

## A View From The Lighthouse

### Democracy hypocrisy

There has been a lot of talk in this year's election about how important it is for the countries in this world to be more democratic. But how is it possible for the United States to enforce democracy when we, by definition, don't even practice it? The definition of democracy is this:

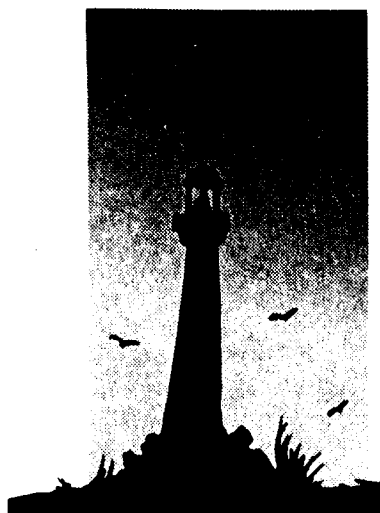
*democracy (n) 1. Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives...4. rule by the majority.*

This brings up two questions about the way we elect officials in national elections. When we go to the voting booths on November 7, 2000, we will flip the switch for the president that we wish to take office. In reality, we will be flipping the switch for electors of the Electoral College, who will then vote for the person that they wish to take office.

Briefly, here's how it works. Each state is designated a certain number of electoral votes based on their population. In addition to that, each state gets two electoral votes for the number of senators they have. In Pennsylvania, there are 21 districts (based on population) and 2 senators.  $21 + 2 = 23$ , which is the number of electoral votes designated to Pennsylvania. California has 52 districts + 2 senators = 54 electoral votes. Delaware,  $1 + 2 = 3$  electoral votes.

So how does this challenge our claim that we are a democracy? Take this scenario for example...  
Al Gore wins California by 1000 votes. Gore also wins Pennsylvania by 1000 votes. George W. Bush wins Delaware by 5000 votes. This would mean that Bush won the majority of votes in the three states by a total of 3000 votes, yet loses the election, 77-3. We throw out the total voter count and put the election in the hands of 538 electors.

*Government by the people? Rule by majority?* If everything goes right, then yes, officials are ultimately chosen by the people. But there is room for error. Why take the chance when all we need to do is take total vote count into consideration and announce the winner as the candidate that got the most votes? But that brings up another question.



If we are to just take the candidate with the most votes, then we could violate that all important word of democracy again. How? In 1992, Bill Clinton won 43% of the total popular vote. George Bush won 38% of the total popular vote, with Perot grabbing 19%. If we were to get rid of the electoral college, Bill Clinton would win the election because he got the most votes. But does he really rule by majority?

The term "majority" is equivalent to "more than 50%." More people in this country voted against Clinton than for him, yet he still won the presidency. This is not majority rule.

We propose a run-off system of voting. That means, if no candidate wins the election with at least 50% of the vote, there is a run-off between the top two candidates. Here's the scenario...

George W. Bush wins 48% of the popular vote. Al Gore wins 41% of the popular vote. Ralph Nader wins 9% of the popular vote with Pat Buchanan grabbing 2%. Instead of giving the presidency to a man that less than half of Americans voted for, hold a one-on-one race between the top two candidates, Bush and Gore.

Maybe all this is just more to complicate the election process, but it's the principle of it. Don't call the United States a democracy and force the government on other countries, if we don't even practice what we preach.

Get rid of the Electoral College and only give elections to people that the MAJORITY of voters vote for. Don't put the power of our country in the hands of 538 electors, put it in the power of the people!

## Mike's two cents worth

I have been quiet all semester, but I just can't take it any more. I have really enjoyed my four and a half years of going to school here, and I have received a first class education that I feel will serve me well the rest of my life. But even with all of the improvements that have taken place on campus in my time here, there is still something glaringly absent around here: common sense. There are some very intelligent people on this campus, but when they have to click two brain cells together for something practical, they can't even get a spark. To get through life you need more than just book smarts, you need common sense, unless you plan on living in Biosphere II.

I understand that it is hard for some people to grasp a concept when it is right in front of their face. For example, something as simple as the idea of the purpose of an editorial page. Now let's explain this real simple for all of you whose brains are clogged up with malted hops and bong resin. The purpose of an editorial page is for the editors and other selected contributors to state their opinions on any subject that they feel is important and relevant. It is also a forum where readers of the newspaper can write letters to the editors to share ideas with other readers and the editors. Now lately we have been getting a few letters about what we have been printing in the paper. In my opinion this is a great thing, it shows that people are reading the paper and care enough to write letters about things we have printed. What has been bothering me, and shows the lack of common sense around here, is that people have been complaining about who we have writing for the paper, that they should not be allowed to write for the paper and that we should get other people to write for the paper.

Now this really pisses me off. Every semester we give everyone on campus the chance to write a column for the paper. We run a big ad on the



### Pay No Attention To The Man Behind The Curtain

**Mike Frawley**

managing editor editorial page for weeks on end asking people to send in a sample column so that we can choose

new editorial columnists for the following semester. And you know how many we got last semester? Two. Out of 3700 students on campus, we get two. Now how sad is that? We have people writing in and bitchin' about who we have writing for the paper, but when it comes time to submit a sample column to become an editorial columnist they can't put down their remote control long enough to write one, but they can find time every gosh darn editor's note - I originally wanted to use a much stronger phrase but due to our editor-in-chief's dumba\$\$ swearing policy, I was unable to state my true feeling on the subject. Thanks Jay.) week to write pointless letters to the editor about who we have writing for the paper. Now if that doesn't show a lack of common sense around here, I don't know what does.

I know that right now there are a whole bunch of you about to spout off letters to the editor about how horrible it is that I just wrote this, and maybe I'll even get a few death threats (which are always good for a laugh), and if it will really make you feel better by all means, write the letter. But if you think I really care and that your letter will change how I feel and write, let me save you some trouble, don't bother because I don't care. I am writing to state my opinion, which is the purpose of this page and of this column. And I know that it might not be politically correct, but this political correctness thing has gotten a little old.

And while I'm at it this whole hyphenated Americans thing is just plain stupid. We are the only

country on Earth where it is not good enough to be from the country. Every one is something-American (African-American, Italian-American, Mongolian-American, Polish-American, Granadian-Americans, Iraqi-Americans, Yemenese-Americans, Kazakhstani-Americans, Panamanian-Americans, Stupid-Americans), but no one is just an American. You don't hear people in England who have American ancestors saying that they are American-English, or people from Russia who have German ancestors calling themselves Germanic-Russians. And why is that? It's because people from these countries don't quibble about their backgrounds, they just know they are Russians and go with it, but not Americans. Everyone is so concerned about saying just the right thing that crap like this becomes important. Let's get a grip and drop this stuff. We are all Americans so lets just leave it at that.

Now that I have that off my chest, let's get back to the topic at hand. As the managing editor of the *Beacon* I am very happy that people are picking up the paper and reading it. When I first joined the paper three years ago the only thing it was good for was lining a birdcage. Now it has turned into a top notch paper that people want to read (and if you don't believe me go look at the papers put out by the other local colleges), and we have an award winning columnist on staff. So please don't write to us saying that the people on staff can't write because they can. And if you think you can do a better job, submit a sample and try to get on staff next semester. It's time to quit whining and do something about it if you feel so strongly. Try leaving your own warped little world and join us in reality for a moment, and if you need help just give me a call. I've got a baseball bat right here to beat some common sense back into you.

P.S. Next time you feel the urge, just do it.  
*Frawley's column appears every three weeks.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Are you a hazer?

Dear Editor,

One of the greatest parts of college life is joining organizations. It is a time of meeting new people, learning new ideas, and getting the most out of your college experience.

Joining a new organization should be an enjoyable experience, but, unfortunately, that is not always the case. Some organizations violate University policy, among other restrictions, during the beginning period of membership. HAZING - it's a word that we all recognize, but do we truly know what it is and who does it? According to the Pennsylvania State University, hazing is defined as: any action or situation that (1) intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student or (2) willfully destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of admission or maintaining membership in any organization or group associated with the University. Hazing policies apply to all members of the Penn State Community. (Pennsylvania "Anti-Hazing Law" Act 175 of 1986; *University Policy Manual, SY-1, SY-2, SY-3, SY-7, SY-8, SY-12, SY-13, SY-16, SY-18, and SY-27.*)

Who does this apply to? As policy says, it applies to everyone. It is commonly associated with social Greek organizations, but any individual or group can be guilty of hazing. This includes sports teams, clubs, councils, service organizations and social and nonsocial Greek organizations.

Newspapers, magazines, and television media boast headlines and horror stories about (social) fraternities and sororities torturing new members, forcing alcohol consumption, and committing degrading acts. This is hazing, of course, but they are the most extreme cases. Did you know that singling new members out, required meetings, and quizzing new members could all be considered hazing? Hazing is something that may be affecting organizations and individuals without their knowledge and awareness. Hazing can be blatant or subtle, but either way it causes feelings of uncomfortableness, embarrassment, and/or intimidation.

If you feel that you have been hazed or hazed someone, or if you want more information, please contact the Office of Student Activities at x6171. Hazing is not only legal and in direct violation of University policy, it is detrimental to the individuals involved, the organizations, and the campus community as a whole.

Mackenzie Baird, Megan Horanic, Jamie Lewis, Jennifer Osmanski, Lennys Redondo, and Erika Weissenfluh

### Praise and suggestions for the *Beacon*

Dear Editor,

Just wanted to let you know that I have been reading the Behrend college newspaper for over four years now, and I think that this new *Beacon* is very good. The format is not boring, and it comes across very professionally. There is just enough of every agenda to keep one informed in a short amount of time. The ads are good too, and everyone likes coupons! The colored pictures are great!

Maybe a section where each week you feature a place or two where kids may go to for relaxation might be of interest. Examples might be restaurants, parks, seasonal events (Haunted Happenings, Festival of Trees, ZOO lumination, Holiday concerts...), Art Museum events, Mall events, festivals, Dances (Church/Community sponsored), Erie Amphitheater, or Radio Station sponsored events. Kids are always saying there is nothing to do...open their eyes to things that may appeal to their interests.

I know you list some events, and that is good, but it needs to be broader. Sometimes all it takes is to get on their mailing list, and they will mail you schedules of events that you may post. Erie Insight puts out a pamphlet of happenings around town, and the Provost's Office receives them. That may give you some ideas. Not 'too costly' events though, we all know how poor college kids are; I know, I have two of them myself! Just an idea. Thanks again for a great paper!

Karen Hein, Staff Assistant/Switchboard Operator  
Operations, Glenhill Farmhouse  
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

### Displays of genius need not appear

Dear Editor,

As always, I hardly know where to begin. It seems that every week, Liz Hayes has less to say. It got so bad that we were treated to a horribly self-congratulatory article about Miss Hayes' alleged genius. I am sure that we are all very happy to hear that she can skip classes and still "cough up another A," but is the *Beacon* really the place for this kind of nonsense? I won't even touch her presidential endorsement with a ten foot pole, except to say that it does not seem to me demonstrative of her genius.

Mr. Snyder, who has a way with words (and by this, I mean a bad way with words), predictably endorsed Mr. Bush for president. Snyder even goes so far as to accuse Mr. Gore of being a "smooth talker," which could not actually be further from the truth. By all measures, George Bush is the slick talker in this election, and has demonstrated his ability to "talk his way out of problems" more times than Mr. Gore has. Apparently Mr. Snyder wants to believe the things he says about Al Gore, rather than generate legitimate criticisms about the Vice President. This is all-out deception. And while Mr. Snyder accuses the Clinton/Gore administration of deception, he engages in it as readily as either of the men he accuses.

I'd like to offer a solution to the problem of the continued increasing silliness of the *Beacon's* editorial page: more writers. Solicit submissions from the students on a certain topic - and please, make the topics good (that means, no WWF: SMACKDOWN and no Smart is as smart does) - every week. I think Behrend would be interested in hearing from someone other than The Usual Suspects.

Finally, I wish to commend and agree wholeheartedly with Abbey Atkinson's letters to the editor. The *Beacon* has time and time again done nothing more than give voice to unintelligent, intolerant, and unoriginal babble. Kudos to Abbey for pointing this out in such a dramatic and compelling fashion. On the plus side, The *Beacon* has not forced me to off myself, as I promised the first week, just yet. But you sure are trying, aren't you?  
Jason Leto

### Personal attacks at the *Beacon*?

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter concerning the recent "piss and moan" contents in the *Beacon*. For those of you who have forgotten or simply did not read these letters/editorials in the Oct. 20 edition of the paper, Abbey Atkinson wrote a letter to the editor voicing her concerns about the apparent ignorance on this campus of GLBT (gay/lesbian/bisexual/transsexual) issues. She also pointed out that, in this day and age, we shouldn't be enforcing outdated gender roles in our school paper. In response, Katie Galley wrote her tri-weekly editorial (appearing directly beneath Abbey's letter) saying that no one cares about these issues and that Abbey was just complaining for the sake of hearing herself complain. In the Oct. 27 edition, Bob Sidick agreed.

I have a few concerns with Ms. Galley's editorial. First of all, I personally thought that Abbey made a valid argument in her letter, though Katie compared the complaint with others, such as hers that people often walk through doors she has opened for herself. I failed to see the comparison. Secondly, who on this campus can say that this campus isn't largely ignorant of GLBT issues? Are you up to date? Do you care? And really, aren't gender roles such as those presented in "I know what boys like/What a girl wants" a bit outdated? I think so, and I don't see Ms. Galley's point about the titles being chosen because they are song titles. So what? The paper is still endorsing the attitude, and that is what Abbey was pointing out.

Thirdly, and most importantly, I don't think that Katie Galley had any right to attack Abbey's letter. We write letters to the editor because we have an opinion about what is going on. We are supposed to be represented by the *Beacon*, aren't we? Our tuition goes to paying for the production of it. If Katie had an opinion, she should have been objective like the rest of us and written a letter to the editor, instead of stating something as subjective and mean spirited as this: "ok, can everyone calm down and not read things into every little thing that they see in the paper, or that they see in life in general for that matter...stop thinking so highly of yourself!" I'm sorry if I offend you Katie or Bob, but I will "read into" whatever I want to in my life, whether it has to do with my life or your paper.

Sincerely,  
Jaimi Bonczar, President Women Today

## THE BEHREND BEACON

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

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**Postal Information:** The *Beacon* 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 *Beacon* can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

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

Send all letters to the editor to  
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