

Friday, January 23, 2004

The Behrend Beacon

The Great Debate

Every other week, two members of the Beacon's board of opinions will choose a topic and discuss the topic from opposite viewpoints. This week, the focus of The Great Debate is the State of the Union Address given by President Bush on Tues.

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OUR VIEW

Lack of winter maintenance poses safety issues

How is it possible that \$8,800 to \$16,500 does not buy clean sidewalks? With the exorbitant amount of money that we pay Penn State every year in tuition, you'd think that they would be able to do something simple like winter maintenance. Not here at Behrend.

Here we are faced with snowy and icy walkways going down and up our campus on the hill. Walking to class should not be an Olympic sport that tests your sense of balance, reaction skills and determination.

When a student is sliding down a hill to class they must first attempt to keep their balance. Often this is unattainable and so reaction skills are put to the test so that when you do fall, you don't hurt yourself.

Finally, determination comes into play. Not only do you have to be determined to go to class after a fall, but also to sit through a class wet with dirty slush that built up on the pathways.

This is bad enough for those of us who are walking on two feet, but what about our fellow students confined to wheelchairs?

Many don't feel safe driving up Jordan Road with the protection of air bags and safety belts, while the hand-capped on campus have to maneuver

their way down the hills with few safety precautions.

We understand that it is a difficult task to keep up the massive sheets of snow that fall on Erie in the winter, but sometimes it almost seems like the school isn't even trying.

Rarely do you see salt on pathways that would give students much needed traction. This is supposedly not done because all of the salt washes away and hurts the grass and trees on campus. Which is more important student welfare or turf grass management?

The college must do a better job of maintaining the paths around campus. When this is not done it is not only dangerous, but it also makes the rest of the campus filthy.

Just look at any of the rugs inside of buildings by noon; they are soaked and there is brown crud on top of them, if not on the floor itself.

When this happens, you are not even safe from slipping and falling indoors! For the amount of money that we pump into this school year after year, is a little safety too much to ask for?

The Beacon's view is determined by a majority of the board of opinions.

From politics to sports: things that make me tick

by Tim Denial
staff writer

Well, folks, this is my first-ever editorial, so bear with me. It seems like complaining and whining has been the popular subject as of late so I think I'll just jump on that bandwagon and take it for a spin.

I suppose I start off internationally. I think the United States could solve the increasing problem of companies moving their production plants outside of the country in favor of cheaper labor costs by not allowing them free trade back to us.

There has got to be some way to keep American businesses here within our borders. If there was a tax heavy enough to counter the 13 cents-an-hour labor, CEOs might think twice about leaving. So what if companies change their names or owners, I have no idea.

Now on to a more domesticated subject, is it just me or do sirens played in the background of songs suck. To me the only thing worse than driving home from a bar, jamming-out to a tune and hearing a siren coming from the radio, is actually having the police behind you. Seriously, you've got Kid Rock on the radio (or whatever else Erie radio stations play

a lot of) and you hear that siren, next thing you know your applying the brake, checking all your mirrors frantically, checking your breath and swearing at yourself because you have no idea where your insurance card is. Okay, maybe it is just me.

Now on to sports: How the heck can the Los Angeles Lakers be losing with a roster that consists of four of the biggest names in basketball? Oh yeah, because Karl Malone, Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant are all injured.

Not to mention their rookie center from Illinois is finally able to play after surgery, and Gary Payton, though a sure thing for the Hall of Fame, can't handle the whole court. And you can't forget that fact that there is enough non basketball-related news surrounding the Lakers to fill an entire issue of the National Inquire.

And now they're "not ruling out Rodman." Do they really think that he's going to be a big help?

I guess I'll stop here before I ruin any credibility I had before the column was concocted.

Tim Denial's column appears every three weeks.

If nothing else President Bush's fourth of eight State of the Union Addresses was the most aggressive towards his critics. All of the knocks on the President were dispelled Tuesday night and now the Democratic Presidential candidates (and Democrats in general) are grasping at straws to try and attack our President.

Gen. Wesley Clark and most other candidates made accusations of lies and misleadings in the address. However, they failed to report anything new to refute Bush's words.

Yes, there was a lot of money spent in Iraq, and yes, we have a massive wartime deficit. Those aren't new revelations that show Bush's weakness, instead it is just beating a dead horse with common knowledge.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi talked about President Bush's go-it-alone foreign policy. Apparently she must have nodded off when the President named 17 out of the 34 countries that are helping us and the Iraqi people. All of the rhetoric about unilateralism is an insult to the 34 nations that are with us.

President Bush's temporary worker plan for immigrants was also a target for criticism. Is this because it could

grant legal status to many illegal immigrants? No, instead the policy is too hard on the illegal immigrants. In the Democratic Party's official Spanish response to the address, Gov. Bill Richardson complained that after three years (immigrants) don't have a guarantee they'll be able to stay. Apparently the Democrats realized that it was not a free amnesty pass or a burden on the average worker so they decided to pull for the illegal immigrants.

Iowa caucus winner John Kerry also made a boneheaded statement by declaring that President Bush stood by while we lost more jobs than any time since the Great Depression.

The mere comparison of the current downturn in the economy to the Great Depression is ludicrous. Firstly, our president did not stand by, he tried several things to get the economy back up and running. Some helped some didn't, but all of them constitute not standing by.

Secondly, at the end of the Great Depression the United States population was at roughly 133 million. Currently we have an estimated approximate 292 million citizens. When you start talking about the number of lost jobs in those two times you are comparing apples and

oranges. Add to the paltry numbers of the Depression's population the fact that women did not hold nearly the number and types of jobs then and they do now, and the analogy is further skewed.

Finally, the President's view of the sanctity of marriage has been attacked. This is also mind blowing as Bush is merely continuing the work of Democratic Savior Bill Clinton.

Let's recap: Bush supports Republican ideas, he's wrong; Bush supports Democratic measures, he's wrong. Something just doesn't sound right there. Many conservative states are overwhelmingly against "redefining marriage" but the Democrats would have their new will imposed on all states and their citizens private lives whether they like it or not.

Our president did an excellent job in his State of the Union Address. Some accuse him of "fluffing" and using "smoke and mirrors." I applaud him for explaining. If some people want to be ignorant of the truth, then that is their prerogative, but direct the criticism where it belongs. Remember whenever you point a finger there are three pointing back at you. Put up some new material or shut up.

Bush claims that the attacks in Iraq occurred to meet the demands of the United Nations.

Yet, I still recall our country attacking both against the United Nations' will and without the declaration of war from Congress.

And has anyone noticed we still haven't found any nuclear warheads capable of destroying life as we know it?

Bush wants the American people to believe that by god, we will find them, and we will bring peace to world as a whole. He thinks that if enough people buy into that theory, he'll have another four years at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Hopefully enough people realize that this goal is completely intangible. Fighting has been going on in the Middle East and Africa for centuries now, and no amount of diplomacy will bring it to an end. Ever.

Bush claims that our economy is working, and working well. If that is the case, then why have institutions seen on average a 28 percent increase in tuition since the beginning of the Bush regime?

By comparison, Democratic presidential hopeful Wesley Clark plans on readjusting the tax brackets to allow for a \$6,000 undistributed college grant available to all students whose parents make under \$100,000 a year.

This would make the first two years

of college close to free for almost all college-bound students in America. Bush has made it harder for students to move on to college. Notice he doesn't mention that. It would look bad.

One final point: Bush's sanctity of marriage. Granted, I could write an entire editorial on this one, so let's just hit the main points. Bush wants to defend the sanctimonious union that is marriage in today's America, as long as it's between a man and a woman. But trust me: I know a lot of unhappily sanctimonious couples. Divorce, adultery and single-parent homes have become rampant in today's society. Marriage is no longer the holy union it once was; it has become just a set of words for most people. Till death do us part no longer really means anything for married couples.

Yet, there is a decent percentage of Americans that will never be able to say those words. Outlawing or even not recognizing a homosexual marriage is unjust. It is our God-given right to pursue life, liberty and happiness, as outlined by the Declaration of Independence, and if we can't be legally tied to the one person whom we love, our pursuit is halted.

Almost all of the other candidates running for election support some type of recognition or benefits for homosexual couples. But not Bush, the hardcore Republican that he is.

Canceling classes costs money- my money

It's the second week of school and everyone is running around to classes. As I sit in Bruno's I get the ever-so-popular question "How's classes going?"

My reply is "I'll let you know when they start." Why do I reply like that you may ask? I didn't have classes the first week of school.

All right, that's an exaggeration. I went to one class on Tuesday, Wednesday and on Thursday. Sound a little weird for someone with 17 credits? Yup, that's what I thought.

I understand that sometimes teachers need to cancel classes due to illness, snow, etc. Why did all my teachers cancel classes in the same week? I got a heads up on a few of my classes via e-mail from some teachers that class would be cancelled but it seemed that for my 9 a.m. there was nothing except that little white paper. You know what paper I'm talking about. The one that is posted outside of the door that says your teacher cancelled class.

I love and despise that paper at the same time. It seems that I only see that paper when I have to go to my early classes. I get up early, I make the frigid walk and then there's that paper. I could have continued sleeping in but nope; I'm up now! Yet at the same time, I like that paper because class is



Erika Jarvis

canceled. I saw that paper more times last week than I saw it in my entire college career, which is all of three semesters.

As I talked to friends and complained about how my classes kept getting canceled they didn't appreciate my whining while they got ready for class. It seems that when your friends have class, they don't like to hear that your class was canceled. On Friday when my classes were canceled yet again my friends yelled at me.

"Stop complaining! Not having class is great," they yelled at me. Then I thought about it, I am paying

about \$14,000 to come to Penn State and my money went nowhere for the first week. It seems that all I paid for in my first week of this semester was to chill in Bruno's, hang out in my room and find ways to keep myself busy and not bored out of my mind.

Had I had a single class it would have been a little better and could have done work, but there was no work to be done! I didn't even have the blow-off day where you're handed the syllabus and you learn about what the semester will be like in that class.

Granted, I wasn't too upset but I felt like the biggest waste of space. Also, my parents weren't the happiest people in the world when I'd call and give them the news that yet another class had been canceled. Try calling your parents and telling them that all of their hard work and money went to you watching another episode of "Oprah" instead of going to class.

I'm not going to lie to you; I do journalism a lot better than I do math. I was wondering one thing: Penn State? Think I could get reimbursed for the classes that were canceled?

Erika Jarvis' column appears every three weeks.

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LETTERS

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