

The Behrend College Collegian

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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Postal Information: The Collegian is published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College; First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, PA 16563. The Collegian can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

Letter Policy: The Collegian encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail their letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5pm Tuesday for inclusion in that week's issue.

EDITORIAL

Greeks handle SGA elections poorly

The fraternities and sororities made a great effort to assure that the Greek Student Government Association Senate candidates were elected into office. While voting was taking place outside of Bruno's, members of sororities and fraternities were handing out lists to voters stating all eleven Greek candidates. They even made a request to hang the list of the Greek candidates in the voting booth.

It is not the fact that the Greek organizations want to get involved with SGA that is troublesome; their involvement could be very beneficial to the organization. It is the way they are going about it that is not right.

By encouraging students to vote for candidates based only on their fraternity or sorority status, they are separating Greek students from students involved in other organizations. This is exactly the opposite of what Greeks claim they want to do on this campus. One sorority member running for SGA stated she wanted to promote cooperation among groups on campus. If the majority of SGA senators are Greek, how is this cooperation going to occur? If the Greek organizations truly want to promote coop-

eration between all of the groups on campus, they would not attempt to monopolize SGA.

Members of Greek organizations would not disclose from where the list originated. They also claimed that they told voters that were given the list that they should look at all of the candidates' statements before voting. However, when we obtained a list from a fraternity member, we were not informed of the statements. Presidential candidate Buck Goedicke, who was running the table next to the booth, even had a list, which a female student leaving the booth handed to him, though he claimed not to be the person who had given it to her.

Even the voting process itself was not handled professionally. A voter had to give only his or her name; voters did not have to show an ID card or social security number. A system like this could make it possible for a person to vote more than once.

The Greek campaign to win all of the Senate seats of SGA is not being handled well. They are directly contradicting their own claims of group cooperation. It seems that the only groups that the Greeks are truly concerned about are themselves.

Making higher education affordable

By Christopher J. Dodd=Special to The Hartford Courant

This is a time of great anticipation for America's high school seniors. Colleges and universities have sent out letters of acceptance and rejection for the Class of 2002. And young people across the country are racing home after school to check their mailboxes. But these days, the letter that many students are most anxiously awaiting is not from the admissions office; it's from the financial aid office.

Getting into college is hard enough, but many families are now finding that the most important numbers for determining where a student will go to college are not GPAs and SAT scores; they're the numbers in their bank account.

More and more, families are finding themselves unable to keep up with the rising cost of a college degree. In the past 10 years, costs at four-year public universities have increased at more than triple the rate of inflation. Two-year community college costs have increased twice as fast as inflation. In that same time, tuition at the average private four-year college has doubled from \$6,700 to \$13,300, an increase of more than twice the rate of inflation.

In fact, when you factor in tuition, room and board, and other expenses, four years at one of the nation's leading colleges can easily cost more than \$120,000 today.

In 1980, when most of today's high school seniors were born, few people could have imagined that a year of college would cost as much as \$30,000. But today the unimaginable has become reality. As a result, fami-

lies are going deeper into debt, working more overtime, taking extra jobs and doing whatever it takes to meet these rising expenses.

Some say that parents have only themselves to blame for not saving enough money to meet college costs. That's an untrue and unfair criticism. More and more parents are doing a better job of planning ahead. In fact, 68 percent of parents below the age of 30 are saving regularly for college. Parents should not need a key to Fort Knox to open the doors of college to their kids. We must do all we can to make college affordable to each and every family.

In recent years, we've taken some significant steps forward. Last year, Congress approved President Clinton's plan to eventually make the first \$10,000 of college costs tax-deductible. We increased the maximum annual Pell Grant awards from \$2,700 per year to \$3,000. We also established HOPE Scholarships, which provide a \$1,500 tax credit for the first two years of college. In addition, we approved a number of new tax-advantaged education savings programs, including education IRAs and penalty-free IRA withdrawals for certain higher-education expenses.

These steps are making a positive difference for many families struggling to educate their children. But we must do more.

Earlier this month, the Senate Labor Committee, on which I sit, approved a number of steps to improve the affordability of college. One that I authored would require educational institutions to make full and detailed disclosure to families of the costs of attending institutes of higher learning.

The Other Side

RAY MORELLI

Do you ever stop to think of the other side?

When I decided I wanted to do something at Behrend more than just hang out and go to classes, *The Collegian* immediately appealed to me. I thought, "Hey, it's only one class a week." Also, I thought it would be a good experience, as I'm a Communications major.

Although next year I'm transferring to another school and switching my major, I still feel my experience with *The Collegian* was valuable. First semester, I tackled a beat of "Health and Safety," which I particularly enjoyed, because I thought several pieces would be beneficial to students here. I truly hope I accomplished that. Second semester, I was given the chance to write an editorial column every three weeks, and decided to give it a go.

Now I had this column, but needed a name. "The Other Side" quickly came to mind for many reasons! In my opinions and personal beliefs, I often feel like I'm in the minority. I have very strong viewpoints and those of you who read my articles probably realize that! "The Other Side" gave the column the "us vs. them" feel I wanted.

I was thinking about differences we all have with others and came to the conclusion that ninety percent of our problems could be resolved or drastically lessened if people would focus less on "winning" an argument and more on where the other side's coming from. Nowhere is this more obvious than the all too familiar conflicts many of us had with our parents growing up over the car or that early cur-

few. The parent's concern is never under account, really, and that should be expected.

Life is a power struggle. The focus for the large part is immediacy. Everyone wants to feel good now. Everyone wants to have fun now. Even as I wrote about the University Park professor leading pro-marijuana protests, it was obvious he was thinking in the now. He didn't stop to consider the consequences of his actions. He didn't stop to think of the other side to his actions. The same can be said of Michael Zampetti's crying about student involvement and all the health issues my articles first semester dealt with.

I feel I accomplished my goals this year in *The Collegian*. I found a great forum to present my viewpoint and

had a good time doing so. Currently, *The Collegian* is looking for writers, photographers and editors. It would be a great opportunity for anyone, but especially Communications or English students. Now that my shameless plug is out of the way, I'll use the rest of my column to serve my own interests. My first year of school here at Behrend has been very enjoyable. I love it here; there's a good faculty, an overall decent student body and a beautiful campus. As I leave, I just want to say thank you to everyone at Penn State who helped me through the course of the year here. To all staying at Behrend: Good luck, have fun, but stop to think about the other side.

The Other Side appeared every three weeks in *The Collegian*.

Drug war is a lost cause - like prohibition

By Mike Gray

Special to the Los Angeles Times

Sixteen-year-old Jonathan Kollman had been clean for several months - a struggle, but he was hanging in there. Then he ran into this babe in a red sports car who offered to buy him a fix. For a fragile teenager holding on by his fingernails, it was one temptation too many. He made the buy and 10 minutes later, he was back in the jaws of the dragon with heroin in his veins.

But what of the Dragon Lady? Who was this evil temptress? Turns out she was a cop - an undercover narcotics officer from the Plano, Texas, police department who needed an informant. Playing on the kid's vulnerability, she reintroduced him to his habit, and once he was rehooked, she was able to use him for a half dozen drug buys.

If you believe the end justifies the means, this little operation would have to be considered a resounding success - three dozen people busted for selling or holding heroin, including Kollman. But a lot of the folks in Plano are uneasy about this business of using kids as offensive weapons in the drug war. The boy's parents, for example - having just waged a titanic battle to free their son from ad-

dition - are understandably dismayed that it was the police who turned him on again.

But for all their trauma, Jonathan Kollman's parents are lucky. Chad MacDonald Jr.'s mother probably would trade places with them in a second. When her son's badly damaged young frame was found in an alley south of downtown Los Angeles last month, it was revealed that he, too, had been lured into the service of the law. Earlier in the year, the Brea Police Department in Orange County had captured MacDonald with a half ounce of methamphetamine, and they apparently saw in him the makings of a useful snitch.

After MacDonald's arrest in January 1998 on charges of possession of methamphetamine, the police offered Chad and his mother a deal, and the pressure must have been intense because they went for it in spite of the obvious danger. Rather than treat his addiction, the deal dropped this high school student unprepared into the boiling pot of cutthroats who populate the illegal drug trade. Since these guys are often facing 10 or 20 years if they're caught, they disdain informants - a fact they underscored by

torturing the kid before killing him and then raping and shooting his girlfriend and leaving her for dead in the San Gabriel Mountains.

Undoubtedly this is an arrangement that everybody involved wishes they had to do over again, but the truth is, we're likely to see more of this kind of thing in the future, not less. Consider the problem from the cops' viewpoint. You have a bunch of high school kids dealing drugs to one another in private. How do you break into this closed circle? That's the intractable nexus of the war on drugs, the thing that has driven our ongoing assault on the Bill of Rights for more than 80 years. In a drug deal, there's no complaining witness.

Most other criminals - the rapist, the robber, the ax murderer - have somebody chasing them or have victims or survivors demanding justice. But when there's nobody to call the cops, the cops have little choice. To break up what is essentially a private transaction, they inevitably have to resort to some subterfuge that will trample the Constitution, whether it's turning your kid into a junkie or splintering your front door without bothering to knock or forcing you to the pavement because you happen to be

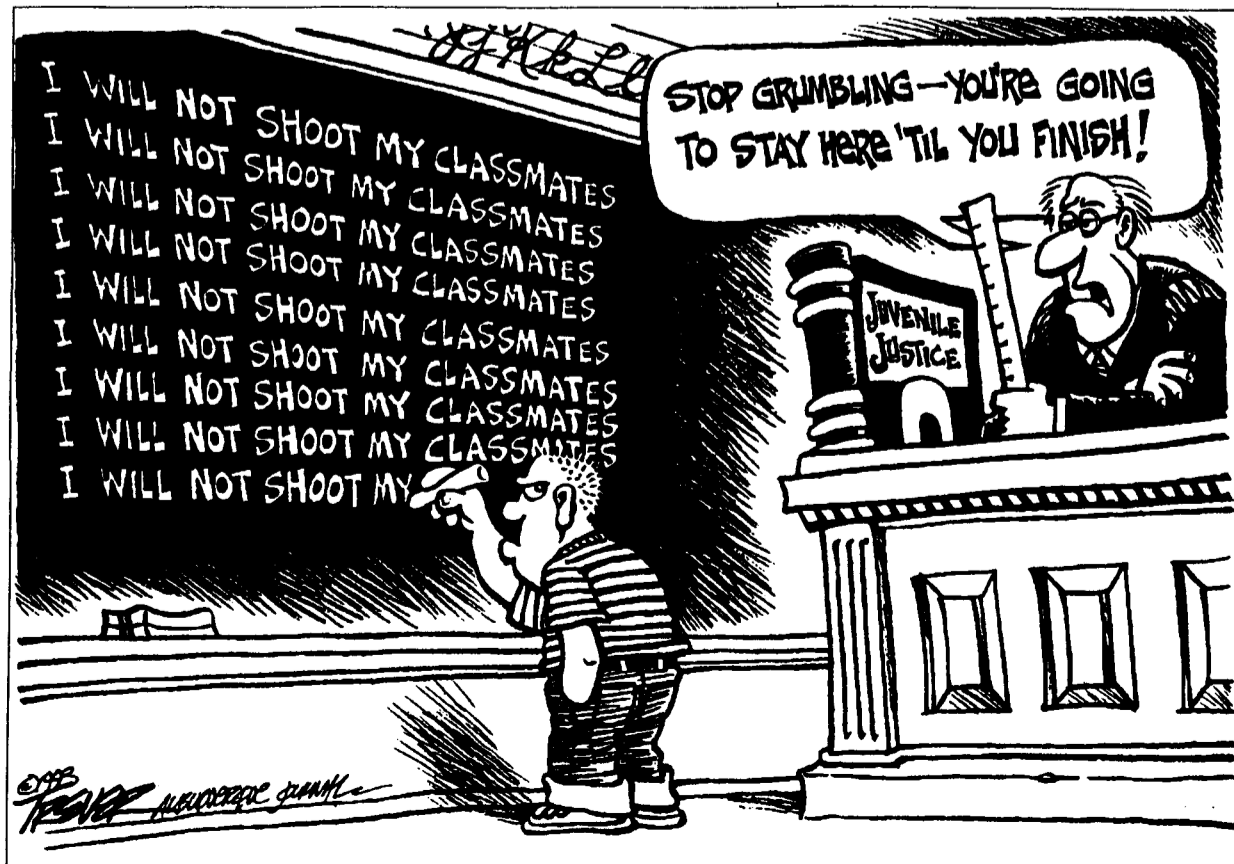
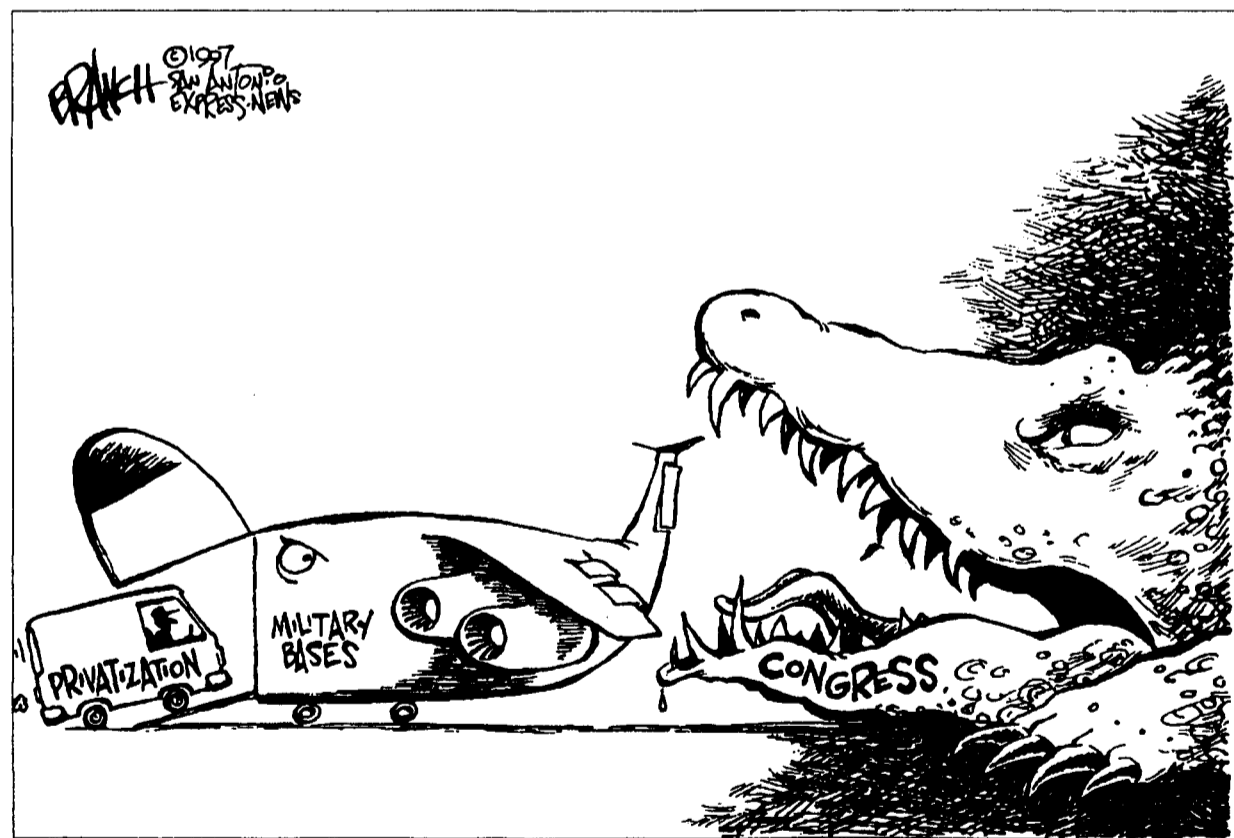
a black man in an expensive car.

It is the nature of the drug war itself that creates this ethical quagmire, not the perversity of the police. Brea Police Chief William Lentini was simply trying his best to carry out the impossible task we've handed him.

Our hands are hardly clean on this issue. The latest polls show that 70 percent of the American people think the drug war is a failure - and that we should keep at it. As President Clinton has pointed out, doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.

Like a man who has set his hair on fire and is trying to put it out with a hammer, we will continue to pulverize our principles and devour our young until the drug war's violence and corruption finally reaches every nook and cranny of our lives. Only then will we face the fact, as we did with alcohol prohibition in 1933, that the problem is not what's in the bottle, but how we've chosen to deal with it.

Gray's latest book, "Drug Crazy: How We Got Into This Mess and How We Can Get Out," will be published by Random House in June.



Democrat Dodd represents Connecticut in the U.S. Senate.