

Opinions

The Daily Collegian
Wednesday, April 15, 1987

editorial opinion

No time for silence

The killing and torture have hit home. Now it is time for action.

Boris Weisfeiler, a Soviet Jewish emigre and Penn State mathematics professor, apparently was sucked into the maw of Chile's human rights abuses when he disappeared in January 1985 while on a hiking trip.

Chilean police said Weisfeiler drowned while wading across the Nuble and Los Saucos in the southern part of the country, and his body was never found despite intensive searches by police units, army patrols and navy frogmen. But some groups believe Weisfeiler is still alive, a prisoner in a Chilean colony that the United Nations has accused of housing a torture center.

Several University international groups concerned about Weisfeiler's mysterious disappearance will hold a vigil at noon today on the steps of Fattee to commemorate Weisfeiler's disappearance and educate the University community about political oppression and torture.

The Penn State Undergraduate Amnesty International Campus Network, the Undergraduate Student Government's Department of International Affairs and other University international groups involved are to be applauded for taking action.

They will kick off a petition drive aimed at gaining national recognition for Weisfeiler. They want to get some real answers from the reluctant Chilean government, and the more names that appear on the petition the greater the impact will be on our congressmen — especially Heinz and Specter.

"This is an attempt to show these two senators that the University is seriously concerned about Weisfeiler's fate," said David Tubbs, former president of the Undergraduate Amnesty International at

Penn State. Tubbs said University President Bryce Jordan is also writing letters about Weisfeiler to Heinz and Specter.

Also, the organizations will sponsor a film titled *Your Neighbor's Son - The Making of a Torturer* at 7:30 tonight in 301 HUB. And human rights activist Veronica de Negri, a former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, will speak about human rights abuses in Chile from her perspective as both a victim and mother.

De Negri's son, Rodrigo Rojas de Negri, a 19-year-old U.S. student, was beaten and burned to death last spring after taking pictures of a street demonstration in his native Chile. Although the Chilean government maintained it had nothing to do with Rodrigo's death, witnesses have said security forces beat him and his companion, then doused them with gasoline and set them afire.

Why should we care? Because a member of our community may have joined the legions of the disappeared victims of political violence, and may even now be a captive in a government-sponsored torture chamber. By raising our voices, we can help spark action that will help him and others in the same fate — someday, maybe ourselves.

We in the United States can be thankful that we don't live under a government that uses killings and torture to silence dissent. Veronica de Negri said she too felt lucky to be in Chile during the 1940s, when the Nazis were slaughtering millions throughout Europe. But her example shows that no one can afford to feel too secure.

This is no time for students to be silent. In our own interests, and those of human rights justice around the world, it is time to speak out — loudly, for freedom.

Worthy Words

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."
— Edith Wharton, *Vesalius in Zante*



the Collegian

Wednesday April 15, 1987
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Business tax

Without it, the days of wine and rose vanish

What if they woke up one morning and we were gone? No students, faculty, administrators or maintenance: just several square miles of flat, sterile asphalt where the University's buildings and lawns used to be, and lots of vacated apartments, houses and bank accounts. What would the State College business community do then?

Only God and Rod Serling know for sure. I can only guess, but I guess that the parking problem would be solved, and that the proposed Business Privilege Tax wouldn't be an issue anymore.

One-point-five mills is a pittance for a business to pay for the privilege of operating in State College. And a privilege it is; any business that operates in this town reaps the benefits of assured profits and municipal services, yet (with exceptions) gives the University and borough practically nothing in return.

Borough-based businesses get police protection, trash collection, sewer service, and parking areas to accommodate their customers. What do they give the borough in return? Some — by virtue of their residency — give only as much (through existing taxes) as their non-business-owning, non-profit-making fellow citizens. But only some.

Business owners may contribute an Earned Income Tax payment to State College — by virtue of their residency — give only as much (through existing taxes) as their non-business-owning, non-profit-making fellow citizens. But only some.

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sell goods and services, and (as should be expected in the free-market system) exploit consumer demands. They're not here out of kindness or to do us any favors, and they let us know as much when they object to a tax that would have them carry a reasonable share of the local tax burden.

Those business-people who point to their on-campus "competition" are grasping at straws in an effort to fight the tax — they forget that campus businesses don't pocket profits for personal, individual gain, that the University is a non-profit institution. They bite the hand that feeds them — two-thirds of State College residents are students, and obviously tied to the University.

I agree with anyone who says that a way must be found to apply the BPT as equitably as possible, taking smaller, weaker and newer business ventures into special consideration.

However, I disagree with those who say the BPT will cause businesses to fly from or avoid State College. The tax isn't that bad, and for every business that leaves, 10 more are waiting to fill the vacuum. Besides, who's to say the neighboring municipalities won't evict their own BPT?

I also disagree with the outrageous assertion (made by one businessman) that businesses "work" for the borough by collecting wilding tax from their employee's paychecks. Just try claiming such wageless "work" on your 1040. You probably consider sticking postage stamps on your mail to be work too.

As I see it, opposition to the BPT has no basis in reason or principle. It's a desperate bid to keep State College a paradise for businesses — a place where customers are abundant and services free.

The time has come for the free press to end. The time of exploiting the University and borough at no cost has to end. It's time for State College businesses to contribute to their host-town something other than trash and sewerage.

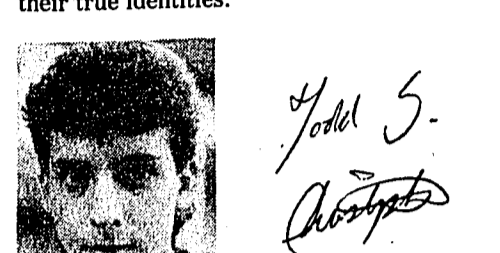
Al Blaslo is a senior majoring in Journalism and is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every other Wednesday.

opinions

The Rat Race

Skinner boxes, learned helplessness, and pushing the right buttons

We're all rats. Wrong? Well, wait a second, there actually is something to that. It seems as if all of us either look like or know someone who looks like a rodent; be it a rat, shrew, mouse or mole. With their beady eyes and nervous ticks, their mannerisms, too, often believe their true identities.



And, deep down at heart, we are all, as a race, pretty ratty. Just look at some of the helms and weaselly deeds we perform daily. Selfishness and greed grow like crabgrass among us, from the acts of the whole nation right down to the individual.

The self comes first — survival by any means, no matter how selfish or immoral. That's us. No matter if it comes at the expense

of those acting selflessly — what stands between us and what we want has got to go, and those in our way are swarmed mercilessly. But it's not our fault. We're all rats.

Back in 1984, a woman had a baby boy, and named him Burrhus F. Skinner. As a child, Burrhus was fascinated by critics that crawled, walked or flew. He used to eat bugs, and he would constantly bring home small animals and show them to his mother, making some unintelligible comments about why they did what it was they did.

Burrhus' mother passed the child off as a lazy, rampanly imaginative daydreamer, and a source of perpetual annoyance and embarrassment. She may have even beaten him, I don't know. But Burrhus held fast to his ideas. In fact, he went on to devise the Skinner box, a contraption with two pressable levers in which Burrhus would place his rats. If the rats pressed the right lever, he would reward them with a piece of cheese; if they pressed the wrong lever, he would administer a mild electric shock.

Freudians generally agree this was brought on by Skinner's domineering mother, but that's another story. At any rate, the little bugger learned which levers to press. So why are we rats, eh?

"Deep down at heart, we are all, as a race, pretty ratty."

Well, we're not at all different from Skinner's rats in the box. We all are victims of circumstance, willingly or not. Whether it's work, school or (pardon my grandiloquence) life itself, everything we do goes on inside a big Skinner box. Every point in our life is a decision — a lever to press. Thank God experience lets us guess right most of the time.

Should I go to college? Press a lever; get a nice piece of cheese.
Should I study hard and be a conscientious student? Press a lever; ditto.
Should I stay at the Physrat until 3 a.m. the night before my Physics midterm? Press a lever; get a nasty shock.

Pretty simplified, maybe, but valid reasoning nonetheless. This is the way we live, the way we have to live to survive. Though we might not always like to believe so, we are at the mercy of our environment (vis a vis

Skinner box) — and our thoughts and actions carried out to keep us comfortable and safe within it.

There's a term that psychologists bat around known as "learned helplessness." Basically, learned helplessness is being in a Skinner box where both of the levers give you a shock. You know, just like life.

We spend our lives learning what's right and what's not, what buttons to push and which ones not to, how to get what we want. We get pretty good at it, too. And then you start seeing things clearly, seeing that the levers don't work at all, and inside your box there's nothing you can do as everything spins out of control.

Poverty, unemployment, social discrimination, famine, the Moral Majority, impending war — whatever — all rain down upon us as our parents, bosses, administrators and governments stand above us like Burrhus with a sprinkling can.

Pass the cheese, please.
Todd S. Christopher is a sophomore majoring in English and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every other Wednesday (and if we like it, he gets a piece of cheese).

Please Write

Are you angry at a recent editorial, article or column printed in The Daily Collegian and are your friends are thoroughly bored with the fact that you've reread it at dinner for the last three nights in a row?

Don't bore your friends or ruin a good dinner; write a letter-to-the-editor and let others in Happy Valley know what's on your mind.

The Daily Collegian welcomes letters from students, faculty, staff, alumni, and area residents concerning current issues and nationally, but may be internationally.

All letters should be typed, double-spaced, and no longer than two pages. If you believe a topic merits more of an in-depth statement then you may submit a forum. Forums also should be typed, double-spaced, but may be longer than two pages.

Author or authors should include name, ID number, local address and telephone number on each letter. Writers should submit their letters in person to the Collegian office in 126 Carnegie during business hours.

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U.S.G. Departments of International and Political Affairs
— with the assistance of Penn State Undergrad Amnesty International
present the film
"Your Neighbor's Son, The Making of a Torturer"
Wednesday, April 15
301 HUB 7:30 p.m.
Admission is Free

The Office of The University Registrar Announces The Spring 1987 Conflict Schedule

Printed below is the conflict final examination schedule for Spring Semester 1987. Only those students assigned to a conflict examination should follow the schedule outlined below. All other students will have their final examinations at the time and place announced in the originally published schedule.

The interpretation of the time designations used in the conflict examination schedule is as follows:

08:00 - 08:00 A.M. TO 09:50 A.M. 10:10 - 10:10 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M. 12:20 - 12:20 P.M. TO 02:10 P.M. 02:30 - 02:30 P.M. TO 04:20 P.M. 04:40 - 04:40 P.M. TO 06:30 P.M. 06:50 - 06:50 P.M. TO 08:40 P.M. 09:00 - 09:00 P.M. TO 10:50 P.M.	M - MONDAY, MAY 4, 1987 T - TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1987 W - WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1987 R - THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1987 F - FRIDAY, MAY 8, 1987 S - SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1987	Conflict examinations have been determined by the University Registrar. Instructors will announce to those students for whom conflict examinations have been scheduled.
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ACCTG 101 1-27 104 1-30 206 1-7	T 6:50 P.M. F 10:10 A.M.	158 WILLARD 71 WILLARD	APPT APPT	NUTR 100 1-4 251 1-3	W 10:10 A.M. R 08:00 A.M.
AG E 327 1,2 438 1 453 1	APPT APPT APPT	ECON 002 1 002 2-21 004 1,2 007 1 004 4-15 302 3 302 4-5 302 4-2 323 1,2 342 1 351 1-3	APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT	PH ED 480 1-2 PHYS 202L 2-3 203L 1-2 204L 1-2 419 1	APPT APPT APPT APPT APPT
AG EC 460 1	APPT	AGRO 028 1	APPT	PL SC 415 1 438 1	APPT APPT
AM ST 105 1	APPT	ANTHY 001 1 021 1 045 2	F 8:00 A.M. APPT APPT	E E 220 1-4 251 1-3 271 1,2,4 365 1-5 368 3,4 415 1-2 458 1,2 472 1-2	T 10:10 A.M. T 08:00 A.M. W 08:00 A.M. W 10:10 A.M.
ASTRO 001 1 001 2	APPT APPT	BA 297A 1-21	R 10:10 A.M.	EN CH 011 1-8 012 6-9 013 1-4,6,8	R 04:40 P.M. R 210 HAMMOND
B LAW 243 2	T 06:50 P.M.	209 WILLARD	APPT	ENGL 100 1 104 1 133 1	APPT APPT APPT
B LOG 301 1-20	T 06:50 P.M.	203 WILLARD	APPT	FIN 301 1-17 305 3,5 306 1-5 408 1-3	R 04:40 P.M. R 10:10 A.M. T 10:10 A.M.
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reader opinion

Prejudiced

Let's face it, the Collegian is wrong and Mary Greeley Beahm is right.

I myself am used to reading professional newspapers who hold their opinions for the editorial page. The Collegian, on the other hand, bombards students with their prejudiced views on every page.

Like the Collegian plasters articles against South Africa as frequently as a normal paper would print summer fashion ads. Every morning, when I wake up and read a Collegian, I naturally assume (correctly) that I will see at least one article somehow blasting apartheid. I'd almost bet my rent money on it.

The fact that the Collegian writes biased articles is one thing, but where does the editor get the nerve to question decency made by Beahm? Her job is to represent a body of 64,388 Penn State students. I hate to break the news to you, Collegian, but the 50 to 150 students who desire Bryce Jordan's head on a silver platter isn't even close to a student majority.

To this date I haven't seen proof that the Penn State body of students supports divestment, have you? Probably tomorrow some bright Collegian writer will conduct a poll and the next day headlines will scream "99 percent of the students demand divestment!"

Yeah, sure, if someone goes around and asks students if they want apartheid to stop who'll say "Are you kidding? I love apartheid!" In the end, actions speak louder than words. When 100 students show up to protest trustee meetings or Mellon Bank or South Africa in general, this is a clear signal just how wrong the Collegian is.

As for my opinion on apartheid, never once have I gone out to protest, but I will see at least one article somehow blasting apartheid. I'd almost bet my rent money on it.

The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste. Because of the number of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all the letters it receives. Letters may also be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian. All letters received become the property of Collegian Inc.

University Park and State College. Please deliver any submissions in person from the office of The Daily Collegian, 126 Carnegie Building. All authors must be present with picture identification — either University ID or photo drivers license — when presenting the letter or forum.

ago, died is outrageous! What is even more ridiculous is that Rock Hudson's estate can't be sold because the actor had AIDS.

People are terrified to view the home. They are afraid if they touch anything in the house or breathe the air in the surrounding area, they will contract the disease. What is the public really afraid of?

This is the question that needs to be answered. Pregnant women aren't getting the proper tests done for AIDS, birth control is not being used in a phenomenal number of sexual relationships, and the amount of illegal drug users, who continue to share drug equipment, is unbelievable!

Instead of everyone complaining about the epidemic, we should take some individual initiatives in controlling AIDS. Just like any illness, people can be victimized; however, the public can take precautions against this disease. AIDS is like soap opera gossip, one rumor spreads, and we are all in state of panic. Let's stop worrying about these insignificant untruths and concentrate on decreasing the number of AIDS victims.

Lesl Thayer freshman-telecommunications

Ignorance

In his letter of March 31, Richard Weinstein claims that, "Religion is not innocuous." Actually it is Weinstein's opinion that is harmful in three ways: He disdains the beliefs of others; his disdain is based on ignorance and prejudice; and he is determined to impose his view on others.

First, Weinstein's disdain of others' beliefs is evident in that he disdains these beliefs as "illusion" and calls his belief "the truth." How does Mr. Weinstein know that his beliefs are true?

If his conclusions were based on reasoning then his own beliefs would have some credibility, but Weinstein declares his own belief to be "obvious" and says, "I will not argue this point." He then resorts to name calling — religion is for the "troubled," "uneducated" and "brain-washed."

Weinstein's second error is that his disdain of religious beliefs (Christianity in particular) is based on ignorance and beliefs. I am a Christian and I know many other Christians who are not "troubled," "uneducated" or "brainwashed" as Weinstein suggests. What Weinstein needs to do is to discard his stereotyped views and try to learn what Christians are really like.

Weinstein's third error is that he is imposing his views on others. He calls people who believe in God by derogatory names, and he and others intend to "fight for all they are worth" for their cause — a frightening prospect for anyone who believes in God.

I hope that Mr. Weinstein as well as others who share his feelings will make the effort to learn what Christians really believe so that they may dispel the stereotypes and myths about Christians. Most Christians do not "cling to an irrational belief," but have good reasons to believe what they do, as will be evident to anyone who makes the effort to find out.

Jason Jones senior-mathematics

Junior-business management

Frenzy

I'm writing in regard to your April 6 article on AIDS paranoia. Despite the medical facts on how AIDS can be transmitted, the public is in a frenzy. I fully agree that there is entirely too much hysteria about the AIDS issue.

When I say hysteria, I am talking about the way people are handling themselves in our society. Refusing to eat in a restaurant where a chef, who worked three days years