

The Daily Tar Heel

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Missed Opportunity

Gubernatorial candidate Mike Easley made the wrong move when he opted out of a debate with opponent Richard Vinroot.

In politics, silence is not golden. This week, State Attorney General Mike Easley made a misstep on the campaign trail when he turned down an opportunity to debate his Republican opponent for governor, former Charlotte Mayor Richard Vinroot.

The debate was scheduled to take place at the North Carolina Bar Association convention in Myrtle Beach, S.C. June 23. Since both men are lawyers, convention organizers had expected both candidates to agree to participate. It seemed like a logical thing.

But logic and politics do not always make comfortable bedfellows.

Despite the fact that Easley has backed out, Vinroot has agreed to speak at the forum regardless. It's a wise political move for him, and it will present an opportunity to elaborate on some of his gubernatorial platform goals in a non-confrontational atmosphere.

This is not the first time that Easley has shied away from a one-on-one debate with Vinroot however.

Earlier this year, Easley decided against participating in a forum with the National Federation of Independent Business that was going to be televised on UNC-TV.

Amanda Crumley, spokeswoman for the Easley campaign, said there were numerous reasons the Attorney General opted out of the engagement.

"It's early summer. It's out of state. It's not televised. But most importantly, Mr. Easley is very restless with the standard status quo forums that don't reach or involve the broader public. He intends to push for debates that will maximize public participation."

Indeed, it is early summer. But the election is less than six months away. In a high profile race such as this one, voters tend to pay close attention to the candidates early on. The primaries were not far in the distant past, and voters will remember who they cast their bal-

lot for and keep an eye on that man. It's also never too early to try and sway any undecided voters.

Easley is also very astute in pointing out that Myrtle Beach is not in North Carolina and that few people are interested in seeing a Bar Association convention instead of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" on ABC.

However, the press would have covered the event and the debate would have made front-page headlines in papers all over the state.

So even though it was not scheduled to be televised, there would have been a great deal of publicity surrounding the convention and an ample chance for both candidates to get their message out.

Finally, the Attorney General is "restless with the standard status quo forums." What's really disappointing is that this is what Crumley calls Easley's most important reason for dodging the debate.

Voters tend to get restless with the standard status quo politicians who use flimsy excuses to avoid meaningful engagements on the issues, Mr. Easley.

Despite the excuses, Easley has opened the way for Vinroot to take the higher road early on in the campaign.

Now the Republicans can characterize Easley as a candidate afraid to confront his opponent on the issues. It will undoubtedly be used to the Democrat's detriment as the march towards November wears on.

Vinroot has already agreed to Easley's suggestion for a series of televised debates where citizens' questions will be answered.

In his acceptance letter, Vinroot wasted no time in throwing punches about the missed debate. "It is difficult for me to understand why you turned it down, but I am accepting your proposal and hoping it does not turn out to be political posturing."

Only time will tell.

Media Circus

O.J. Simpson once again makes a move to be seen and heard. Hopefully, America will tune out.

We thought that O.J. Simpson was a figure best left in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, we were wrong. Simpson has leapt back onto the public stage in the usual circus fashion that the public has grown to both loathe and love at the same time.

Taking a break from his manhunt to discover the real killers of his wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman in June 1994, O.J. has announced plans to hold an online chat with people from across the country.

But talking with the Juice isn't free.

Using a new internet site, publiccrossing.com, O.J. will charge a fee for users to come online and hear him answer questions from the audience.

Simpson seems excited about the project. "I've always wanted to be able to talk directly to the public. It's amazing how many people don't know the facts of my case."

But if Simpson wanted an open forum where he would be forced to answer hard-hitting questions about the past few years to a large national audience, he could have gone to a legitimate news organization like CNN or "60 Minutes."

Instead, he chose to hold this foray in cyberspace and charge people to come and hear his words of wisdom.

Hopefully, America will log off and tune out this attempt at media publicity.

But even if you can escape O.J. online,

you can't escape him on television.

In another enterprise, Simpson has pondered taking a polygraph test relating to the murders he was accused, but later acquitted, of, in 1994.

Where will this potentially explosive and revelatory event take place?

Pay-Per-View television. Nothing screams legitimacy like a polygraph examination on PPV. Come on, O.J. What do you want out of this?

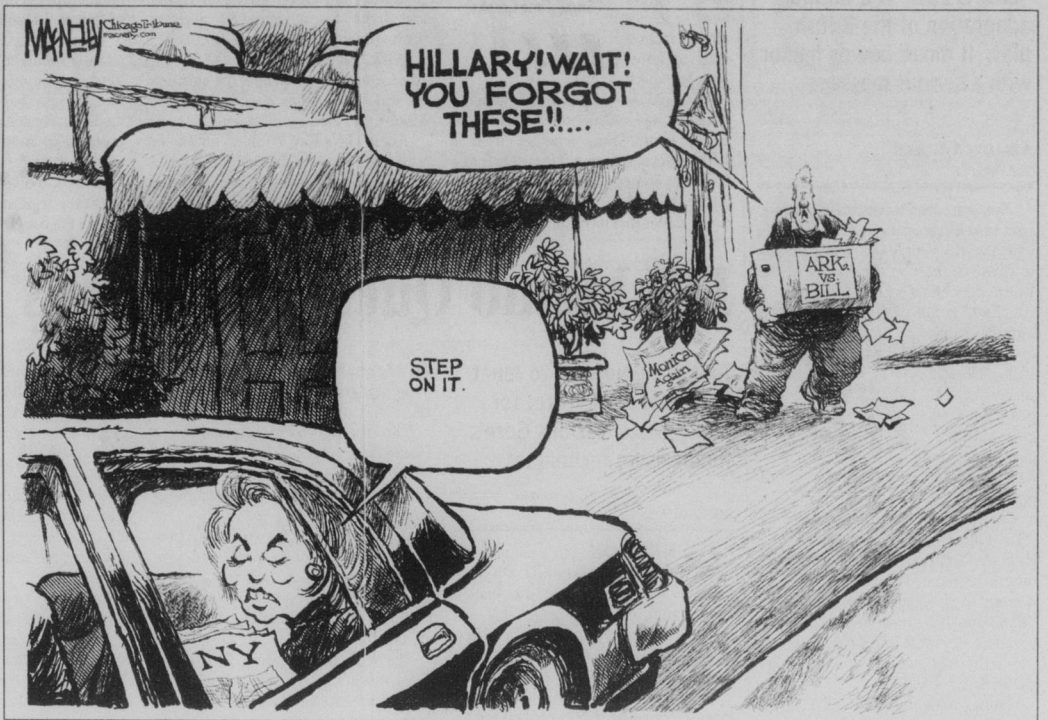
He's already pledged to give some of the proceeds to The Innocence Project, which works to free wrongly convicted prisoners. Any other money he might make off of these projects would be siphoned off by the families of Nicole and Ron, thanks to that pesky civil suit O.J. lost.

He has no grandiose illusions of mass public vindication. He's recently said that "no lie detector test is going to change anyone's mind."

In reality, what Simpson is trying to do is remain alive in the public's eye. Now that all of the tell-all books have either been trashed or relegated to the bargain bin at Barnes & Noble, and the made-for-TV movies have been shelved on every networks' wall of shame, O.J. needs a way to show America that he's still around.

Maybe a scant few people will tune in just to see Simpson strapped into a chair with electrical equipment surrounding him.

But hopefully, no one will care.



Spears is a Sign of the Apocalypse

Corporate rock still sucks. I remember the good ol' days of music. Those were the days before there was a Gap on Franklin Street, before the Cat's Cradle had been turned into a beer bar full of white hats pushing and shoving over 25 cent wings on Thursday nights.

Those were the days when bands like the Pixies played at Memorial Hall and the Chapel Hill music scene was something to be proud of; bands like Zen Frisbee, Polvo, Archers of Loaf and Superchunk played almost every weekend.

Back in those days Spin magazine named Chapel Hill the "epitome of cool" on the East Coast, long before Mammoth Records was bought out by Walt Disney.

In those heady days you could hear Nirvana on almost any radio station and Britney Spears was still in diapers.

Things have changed. These days, Britney Spears' new album debuts in second place for the most first-week album sales in history.

At the top of the list for the most first-week album sales is, of course, "NSync, arguably the only band in the world actually worse than Britney Spears.

The poppy boy band's Web site proudly notes the band has been No. 1 on the Billboard charts for eight consecutive weeks. Please, won't they just go "bye, bye, bye?"

Such is the sad state of music today. "NSync gets rich and Britney Spears "Can't Get No Satisfaction," the lead song on her new album. Mick Jagger must be thrilled.

Note to Britney: if you stopped hanging out with guys like "NSync you might find someone who can satisfy you. Give a guy who doesn't wear makeup a try - you might be surprised.

In the middle of this musical wasteland is Napster, the program that gives you all the free music you can handle. After about a month of using Napster, I'd downloaded every single song by every single artist that I could think of.

Every now and then I'll think of something I missed, but for the most part I have all the music I've ever wanted. With a computer and a fast connection to the internet, you can do the same thing.

Thanks to Napster, you can avoid greedy record labels, overcharging CD companies and insolent "I'm cooler than you are" sales clerks.

The best part? Napster is free. The price of such convenience these days is



BILL HILL
"DON'T CALL ME WHITE"

litigation: you know something is "for real" - whether it is Pokémon or Elian Gonzalez - when lawsuits and million dollar damage figures start flying.

Napster is no exception. Metallica, the '80s hair band relic that now likes to play classical music and hardcore-rapper-turned business exec/producer Dr. Dre have both filed lawsuits against Napster claiming copyright violation.

In response, some colleges and universities - hot beds of Napster users - blocked access to Napster servers over the campus networks.

Even worse, thanks to the lawsuits over 300,000 people lost their Napster accounts for the (gasp) sin of downloading Metallica.

Now I'm as much for punishing Metallica fans as anyone: I say strap 'em to the hood of a Trans-Am and send them back to the trailer park.

But to block people from using a computer program simply because they did what millions of other people around the world are doing every day seems silly at best.

Perhaps Metallica was looking to drum up publicity for a fading career. Let's face it: *Master of Puppets* was cool 15 years ago but these days angry old men just can't compete with the likes of Christina Aguilera.

Or maybe Metallica was mad that out of the millions of Napster users around the world only 300,000 made the choice to download their "art."

Either way, the Napster cat is out of the bag and Metallica comes off like party poopers.

Here's a tip for Metallica: lose the horse and buggy and hop on the technology bus. It's much more exciting.

The folks behind the lawsuits accuse Napster users of financially ruining the recording industry. Obviously, these people haven't been watching the news.

It turns out that last year was the most profitable year in history for the record industry. One of the reasons for such fat profits was fraud: in May, the top 5 recording companies

settled an antitrust lawsuit with the Federal Trade Commission.

According to CNN, Sony, Bertelsmann, EMI, Universal and Time Warner scammed consumers out of almost half a billion dollars over the last three years through a price-fixing scheme.

Apparently, selling \$15 billion a year of here-today-gone-tomorrow "artists" like Britney Spears wasn't enough for the recording industry.

Besides only releasing crap, the record companies overcharged consumers, as well. Thanks a lot, guys.

I personally love being ripped off for the privilege of listening to over-produced major label schlock.

Now, because of Napster, these same giant multi-national media companies are crying foul. The corporate executives who have the luxury of charging their crimes to the company bank account are the same people who are so upset that college students have gotten around their scam.

If you rip someone off as a record label executive, you have "increased market value for your stockholders" or some such nonsense. Yet if you rip those corporate executives off by using Napster, you're a pirate.

Go figure. Like Metallica, these record exec guys need to get a clue: bring back the single, stop charging \$17 for a CD and sign some good artists. Just imagine the profits if the labels released good music again.

So until Lars Ulrich kicks down my door and pries my computer from my cold, dead fingers, I'll keep on using Napster to get my music collection back up to snuff.

After years of student life many of my best CDs have ended up in the used bin at Schoolkids to pay for more important things like beer and tuition.

If I'm a "pirate" for digging up all the old music online that I can't find at stores anyway, so be it. It's just too easy to reminisce about the good ol' days, grab a Descendants tune off the net and dream about when Chapel Hill was supposed to be the next Seattle.

So I'm a criminal for getting my music off Napster?

Oops - I did it again.

Bill Hill is a senior Anthropology major who is most recently from Raleigh. Send any pirated music to him at wbhill@unc.edu (unless of course you are a redneck Metallica fan).

READERS' FORUM

International Students and Teachers Require More Tuition Support

TO THE EDITOR:

We are writing to bring attention to the difficulties arising from our current circumstances as international instructors who have reached the ten-semester tuition support limit.

All of us serve the University as instructors and researchers, yet we must pay full out-of-state tuition.

Considering that the University now requires that we register for at least three credit hours, we must pay at least \$3,100 toward tuition and fees per semester.

Thus, we find ourselves in a vicious circle: on one hand, we must work to earn a subsistence income; on the other hand, it is virtually impossible for us to make adequate

progress towards completion of our degrees.

To make matters worse, we do not know whether our department will be able to offer us work opportunities next semester to even cover our tuition expenses.

As international students, we are not entitled to loans, most grants or other sources of financial support available to Americans.

International students are also not eligible for in-state residency status and the law does not allow them to work outside the University.

This situation forces a great number of international graduate students to leave the University and return to their home countries after years of commitment to their departments, the University and the state of North Carolina.

We ask that the University reconsider the situation of international

graduate students most immediately by lifting the ten semester limit on tuition waivers.

Some of us have addressed this issue within our departments, but the situation cannot be rectified by individual academic units.

Additional funding to support graduate students must come from the University and the state legislature. We ask that members of the community contact the Graduate School at gradschool@unc.edu or the Chancellor's Office at 962-1365 in support of outstanding graduate employees.

Nereida Segura-Rico
Graduate Student
Comparative Literature

Estelle Taraud
Graduate Student
Romance Languages



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments. Letters must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff include their title, department and phone number. The DTH has the right to edit letters. 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.

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