

## A View From The Lighthouse

### Blue Bus funding should be cut...for now

Behrend's Student Activity Fee committee has a tough call to make with the proposed Blue Bus funding. It's a no win situation for the committee, which has to weigh students' needs for the Blue Bus against the high cost to provide the service.

Ridership on the Blue Bus continues to decrease despite numerous attempts to provide a route for students that will cater to their needs. If you take a serious look at this problem, and at the proposal submitted by Student Activities for a new Blue Bus, it doesn't add up.

It's not completely fair to just hold this criteria to the Blue Bus. There are many student organizations which are funded for events which end up having no turnout. The difference between that problem and the Blue Bus, is that there is no way of telling which events will get turnout and which ones won't. We haven't seen results for these planned events. We have, however, seen results for Blue Bus ridership. And those results aren't good.

The best bet for the immediate future for the Blue Bus is to hold off on funding a new one. The proposal calls for funding a brand new bus at around \$50,000. That is a huge chunk of SAF money. And if trends continue, this \$50,000 will only affect about 100 students. That's 100 students on this campus out of 3,800 students.

The *Beacon* requests a rather large chunk of change from SAF as well. Usually, we get nearly all that we request because of the importance of having a quality newspaper at Behrend. We request money based on what we put out on a weekly basis. If we average 18 pages every week, then we request funding for that. But then, if we only print a 12-



page newspaper every week, we have to expect a cut in funding in the future.

There should only be funding for groups that are going to back-up what they request. The Blue Bus isn't carrying its weight right now; its carrying four students at a cost of \$50 per student on certain days.

The immediate answer for the Blue Bus shouldn't be something that calls for a long-term commitment. Until the future is certain, Blue Bus funding should be cut. To start, the Blue Bus should only run its routes on Friday and Saturday, the two days with the most ridership. This should be done until the Blue Bus falls apart (which is expected to happen very shortly). At that point, we should reevaluate the situation and decide whether or not to make a long-term commitment.

The rest of the week, Sunday-Thursday, the Blue Bus should be used upon request from student organizations and faculty who wish to take their groups or classes off campus. Costs for the wages and gas should be paid for by those organizations. Funding for these travel costs should be something that SAF funds.

For now, use this \$50,000 to bolster the current organizations. Stronger student organizations and events on this campus are much more valuable than driving four students to Giant Eagle.

J. B. SACK



## The justice of murder?



### Beyond the Cheap Colored Lights

Liz Hayes

In the Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution there is this interesting little phrase that states no citizen shall receive cruel or unusual punishment. Now, I realize there are some obscurities in our Bill of Rights and our interpretations of those rights. For instance, how do we define obscenity and when are we abridging a person's freedom of speech when we restrict them on the basis of obscenity? There are loopholes, there are problems, there are instances of "fuzzy math." But when that revered document that is the holy of holies to the United States of America says no cruel or unusual punishment, how do we interpret that to mean that it is okay for the U.S. government to premeditated murder?

Isn't killing someone about as cruel and unusual as one can get? If not, what is cruel and unusual? Is it the method of killing that determines cruelty? Is it cruel to stab someone to death, but not cruel to shoot that same person up with a lethal cocktail of chemicals? Is it cruel to shoot someone to death, but not cruel to have that same person face down a firing squad of executioners? Premeditated murder is a crime, but to punish that crime the government plans out a person's death - isn't that unusual? Did you know that when the government hangs someone, it has to take in account the person's weight so it can be assured his or her (but probably his) neck will break between certain vertebrae without severing the head? That sounds pretty premeditated to me.

I hear the argument that the crimes these criminals have committed are so heinous that the only fair punishment for them is death. I beg to differ. I'm not convinced that the death penalty is punishment enough. A criminal causes huge suffering and pain on the part of the victims and their families. And to punish them for their crimes, do we sentence them to a lifetime of hard labor? Do we send them to rot in jails for the rest of their lives? Do we banish them to a system where they will have the opportunity to be someone's bitch in prison, where they will have to be cautious every time they bend over for the soap? No. We pump 'em up with some poison or strap them into a chair, kill them in a

process that takes considerably less time than the rest of their lives, and then it is over. How can that begin to compensate for the crimes they've committed?

Now, I realize I'm making assumptions on how I'd feel if someone I knew was murdered or victimized in a way that could be punishable by death. But I think I'd get a lot more peace knowing everyday that I'm out living my life, that criminal is going through hell on earth in a prison somewhere. I don't see how it would even begin to assuage my rage if that criminal was convicted, killed, and then... nothing. That's it. It's over. My loved one is dead, the criminal is dead, and there is nothing left to do but move on. I think I would feel a greater sense of justice knowing that person was still atoning for his or her guilt.

Some use the argument that criminals will be rotting in hell or turned into a dung beetle or suffering through whatever bad thing a particular religion holds in store for the evil in society. But we don't know that. Or, at least, I don't know that. I'm not a particularly religious person and I find the theories on what happens to your soul while the worms are chewing on your fingertips to be a pretty shady science. I live for the life I've got now, and I'd like to see the ills of society dealt with in a way that assures me they really are being dealt with. It seems to me that killing a criminal so that God or whoever can deal with them isn't really dealing with the problem. Besides, isn't it said somewhere that God helps those who help themselves? So let's start helping ourselves by really punishing criminals, not just burying their crimes.

Another problem I've got with our system of capital punishment is the number of flaws in it. How many documented cases of innocent people being convicted do we have in this country right now? I have seen many statistics, but a common one is that for every seven people we put to death, the eighth person is innocent. I personally find that rather troublesome. Sure, if we unjustly convict someone of a crime not committed and then send that person to jail for while, pardoning them later may not seem like enough compensation to that person. But try pardoning a dead guy. It doesn't pan out too well.

Another flaw I see is the fact that more and more children are being tried as adults. This is probably a whole new issue, but it does relate to my problem with the death penalty. I'm not sure it isn't cruel and unusual to punish a child the same way we punish adults. After growing up in jail, that child will be a radically different person from when the crime was committed, but that person would probably never have the chance at a

normal life after being raised in a prison. But if we send that same child to death? There is then no chance at rehabilitation.

To me, it is sad enough that these children's lives are being wasted before they graduate from high school. Do we need to destroy any chance of humanity they may have? If we want to fix the problem of increasing child and adolescent violence, maybe we should be taking action against the causes and not the victims of those causes - because aren't the children committing these crimes often as much the victims as those they commit crimes against? We already have enough kid killers in the country. Do we really need the government killing them too?

A final flaw in the system that really leads me to turn against capital punishment is the ethnic inequalities found in our legal system. Statistics I've seen have shown that there are almost twice as many black people on Death Row than there are white people, even though black people represent a smaller percentage of the population than do white people.

Also disturbing is the fact that far more people are sentenced to death after committing a crime against a white person than those committing crimes against black people. I don't know what exactly that says about our legal system and society in this new millennium, but if we were to really listen, I don't think we'd like what we hear. Plus, those living in poverty who are convicted of crimes and face the death penalty can't afford the fancy lawyers to get their sentence lessened. Therefore, the poor get murdered by the government while the rich get paroled. But that isn't cruel or unusual, right?

Looking back over what I've written, I can see that I have some inconsistencies. I think that the death penalty is cruel to criminals, but I also think that it doesn't punish them enough for their crimes. Maybe that doesn't make sense to some, but it does to me. Why do we need to kill people to punish them? The Constitution doesn't say an eye for an eye. The recent controversy involving Timothy McVeigh is what got me on this subject to begin with. Doesn't it bother anyone that McVeigh wants the death penalty? He refused to appeal, against his lawyer's wishes. He wants his murder televised. By killing him we are giving him what he wants, giving him and his cause publicity and to a degree probably justifying some of his points about the problems with our government. I would feel much better about the situation by making him do some hard labor in a prison than by playing into his whims.

How is killing him justifying anything? I guess I just don't see the logic in the way we handle punishing people. I just hope someone out there does!

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Jason Snyder

Managing Editor  
Jeff Miller

News Editors

Liz Hayes  
Erin McCarty (assistant)

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