



# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,  
I am writing in reply to the Editorial which appeared in the October 23, 1997 issue of The Collegian. I am not quite sure what the purpose of the column was, it moves from an opinion page, to last year's editorials, to responsible journalism.

I have an issue with The Collegian regarding all of these topics. I was the Opinion Editor for the paper last semester, and I resent the implication that The Collegian staff was "irresponsible." What you print does reflect on the staff, but it does not mean that the staff must hold identical viewpoints on any subject. Each opinion piece I printed last semester was chosen because it reflected a concern that a Behrend student holds about a particular subject. Part of the democratic process is to distribute ideas freely in an atmosphere of openness. To refuse to print an editorial because I disagreed with it would be not only irresponsible, but unethical.

This year's Collegian does have an "opinion" page, but in my opinion it is not reflective of the general student body's concerns. Editorials from the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times may be relevant and thought provoking, but the average student does not care about these people's opinions. He or she is more concerned with what is happening at Behrend and with the decisions made by administration, staff, and faculty which directly affect his or her life at Behrend.

I feel The Collegian is not serving the student body. The staff seems to be afraid to report on issues concerning the campus and to be satisfied with using other people's work they have taken from news services. That is not responsible journalism, it is using up space.

Editorially, the column was a mess. It was filled with lies, half-truths, and hyperbole. It was also full of misinformation. You have already decided that the staff from last year's Collegian was irresponsible, yet no one has made an attempt to interview any former staff members regarding these allegations. You believed what you were told. That is not responsible journalism.

You say you want "to hear what students have to say, as long as they can say it responsibly." That is nice

rhetoric, but the last time I read the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution, free speech was not guaranteed only to those who are responsible. Free speech is guaranteed to all of us, even those of us who have irresponsible viewpoints. Sincerely,  
Colleen M. Fromknecht, 08, History

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to The Collegian's coverage (or rather, lack of coverage) of the Penn State Behrend Men's and Women's Cross Country teams. Both teams ran extremely well against nationally-ranked Edinboro on Saturday, October 11. Eleven of the seventeen runners who competed ran their best races of the season, if not the best races of their whole running careers. Yet there was no article highlighting these accomplishments in The Collegian. The Collegian chose to publish the Cross Country results in the "Scoreboard" section instead, citing only the performances of the top three finishers for the women's team and the top four finishers for the men's team. The top five runners from each team score in Cross Country races. Why weren't at least the top five runners mentioned?

This is not the first time the Cross Country teams have been slighted with coverage. The Collegian failed to recognize the Athlete of the Week in the October 2, 1997 issue. This just happened to be the week that a Cross Country runner, Mark Huether, was honored for his excellent performance at the Alfred Invitational. In fact, there was no article about the Cross Country teams in that issue at all. There have never been photographs of volleyball teams in almost every issue. It is more difficult to photograph the Cross Country teams, as most races aren't on campus. However, The Collegian could have taken pictures during the Behrend Cross Country Invitational, during practices, or could have even sent a camera to some races. I realize there is limited space in The Collegian, but there always seems to be enough room for huge political cartoons and advertisements to recruit Collegian writers.

Two different area television stations recently highlighted Behrend Cross Country runners in their

evening news programs. If our runners are newsworthy enough for television, why aren't we good enough for The Collegian? Sincerely,  
Sandra Mishic, 07, Biology

Dear Editor,

A few weeks ago an article appeared in the Daily Collegian from University Park regarding Behrend's issue of Prayer at graduation. The issue on this campus needs to be addressed once more. A public university which admonishes against discrimination and proclaims that it stands for diversity and then turns around and has a very focused prayer at graduation ceremonies needs some realignment. In 1992 University Park and all other Commonwealth Campuses (save Behrend) ceased ministerial prayer at graduation. Then Behrend changed their practice to allow students to lead the prayer. This does not address the issue as a majority of the prayers (now and then) have been Christian. We have a small, but recognizable Jewish organization on campus, individuals who practice non Judeo-Christian religions, and those who do not have any religious convictions. These students are made to feel uncomfortable at their own graduation as no prayer can be stretched to fit their religious convictions appropriately.

The suggestion, therefore, is that perhaps a separate Baccalaureate service be held. This does not mean that the students who choose to attend this service will not march at the regular graduation ceremony. This simply is a means by which those students who wish to express their gratitude in a religious manner will have the opportunity to do so in addition to attending the regular ceremony. Therefore, those students who do not wish to have any type of religious message expressed at their graduation will not have to feel uncomfortable at being forced to listen to that which they do not espouse.

Penn State strives to teach its students tolerance and yet it perpetuates the problem by ignoring the non-Christian population of its student body.  
Jessica Mann, 03, History

# China Rising: Is America Paying Attention?

By Robert G. Kaiser-(c) 1997, The Washington Post

BEIJING - China returns to the American consciousness this week. President Jiang Zemin arrives Sunday in Honolulu to begin a state visit and, for the next six days, China's colorless leader will travel around the country with reporters and television cameras trailing behind him. Jiang will be pressed to explain his government's policies on human rights and Tibet, he'll encounter angry American protesters and he'll toast President Clinton at the White House - all media events that may obscure the main story: The startling new China that Jiang represents.

Americans were transfixed by China for a time a generation ago, when Richard Nixon finally raised the curtain to let the United States look into the Middle Kingdom. But we seem to have averted our gaze, especially after the brutal suppression of student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989. While much of America has not been really noticed, China has transformed itself. A reporter exposed to this new China for the first time has the urge to grab his countrymen by the lapels and shout: Pay closer attention!

Isolated facts about China's transformation are familiar. It's then experience of seeing it whole that is startling.

In the past eight years, China has created a novel form of nearly-market economy that has doubled its gross national product. In the '90s, it has been the most successful developing economy in the world, growing at a dizzying 10 percent a year.

The violence in Tiananmen Square implied a return to rigid communist orthodoxy, but the reality here is anything but orthodox. Instead of saluting a party line, government officials argue openly about fundamental issues of policy and strategy. Some speculate about a future in which the Chinese Communist Party has only ceremonial or social functions.

On the humming streets of Shanghai and Beijing, young women in mini-skirts and jazzy makeup show off individualistic style. Chinese rock groups mimic the moves of American hip-hop artists in videos shown on official Chinese television. Private business is thriving and making some Chinese rich. Chinese who fled the country because of Tiananmen and its implications are coming back by the thousands, many carrying American green cards as personal insurance policies, but now eager to participate in their country's revival.

This new China is remarkably relaxed in its now-extensive dealings with the foreign devils that communist propaganda once denounced. It is shrewdly welcoming Japanese and Western capitalists to help turn a barren socialist wasteland into a consumer society - at the high end, a lavish and indulgent consumer society. Big Mac attack? No problem, as the Chinese like to say - 37 McDonald's now in Beijing. Cell phones? They, too, are now ubiquitous. Motorola Corp., which has sold most of them, is shipping profits out of China in bushel baskets. Internet connection? Edward Tian, a Chinese citizen, Texas Tech graduate and former resident of Dallas, can help. His company, an American firm named Asiainfo, is building the "backbone" of connections that will bring the Internet into cities beyond the capitals of all of China's 30 provinces, where customers can already sign on with a local phone call. (Tian cannot, however, evade the controls the Chinese government still imposes, routing every Internet account in the country through choke points at the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, which can block access to Web sites around the world considered undesirable - block them in ways that a resourceful computer operator can easily evade.)

The city of Shanghai is the extreme example of China's transformation. It is a city of 17 million souls. Ten per-

cent of them are construction workers participating in what must be the world's biggest building boom. The construction workers are peasants from the countryside, many of whom never earned a cash wage before coming to the big city. Now they earn about \$250 a month and work in one of three shifts per day often seven days a week. According to the mayor of Shanghai, Xu Quangdi, 18 percent of the world's construction cranes are currently operating in his city. Skyscrapers are sprouting out of every neighborhood in town.

The real wonder is Pudong, the new eastern section of Shanghai - farmland until 10 years ago. Driving through Pudong now feels a little like sneaking a peek at the 21st century, with scores of office towers of 30, 50, 60 and - soon - even 95 stories climbing out of the old fields. The 95-story building will be the tallest anywhere. Pudong already has 3 million residents in its proliferating apartment blocks, and will absorb millions more. In the outlying regions of Pudong, General Motors Corp. is building a big plant to produce Buicks. In a few minutes driving through the area last Sunday, a visitor passed factories for Sharp, Leica, Whirlpool, Johnson Wax, Siemens, Ricoh, Hitachi and Hewlett Packard.

In Shanghai and Beijing, China has

poorished village - his part in the Cultural Revolution, in which Mao invoked slogans of "Greater Democracy" and unleashed the country's students against its intellectuals, creating terror and turmoil. A Beijing city official lowers her voice and says firmly, "The people of Beijing have not forgotten 1989." A friend recalls the death of a parent in the Great Leap, when Mao tried disastrously to compel industrialization of the country.

This history induces fear. There is still fear in China.

The Chinese authorities have a name for the economic hybrid they have created: "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." More accurately, it is socialism with capitalist characteristics, like stock markets, millionaires and a widening gulf between rich and poor. And China still has more than its share of poor. About 200 million Chinese, most in the countryside, still live on less than a dollar a day.

The great growth of recent years has been pushed by every sector of the economy but one - the traditional, state-owned sector. The debts of state-owned enterprises nearly equal their assets - in other words, they are virtually insolvent. Loans from state banks keep them afloat, loans often made on government orders. As a result, the banks have huge bad debts - how huge isn't exactly clear.

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Pragmatism is in ascendance here, largely because the government has concluded that continued economic growth is the key to China's well-being, and perhaps to the ability of

the Chinese Communist Party to rule the country. In the wake of Tiananmen, the government and the populace reached an implicit bargain: "You let us get rich, and we'll let you govern," in the words of Wang Ruoshi, a disaffected former deputy editor of the People's Daily, the party newspaper. Strengthening economic reform and continuing what the Chinese call "the opening" to the outside world are the keystones of official policy.

The rise of pragmatism, blessed in official parlance as "Deng Xiaoping Thought," which was enshrined in China's constitution as official ideology by last month's Communist Party Congress, has put old-fashioned communism in a box. Jiang barely used the term communism in his two-and-a-half-hour speech to the congress. Instead, he emphasized growth and reform.

Can China's boom continue, make the country still richer and keep the Communist Party in power? Perhaps. Smart people are hard at work trying to make this happen. The country faces daunting problems: the danger of banks collapsing - perhaps the most daunting in the near term - and grimmer still, the possibility of the sort of economic crisis setting back so many of its Asian neighbors this year. But China also has formidable resources, beginning with the talents and energies of the Chinese people.

Because of its enormous size and the economic success it has already achieved, China seems destined to play an enormous part in shaping the 21st century, which is why Americans need to pay more attention to what is happening here.

So far, the United States has proven ineffectual in its dealings with China. Our businessmen have rushed to invest here, often without fully understanding what they were doing. Some have been badly burned. The American government has blown hot and cold - and in all directions since 1989, when Tiananmen derailed Sino-American relations. The Clinton administration has invested much more energy in Bosnia and the Middle East than in formulating a coherent China policy and on Capitol Hill, China has become a political football. Perhaps it's time to get serious about the giant in our Pacific neighborhood.

Kaiser is managing editor of The Washington Post