

The Daily Tar Heel

98th year of editorial freedom

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Getting their wires crossed

Sadly enough, the high-voltage charge of racism has been brought up once again on campus.

However, this time it doesn't concern statues or the Homecoming queen. This time the parties involved are the Student Environmental Action Coalition and Carolina Union officials. And the subject is University housekeepers' involvement in a cookout for their benefit sponsored by SEAC.

Conflict arose because the cookout was held in the Pit, which is regulated by the Carolina Union. Because University housekeepers participated in the event, Carolina Union officials charged that SEAC had violated the Facilities Use Policy, which states that only members of student organizations can use University facilities. The group was summarily suspended from facility use.

According to SEAC members, all of the housekeepers who participated in the cookout were indeed organization members. (Non-students are permitted membership in student groups if the number of students exceeds the number of non-students.) However, Union officials assumed that the housekeepers were not members and accused SEAC of violating the policy.

While this assumption might have been unfair to the housekeepers, it was not altogether unreasonable. Carolina Union officials knew the housekeepers were not students and incorrectly assumed they were not members of SEAC. After all, Carolina Union officials are responsible for the enforcement of the policy, and without requiring every member of every student organization to carry proof of membership, this policy is difficult to enforce. This

sometimes, as in this case, allows Union officials subjective judgment in determining who is, or is not, a member of an organization. However, they must operate largely on a system of trust in this determination.

Acknowledging this degree of trust, Union officials should have allowed SEAC the opportunity to explain that the housekeepers were indeed members. What followed was a series of poorly communicated messages among SEAC members, Campus Y officials and various Union officials. SEAC and Campus Y members received conflicting messages from different people in the Union hierarchy, and this caused confusion and some ill will.

While the poor communication by Union officials is inexcusable, SEAC's charge of racism seems to be unfounded. The idea expressed by SEAC's co-chairmen—"Our support of the housekeepers is perceived as a threat to the power structure which keeps the white men on top"—has no basis.

The recent events have done serious harm to relationships among SEAC, the Campus Y and the Carolina Union—relationships that were once strong and rewarding. Union officials' suspension of SEAC from using University facilities because of the involvement of alleged non-members—housekeepers—in the cookout should have been investigated before such a drastic action was taken. Poor communication by Union officials only served to further complicate the matter. However, SEAC members' charge of racism is equally condemnable and serves only to stoke a fire that should be extinguished and not fanned by inflammatory rhetoric.

Failing already low standards

Pending approval from the N.C. Board of Education, the state Department of Public Instruction will take control of five public school districts because of the districts' poor marks in North Carolina's 1991 Report Card—hardly an honor in a state with an educational system which produced the second lowest Scholastic Aptitude Test scores in the country last year.

According to state school board members' guidelines, school districts are subject to takeover if they fail to meet 75 percent of the state's accreditation standards, produce student performance in the bottom 23 percent of all districts and boast a dropout rate of 4.86 percent or higher for grades seven through 12.

Education in the United States is becoming increasingly important as students across the nation fall behind their peers in other industrialized countries. The current economic situation demands that U.S. technology regain its ability to compete with the advances in countries such as Germany and Japan—a goal that can be achieved only if education is improved from the bottom up.

Since public education continues to be a power and responsibility left to individual

states in this country, it is vital that the N.C. state government get involved in reviewing and improving the educational practices of the five troubled districts: Durham city, Hoke County, Robeson County, Vance County and Goldsboro city. By providing the districts with workers to concentrate specifically upon developing and facilitating school improvement plans, the state finally is taking some concrete steps to improve the worst of the worst.

After two school years of state assistance, the districts will be re-evaluated and, if sufficient improvement has not been made, the state will replace the local superintendent and/or school board—a move that, although it may infringe upon the rights of the people who elected these officials, will be necessary to bring failing schools up to par.

Once these school systems are improved to meet the standards of the remaining "acceptable" (according to Department of Public Instruction standards) systems in North Carolina, the state can begin working on raising its educational standards to the point of competition for No. 1 among the best rather than the worst.

Editorial Policy

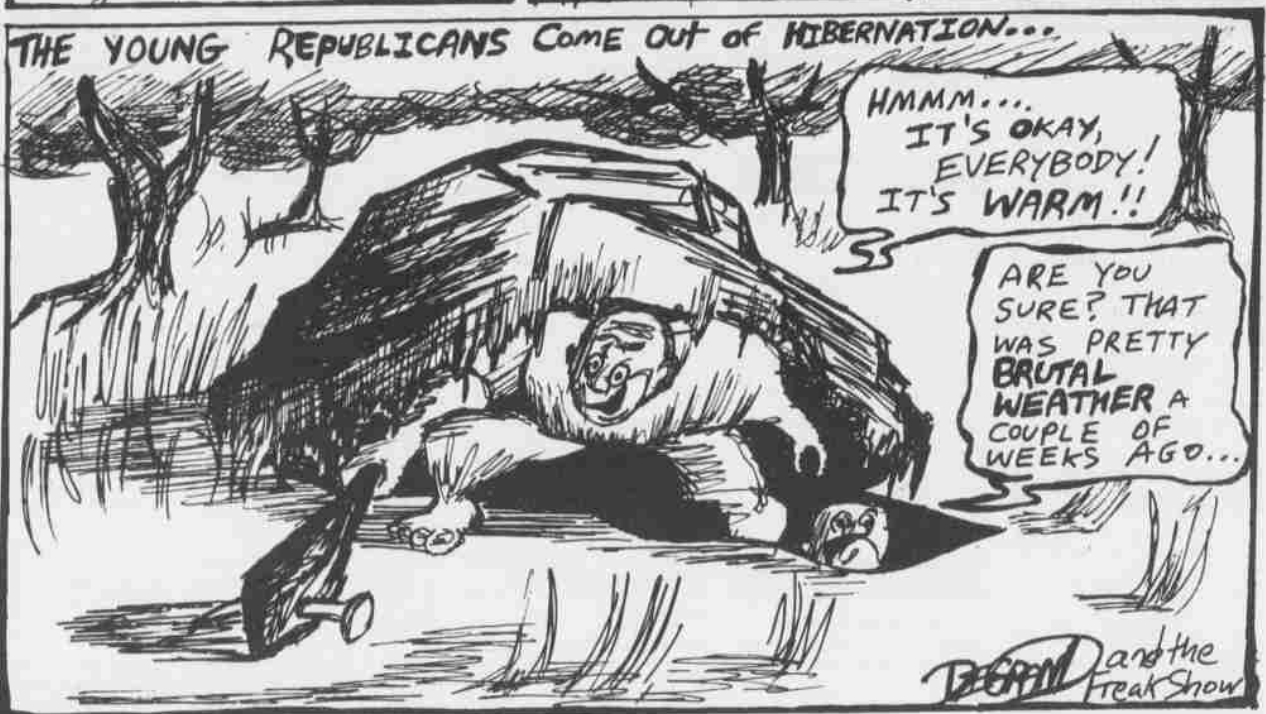
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The Daily Tar Heel

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Bibbs: Record must be set straight on bid for SBP

Mark Bibbs

Guest Writer

When I took my oath of office in 1990, I swore to uphold the Student Government Code for life or for as long as I was a student at the University of North Carolina. Two years later, I still am upholding that code, yet outspoken critics, such as Brad Torgan, feel that I am violating the sacred precepts of democracy and destroying the credibility of student government by running for student body president while retaining my position on the Student Supreme Court. Considering all of the publicity I have received for the retention of my position, I feel the need to state publicly my reasons for not resigning.

There is no term length for members of the Student Supreme Court, assuming they remain at this University. Were I to be so unfortunate as not to win the student body presidential election, I would like to serve out my term as Student Supreme Court justice. For this reason only am I not resigning. If I win the upcoming election, I will step down formally from my judicial position at once.

It should be noted further that I have re-

moved myself from Student Supreme Court cases for the duration of my campaign. I did this because I recognized the possible conflict of interests between my judicial branch position and my executive branch aspirations. Depending on the outcome of the election, I will either return my full attention to the court or resign from it immediately. Until the election, however, I will not hedge the system of checks and balances by hearing any Student Supreme Court cases and campaigning for student body president at the same time.

Contrary to what Mr. Torgan would have you believe, many past student body president candidates have held significant positions in other branches of student government, and the democracy of student government has survived. Matt Heyd, the current student body president,

held the highest legislative branch position, speaker of Student Congress, at this time last year. Mr. Torgan, would you be so bold as to say that the credibility of student government has crumbled under the very successful term of the past Speaker of Student Congress, Matt Heyd?

Clearly to say such a thing would be absurd. By the same token, my campaigning for student body president while still retaining a seat on the Student Supreme Court hardly threatens the credibility or democracy of student government. Let me state my reasons for acting as I have one more time.

If I do not win the presidential election, I still would like to retain my position on the Student Supreme Court. If I win the presidential election, however, I will step down from my position on the court immediately. Now let's focus on the real issues in this campaign.

Mark Bibbs is a senior political science major from Carrboro.

Candidates for SBP, DTH, CAA, RHA and senior class: don't let the deadline for platforms pass you by!

Candidates for student body president, Daily Tar Heel editor, Carolina Athletic Association president, Residence Hall Association president and senior class president should send platforms to the DTH by 5 p.m. today!

Platforms will be published on the editorial pages of the Feb. 3 and Feb. 4 issues of the DTH. Platforms must be limited to 800 words. No deviation from this limit will be tolerated. Platforms with more than 800 words will be cut from the end. SBP, DTH, CAA and RHA candidates also must make appointments for endorsement interviews by the 5 p.m. deadline. RHA and CAA candidates will be interviewed Feb. 6; SBP candidates, Feb. 7; and DTH candidates, Feb. 8.

Letters of endorsement for all candidates must be in by 5 p.m. on Feb. 5. SBP, DTH, RHA and CAA candidates are allowed to submit two letters of endorsement. Letters must be no longer than 400 words. Longer letters will be cut from the end.

Endorsement letters will be printed in the Feb. 6, Feb. 7 and Feb. 8 issues of The Daily Tar Heel.

The DTH appreciates the assistance of candidates during what is obviously a very busy time for them. We feel that the paper serves a valuable purpose in informing the student body about election candidates and issues.

Bonjour kitty! French dropout turns ad genius

For reasons far beyond the limited scope and limit of my understanding, these past few days have rendered me the scholastic equivalent of a chimpanzee. My academic performance during the last couple of days has plummeted so that now my average grade is probably about the same as the last two digits of Eisenhower's inauguration date. What could have happened? Something I ate? Perhaps. I don't see why, though, as I've had nothing unusual to eat this week because so far all I've eaten at is a burrito and about four Triskets.

Anyway, I felt like such an academic buffoon because of the French class I just had. As of late, my class participation results have been so poor that I probably would have gotten better results if I had pursed my lips and uttered random syllables. I realized that what I needed was some way of testing my answers before I said them. I had an idea of how to achieve this. I went out and bought a hand puppet, then wrote the N.C. State Department of Manual Textile-Figure Pseudo-Automation and got a puppeteer's license. Today in class I tried out my theory.

I used the small green puppet, Eddie the Bacteria, to answer questions that I was not sure of but thought I had a chance at. If I had been right, then I could have convinced everybody in the class that Eddie heard me say the answer and jumped in (Who's going to believe a bacteria over a person?), and if I had been wrong, well, who would have cared, Eddie said it! It was flawless.

Sadly, everybody caught on. Maybe they saw my lips move. Or maybe I should have disguised my voice. Oh, well. Anyway, when I tried having the puppet give an answer, everyone looked at me with shame and disgust. After a couple muttered suggestions that I see my clergyman, my professor began a ranting character evaluation of your humble narrator that, save for the rather emotional assessment of me as a "pitiable moron, causing anything capable of rational thought to cringe" was quite deprecatory.

It was more than I could take. I attempted to begin my standard procedure for dealing with crises, and, though I managed to wet my pants, completing the first part, I was unable to bolt teary-eyed from the room as the desks were too close together with no clear aisle, causing me to be entangled in the center of the room under a pile of desks. Damn. The next thing I knew I was being pelted with all kinds of French paraphernalia: escargot, crepes, berets, striped shirts, models of the Seine and then, as always seems to happen in my columns about this time, black-



Jason Torchinsky

Turn Your Head and Cough

ness.

When I awoke I was lying in the tattered remains of my clothes in the Pit, my body one big ache from the intense beating given by my French class. I rolled over to realign some vertebrae and saw a copy of The Daily Tar Heel lying next to me. Apparently it had been beaten up in its philosophy class. One of the articles said something about a new plan to make certain dorms more racially integrated. Though I haven't actually read the article, I think I heard somewhere that the plan was that if you are in one of the affected dorms and your student I.D. number ends in, say, 5, then you're black, at least for as long as you stay in that dorm. If your number ends in a 2, then you're a Native American; a 4, you're Asian; a 3, white; and so on. This way every dorm will have a wonderfully diverse balance of peoples.

All right, I'm going to level with everybody. I was trying to think of some smooth transition for the paragraphs to follow, but, damn it, it's no use. This column is way more disjointed than normal—don't think I don't know that. So to hell with some lame-o transition.

I was in my closet the other day, just looking through some old crap when I chanced upon a box of memorabilia. I cleaned off all the chance and then opened the box. I found lots of old pictures of me during the four years before my parents decided to undress me and realized that I was, in fact, a boy. In it were some old frilly clothes, some toys and napkins and stuff, but, most importantly, my old collection of "Hello Kitty" products.

Now, I'm certain that everyone who deigns to call themselves a human is familiar with that trademarked bloated, ribboned head and microscopic face that is cryptically called Hello Kitty. I don't get the name, but I think the entire Hello Kitty idea is Japanese. That's enough to justify the poor use of English and the amazingly small size of all those Hello Kitty products, from those little, tiny pencil case things to little umbrellas, to all kinds of weird, overly shuff note pads and miniature office product stuff that was the mainstay of the Hello Kitty line.

Seeing all of these fine Hello Kitty products caused me to lapse into this fantasy:

The Hello Kitty Company is in big financial trouble. They need to expand their market, for

the government recently has restricted the number of desk items 8-year-old girls can own, cutting severely into Hello Kitty's core market. Somehow the Kitty corporation must expand its market without altering its product line. How can they do this? Advertising. Image.

Researchers for the Hello Kitty company determine that the group with the most money to spend is the 22- to 30-year-old urban executive male group. These people, they determine, must become Hello Kitty's new market.

An intensive advertising blitz begins. A new series of ads in magazines such as Fortune, Esquire, GQ, Playboy and Time feature attractive young men, dressed in smart Italian suits with adoring babes hanging all over them, writing in Hello Kitty note pads with tiny Hello Kitty pencils. The only copy for the ad is at the bottom, where, in bold type, it reads "Hello, kitty."

Then the television ads begin. One has a young executive on the go, waking up, brushing his teeth with two Hello Kitty toothbrushes held together with Hello Kitty pigtail holders, getting dressed in a business suit and Hello Kitty pin, and putting important documents in a small Hello Kitty duffel. Then the scene cuts to him in a board room, drawing important looking graphs on a Hello Kitty washable note board with a Hello Kitty marker. After being congratulated by the boss and receiving adoring looks from an attractive female colleague, the young executive looks into the camera and says "Hello, kitty."

Another version would feature a similarly studly guy zooming around in a '65 Corvette convertible covered with Hello Kitty puffy stickers. After zooming around a corner and picking up a dozen or so swooning women, the young Adonis would look into the camera and say, "Hello, kitty."

Now, I'm not exactly sure what this little flight of fancy means, but I find the images particularly amusing and, in fact, quite gripping. I am not sure of the financial status of the Hello Kitty Company (I lost controlling interest after the stock crash of '89), but I still can dream. Or maybe it's just that damn lovable, mouthless kitty herself that makes me so amused. I don't know. Regardless, it's printed now, and not all of the gold in my refrigerator can change that. So I hope you enjoyed and, I trust, grew a little. Solidarity.

Jason Torchinsky, a junior art history major from Greensboro, is calling Hello Kitty ad executives right now about his brilliant marketing idea.