggest fan, whose birthday was Tuesday. Happy 26th, Tom Horan! Reach her at trobbins@unc.edu.

UNC Owes Black Football Players More Credit, Less Suspicion

When a long-time friend moved from small-town West Virginia to Washington, D.C., she was concerned for her safety on the streets of a city with one of the nation's highest crime rates. She asked my advice for what she should do to protect herself.

We were walking in downtown D.C. with her husband. He was the excellent reason why she was making the move. I suggested that when she walked alone at night that she should cross the street toward the light.

Her husband, a nationally known blues harmonic player, then rocked my world. He allowed for how all of his life in D.C., he did the opposite. He crossed to the dark so as not to make passers-by fearful. He is tall, strong and black. He sees white people cringe at his presence.

The knowledge that he had to live his life in the shadows stunned me. At times, I am so naïve.

I love Carolina football, and there's a connection between my black friend



TERRY WIMMER
OMBUDSMAN

in D.C. and my fondness for members of the football team I have come to know. That connection extends beyond the greater campus community and to a concern I have about racial attitude in this country.

One of the goals for my job as ombudsman was to reach out to the community here and translate back to readers issues worthy of greater discourse. This university's academic responsibility to its black students, and in particular its black athletes, is worthy of that discourse.

I came to know some members of

the team because I parked my truck near the Academic Support Center. Late in 1998, I walked inside and offered my assistance as a tutor.

With my background in writing and editing, I felt I could be of some service. I worked with athletes for almost a year, but my primary attention turned to the football team.

The University invites these young men here, and we cheer, and too often jeer, their hard work on the field. Some come wholly unprepared for the class work. A secondary education system too often values their athletic skills to the detriment of their academics.

It's uncommon for any 18-year-old black man to have ready trust for a 45-year-old white man, but through perseverance on my part, and patience on theirs, we built respectful relationships.

I was their worst nightmare. I challenged their ideas. I was a taskmaster with their writing. I would send them back to the keyboard for rewrites again and again.

I tried to hammer home rules of

grammar and structure for preparing academic papers. It worked. And then it didn't.

One player was hauled before the Honor Court because six words in a 12-page paper came directly from a listed source without attribution.

In my mind, it was sloppy work, and not plagiarism, but the teaching assistant felt otherwise.

She had challenged his improvement before. This time she went to the library and checked six different sources cited, comparing his work word for word.

So in the middle of final exams, this young black man found himself sweating his academic and athletic future. He felt tortured for weeks until the court tossed out the complaint.

Why him? Was it because he was a football player or because he was a black football player? I fear it was the latter because as the young black men began to improve their writing, the gut reaction from some with grading authority was that something was

amiss.

My tenure ended when a different teaching assistant bandied about veiled threats of more Honor Court challenges. I left because I could not allow my fingerprints to leave a smudge.

I am not saying professors should not question dramatic change in a black student's work, but when the instinctive response to a black student's improvement is that something must be wrong, then something is most definitely wrong.

At the University of Virginia last year, a review of the honor court system found a hugely disproportionate number of black students were brought before the system on cheating charges. Sixty-three percent of those charged were expelled. UVa. is 68 percent white. Ninety-seven percent of the accusers were white.

I do not know whether those numbers hold true here at UNC, but I wouldn't be surprised. Our society has evolved to where saying the "N" word is no longer kosher, but more insidious

is the idea that while some whites no longer say it, then instinctively see it.

Such hidden prejudice reveals itself when police stop blacks who drive nice cars. It shows itself when home mortgages are denied because of race. It shows itself in the system here when the instinct of any white in power is to question the deed instead of praising the progress.

This University owes its black students more. UNC must accept that some athletes come here ill prepared. The professors and teaching assistants who control these young men's fates must be willing to engage these young minds with methods to make sure those needs are met.

It's time to allow blacks to move out of the shadows, but for that to occur, all of white America must move out of the dark.

Reach Ombudsman Terry Wimmer, a doctoral candidate in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, at budman@unc.edu or 605-2790.