

The Daily Tar Heel

98th year of editorial freedom

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President's crime bill misses target

President Bush is attempting to cash in on his soaring popularity by forcing Congress to approve an already twice-rejected crime bill or risk appearing unpatriotic. "We stood by our troops, and now today it's time to stand up for America's prosecutors and police," Bush told Congress last Monday before introducing the bill.

Bush's attempt to manipulate public opinion to advance his own political agenda is disgraceful. Among the bill's provisions are calls for the revival of a federal death penalty, strict limits on the number of appeals prisoners on death row are allowed to file, and most threatening, a provision to allow illegally obtained evidence to be used in court in certain circumstances.

These certainly are not ideas a legislator must support to be a patriot, especially not the final provision, which is an infringement upon Bill of Rights protections. For President Bush to state that legislators unwilling to vote for this bill are unpatriotic is a base appeal to a mob mentality that makes it impossible for Congress to make decisions based on what they believe is correct.

What is worse, this bill most likely would have passed on its first two tries if Bush had agreed to Democratic amendments to further control of automatic assault weapons and increased federal funding of state and local law enforcement agencies. Bush opposed these additions to his crime bills in both 1989 and 1990.

Bush's claim that executing more crimi-

nals would increase the safety of returning soldiers and their families, but spending more on state and local law enforcement would not suggests he hasn't thought about how to reduce U.S. crime. He is trying to force Congress to increase the severity of a criminal's punishment, but he isn't willing to put the same effort into crime prevention. Crime must be stopped before it happens, not after the damage is done.

Bush's unwillingness to consider the amendments also suggests he has misread the lessons of his victory in Iraq. The U.S.-led forces were victorious in spite of, not because of, Bush's unwillingness to compromise. This may work against a pathetically outgunned third-world nation, but it is no way to advance a domestic program.

Diplomacy is what happens after the guns are put down, and Bush should realize that after two assaults on the Democratic-controlled Congress, it is time to compromise. Instead, he is appealing to a knee-jerk patriotism that sees no difference between opposing the present administration's plans and opposing "America." Sadly enough, with the next round of national elections only a year and a half away, this plan may work if Bush can turn enough people against legislators they have been tricked into considering "unpatriotic."

There is nothing more American than dissent, and it is a national embarrassment to think our President would do something as unpatriotic as attempt to suffocate it.

Cracker Barrel deserves boycott

Not too long ago, it was legal for businesses to hire and fire along racial lines. Stereotypes of African Americans were so pervasive that whites went out of their way to avoid a business if a person of color was employed there. The fight to end racism continues, and in North Carolina and nationwide the fight to end sexual orientation discrimination is just beginning.

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. is one of countless companies that exclude homosexuals from the payrolls. First Tuesday Association for Gay & Lesbian Equality, a Charlotte-based group, is calling for a boycott of Cracker Barrel after an employee was fired from the Charlotte store because he violated the company's policy on homosexuals. Jeffrey Sherill was fired after admitting to his supervisor that he was homosexual. Sherill is one of at least 10 Cracker Barrel employees throughout the Southeast fired for being gay.

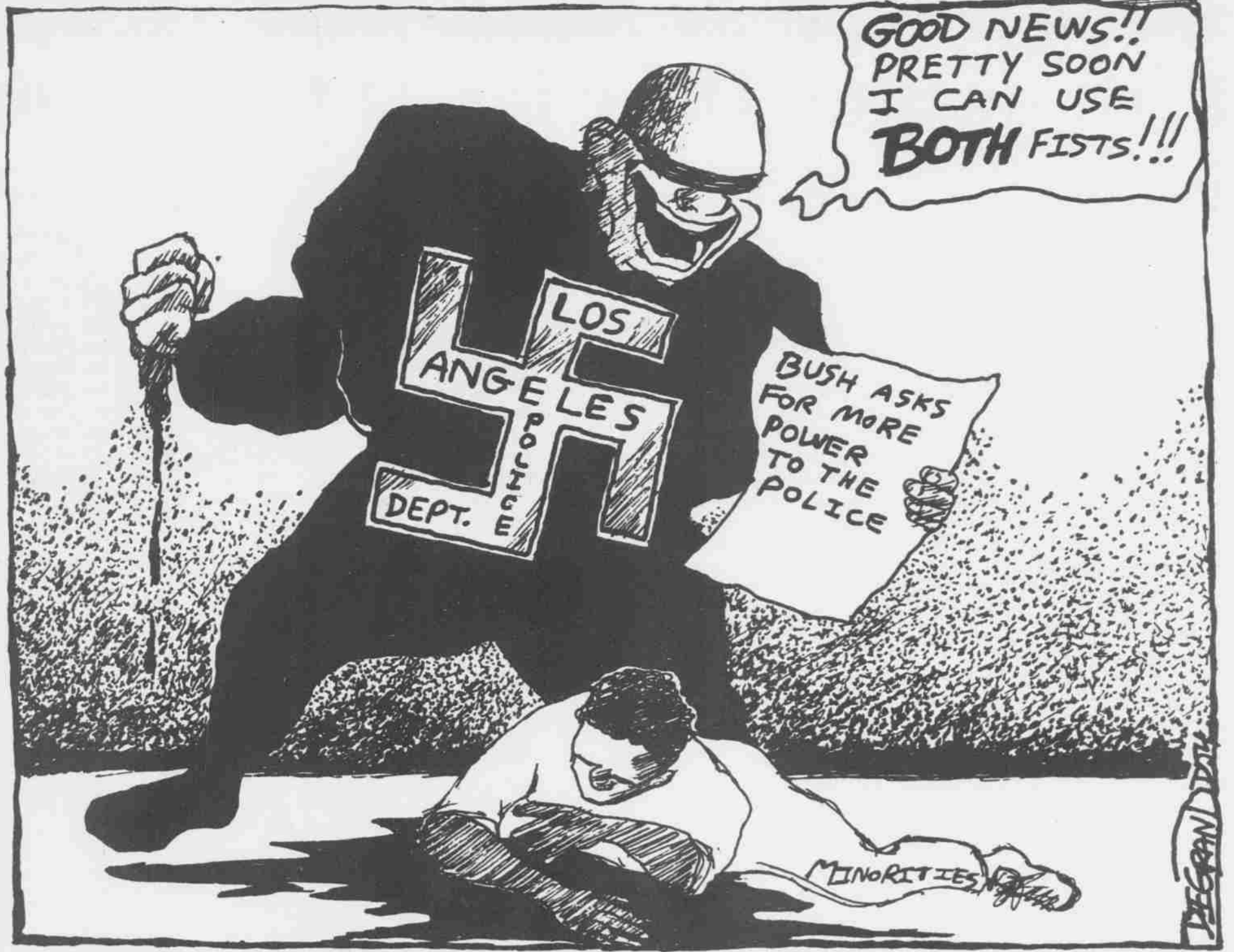
In a policy statement printed in The Charlotte Observer March 16, Cracker Barrel said the company is "founded upon a concept of traditional American values" and that is inconsistent with the concept "to continue to employ individuals in our operating units whose sexual preferences fail to demonstrate normal heterosexual values which have been the foundation of families in our society..."

This statement should raise red flags with Americans who value their freedom and privacy. Cracker Barrel has decided to define traditional American values, but it fails to define who a traditional American is. A little more than 30 years ago, a traditional American would certainly not have been a person of color. African Americans

and many other minorities just didn't fit into the white mainstream's definition of traditional America. Some companies did not hire people of color because their cultural and physical differences made white people uncomfortable. Now Cracker Barrel believes the same holds true for homosexuals; their differences cannot be tolerated. It is amazing that the more things change the more things stay the same.

Cracker Barrel also believes they can decide what values are normal, and hire and fire on the basis of this judgment. By trying to define American values, the company classifies homosexuals as abnormal. But the American psychiatric community has long since removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses, and about 10 percent of people worldwide are homosexual. Certainly Cracker Barrel doesn't wish to alienate 10 percent of its clientele by deeming them to be social misfits.

Discrimination for any reason is wrong. Though Cracker Barrel has retracted its statement, it has yet to rehire any of the employees. A boycott of Cracker Barrel is a good idea. Americans who believe in protecting their freedom and privacy should treat companies like Cracker Barrel with the same disdain as the whites-only businesses of America's past. The discrimination taking place is just the same monster with a different face. And unlike African Americans who are protected against discrimination by federal and state laws, homosexuals enjoy no such consideration. It's up to the American people to see that blatant discrimination, such as that practiced by Cracker Barrel, does not go unpunished.



READERS' FORUM

Letter lacks recognition of risks faced by women

To the editor:
 In his letter to the editor ("Letter shows ignorance of anti-male sexism," March 7), Andrew B. Davidson chose a very poor illustration to support his allegation. He spoke of how "disturbing it is to have women regularly avoid you as you walk down the street at night because of the criminal activities of a handful of sick individuals," and characterized this as "guilty-before-proven-otherwise discrimination."

Is Mr. Davidson trying to suggest that a woman's choice of association — or no-association — with him is discrimination? That she is obliged to interact with him, or any other male stranger, on the street at night? Does he place his discomfort at being the object of woman's necessary caution in a potentially dangerous situation on the same level as the possibility she faces of being a victim of assault? And if a woman set aside this caution and was subsequently the victim of an assault on the street at night, would he be among the many who would say, "Well, why wasn't she more careful? It's her own fault."

Mr. Davidson may be, as he says, "tolerant enough" to acknowledge that sexism exists, although it is not readily apparent from his letter. He clearly does not have a clue to the reality that women are at risk in this society and that we cannot always know in advance where that risk is coming from. We are blamed if we do not modify our behavior to reduce the risk to ourselves, and if we do modify our behavior, people like Mr. Davidson get their feelings hurt. Forgive me if I'm not particularly sympathetic to your angst, Mr. Davidson, but I see the issue from a slightly more serious perspective.

The juxtaposition of Mr. Davidson's letter and Mary Jo Dunnington's well-written and thoughtful column on ignorance and bliss was serendipity. Mr. Davidson would do well to read Dunnington's column and ponder the real issues of sexism.

MARCIA J. DECKER
 UNC staff

Pass/fail option gives needed choice for UNC

To the editor:
 I felt a need to respond to reports that the pass/fail option may be dropped. I am a bit unqualified to respond to this particular problem because I have not as yet taken a pass/fail class; however, there is a need on campus to keep this option available to the students. The reasons are: high interest in a class but great fear in not being able to keep your grades up, and helping students maintain a normal psychological balance in their lives. Both of these aspects are very important.

Having high interest in a class such as physics, but also having great fear of lowering your GPA or totally flunking the class and having to take another class again to replace it are definitely fears of students. By dropping the pass/fail option, a student who might experience a physics class, enjoy it and start the journey to a great career in the sciences would be stopped short. These students are highly competitive and they realize that a lower GPA might stop them from getting an interview their senior year. By dropping the pass/fail option, you would close doors to these students. Keep the doors open. Learning is an experience. By dropping the pass/fail option

you would be closing doors to a student who might not realize his or her capabilities or interests. You might even be stopping new technologies for the future. How many of the professionals on this campus figured out what they wanted to do or become in their undergraduate years?

The second reason stated is helping students maintain a normal psychological balance in their lives. Being an older student, I see many of these students really stressed out. I have often said to many of them, "This is just one class, just one grade. You will look back on this 10 or 20 years from now and laugh at how upset you were over this." But they aren't laughing now. Maybe the classes they miss in some of the pass/fail classes keep them from dropping out of school entirely. Maybe they went running or exercised instead to rid themselves of depression.

I again ask the administrators on this campus, "Can't you remember what it was like to be young?" These kids are good. These kids are smart. They need all the help from you that they can get. Don't close the doors. Keep the pass/fail option.

CLAUDIA JONES
 Junior
 Industrial Relations

Committees' demands already being met

The Committee for Middle East Misinformation and the Student Environmental Action Committee (strange bedfellows until you realize that some members of both have devious underlying political motives) have issued "demands" (to whom, it isn't clear). But, guess what? Every one of these "demands" is in the works or has been met!

"Demand one" for a comprehensive Middle East peace conference has been called for by President Bush and may even be successful if the Arab nations now really want a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, which is of the Arab nations' own creation since THEY refused the United Nations call for two separate nations in 1948 and have forced the "Palestinians" into squalid camps for over 40 years.

"Demand two" for a nonaggressive U.S. foreign policy has been the basis of U.S. foreign relations for generations; this nation is the most generous to other nations (even former enemies, once the fighting THEY started has ended) of all nations on earth. The United States has to be pushed harder than any other country before resorting to fighting.

"Demand three" for establishing an alternative energy policy has been clearly, logically and comprehensively thought out by scores of experts and expressed in President Bush's recently announced energy policy. Like the state legislature of an unnamed state some years ago that demanded "them perfessers" made things too complicated by having pi being an irrational number so they passed a law making pi equal to three in their state, some of these young fledgling "environmentalists" seek to repeal the laws of thermodynamics that govern energy transfer and efficiency as well as the law of human nature that seeks a better and more comfortable life. By the way, there is a solution to saving petroleum for its more valuable chemical content than burning it and to continuing a comfortable life — by building safe nuclear power plants.

"Demand four" for guaranteed

rights for Arab Americans and political dissenters has always been U.S. policy. All U.S. citizens enjoy such rights; you might note that even when anti-war protesters were demonstrating, no one stopped them from showing just how uninformed and naive they really are, and no persons of Arab descent have been investigated by the FBI or police unless they were members of known violent groups. Plus, the fighting in the Gulf was to protect Arabs. I feel that some of the 433 signers of the recent "demands" DTH advertisement don't know that White House Chief of Staff John Sununu is an Arab American. The U.S. troops in the desert and the jungles of Viet Nam were fighting for the freedom that allows people to dissent in this nation, even when they are wrong.

"Demand five" that the United States not have an economy "dominated" by military imperative is reality and has been for many, many years. The U.S. spends less than 6 percent of its GNP on defense. This is the TOTAL for the defense establishment, including salaries of military and civilian personnel, funding for military hospitals, funding for research to cure diseases, costs of dredging harbors, etc. Compared with North Korea's 22 percent, Vietnam's 20 percent, Iraq's 20 percent and the USSR's 15 percent of GNP, it is clear to any intelligent person that the U.S. economy is certainly not "dominated" by the military. You might compare the total cost of the U.S. defense to the dollars spent by addicts on illegal drugs in this nation — both figures are similar in magnitude. By the way, the U.S. military is being reduced this year by over 200,000 troops due to the reduced threat globally because of the utter failure of Marxism. Where is the military imperative?

So, all they had to do was ask — and they have all they wanted.

R. EVERETT LANGFORD, Ph.D.
 Graduate student
 Environmental Sciences

New contraceptive provides more freedom

To the editor:
 It is unfortunate that just when our contraceptive choices have broadened after years with no new contraceptives, that Norplant comes under criticism so soon and by a woman. Anne Holloway ("Norplant showered with false praises," March 4) bases her criticism on the potential side effects of Norplant without paying any attention to its benefits. Furthermore, she fails to realize that women cannot use just any contraceptive, and thus a wide choice is extremely important. After Ms. Holloway's misleading letter, we feel that it is important to provide the community with accurate information.

For example, Norplant provides long-term contraception to women who are monogamous, who do not want any more children and who are adverse to sterilization. For these women, barrier methods that provide protection from STDs and AIDS are not an issue. If women choose to have more than one partner, literature suggests that protection from unwanted pregnancies and STDs increases with the use of two contraceptive methods, for example the Pill and a condom. Why doesn't Ms. Holloway speak up against the Pill then, as she does with Norplant, since it also is not a barrier method? If the pill can be used with condoms, why can't Norplant?

Ms. Holloway also leaves the reader with a misleading percep-

tion of IUDs. She tries to discredit Norplant by comparing it to IUDs when IUDs in fact were wrongly discredited due to bad publicity and misinformed people. The IUD is a good contraceptive, but it is inappropriate for women who have more than one sex partner because of the increased risk of pelvic inflammatory disease. This increased risk is associated with the sexual behavior of the woman and thus her increased susceptibility to contract STDs is not due to the IUD itself. The IUD is a generic term, and there has been only one bad device, the Dalkon Shield. The Dalkon Shield was withdrawn from the market, as it should have been, but unfortunately along with other effective and safe IUD devices. As a result, women experienced limitations in their contraceptive choices.

Until the introduction of Norplant, the only options for many women uncomfortable using the barrier methods were either the Pill or sterilization. Why then complain when efforts are being made to develop new contraceptives and one has finally hit the market after 20 years of clinical trials in accordance to FDA regulation? Also be mindful that this country's FDA regulations are the most conservative in the world; Norplant has been used successfully by women from many countries for over two decades. In addition, the "suing craze" in the United States certainly has not made contraceptive development attractive to pharmaceutical companies. Therefore, any developments in this area should be applauded and not condemned.

Ms. Holloway is clearly wrong in her attack of men as shunning reproductive responsibility and shoving it on women. Ms. Holloway needs to get her facts straight. We suggest MHCH 103 (fall semester only). Women have a more complex reproductive system than men, however the fact remains that only one egg is released per month and this can be more easily manipulated than the sperm production of men that is continuous and not cyclical and produces 400 million sperm every three days. In addition, there is no such thing as "we are having a baby." Men do not get pregnant; they also do not get labor pains, swollen ankles or stretch marks (we would like to include fat here, but men also get fat, just not due to pregnancy).

As long as women are the only sex who gives birth, we would like to see a wide range of contraceptives available in order to empower women and ensure their reproductive freedom. Besides, how many women would believe a man who said, "Yes, honey, I remembered to take the Pill?"

DONNA MCCARRAGER
 and NIKKI COTTEN
 Graduate Students
 Maternal and Child Health

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When writing letters, please follow these guidelines:
 ■ If you want your letter published, please sign and date it. No more than two signatures, please.
 ■ All letters should be no longer than 400 words. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.
 ■ All letters must be typed.
 ■ Please include such vital statistics as your year in school, major, phone number and hometown.
 ■ If you have a title that is relevant to your letter's subject, please include it.
 ■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity.

The Daily Tar Heel

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