

Editorial Opinion Collegian Requests Probe Of J.R.C.

Recently there have appeared many mis-happenings within our closely knit system at Behrend Campus. The S.G.A. and the Behrend Administration have tried to solve many of these problems with the least amount of student unrest possible. Until this time this would have been thought to be true. Now there exists a break down in communication, not from the Administrations view point, but rather from the students organization, namely the Joint Resident Council.

As seen within the content of this publication, we have made totally public the result of the recent issue of extended visitation hours, but if you take notice, the date of the letter is March 3. This letter released by Benjamin A. Lane, Dean of Student Affairs, was to be made publicly known shortly after it had been dated. Why is it now we hear of its content a month after the letter was to be released?

Dean Lane's letter was sent to the Joint Resident Council and from there it was to be

disbursed to the S.G.A. and the students. But instead it sat in waiting to be picked up by a member of the J.R.C.

Why wasn't this letter received immediately, futhering the action of this so called effective organization?

The only possible answer is that this organization does not generate the student interest it so duly professes.

Therefore, we request an investigation upon the effectiveness of the Joint Resident Council. We further propose that a committee be formed to conduct the afore mentioned request. This committee should consist of the following individuals: Benjamin A. Lane, Dean of Student Affairs, Daniel P. Fiorentino, Resident Coordinator, Arthur L. Sprague, President of J.R.C., Alan J. Quinlan, President of S.G.A. and a Collegian representative to clarify the request, to be chosen when the committee is formed.

It is the hope, that this investigation if ensued, will determine the representative ability of this organization.

Open Letter to the Students Why No Extended Visitation

March 3, 1972
Mr. George Frola, Chairman
The Joint Resident Council
The Behrend Campus
SUBJECT: Extended visitation policy
Dear Mr. Frola:

In your recent communication to me regarding "extended visitation policy", your concluding paragraph requests that I "read and evaluate" the new proposal. In accord with that request I would like to present to you the evaluation of the Office of Student Affairs regarding your proposal.

I. To begin, I think it is appropriate to review the history of the parietal rules governing students in residence at the Behrend Campus over the past several years. The residence hall program began four years ago and at that time operated under what current standards would regard as a stringent series of rules and procedures; these regulations were primarily concerned with women students and included sign-outs and sign-ins, overnight permission and a whole host of regulations regarding the student's personal life. In a comparatively short period of time all of those regulations have been withdrawn. As recently as a year ago the open house program at Behrend was restricted to several hours on Sunday afternoon, and as you know last year was extended to include weekends only. The present open house code was established in October of last year permits open house seven days a week. In addition there are open lobbies and the floor operation of the code functions with very few restrictions. All of the changes in the student life in the residence hall have come about through the recommendation of the students themselves functioning through their appropriately designated government bodies. By and large this has been done with a minimum of difficulty and in a spirit of mutual respect and concern. When the current open house proposal, now in effect, was made it was assumed by the Office of Student Affairs that this would be the proposal for a year and it was not our thinking at the time that it would be subject to review.

II. At the present time individuals both at official and unofficial levels within the University are seriously concerned about the concept of visitation as it is currently operating at the University Park Campus. In addition I am sure, you are aware, there is national concern over the whole area of residence hall living. Not only has there been an inordinate increase in the amount of theft taking place within the residence halls, but there has also been an increase in threats to individuals and property as well. There is always the concern of the non-student and his ability to operate quite freely under most open house or visitation procedures. Finally as a recent article in the New York Times indicates, "college officials as well as students have become alarmed by thefts, muggings, rapes, and even murder." It is a common

tendency of the part of individuals in the face of national trends and incidents to assume that such incidents could not happen in their own lives; this has been at times a regrettable and indeed tragic point of view.

It has been observed, with some justification, that all of these incidents could occur on a campus where visitation does not exist; however, current investigations tend to indicate that there is a direct correlation between thefts and other serious problems and the extent of open house codes. Although the operation of the current open house code at the Behrend Campus would seem to be operating reasonably well in certain areas, recent incidents have indicated that the control measures within the code may not be sufficient to insure the security that must be a part of such a program. There is particular concern with the overnight guest and failure of students to comply with the Joint Residence Council requirement that such guests be registered.

An open house program such as is in operation at Behrend, can only function properly if all members of the residence community assume responsibility for control. In the case of overnight guests the element of control rests almost exclusively with the resident student in whose room the guest is staying. One of the primary concerns of the Student Affairs Staff is that most reports of infractions of the code have been made by residence hall staff, not by students, especially in the area of overnight guests where the responsibility of the student is critical. It is felt by this office that there is need for strengthening these aspects of the present open house program.

III. In my letter to the Joint Residence Council in which approval was given for the present open house program I voiced concern about accommodations

being made for those students who conscientiously cannot accept either the spirit or actuality of open house. I requested that these students should be given an opportunity to make their feelings known and that plans should be made to comply with their requests by developing living units where open house will not be in effect. I have had several students over the past several weeks in my office voicing their concern about open house and in addition I have had other observations through the concern of students with what they consider the problem of open house. The Joint Residence Council at this point has not made any workable recommendation to comply with what seems to this office to be a major concern.

IV. Finally the Office of Student Affairs is generally concerned about the viability of the open house concept in residential life. To this end it is concerned with developing sound objectives research in this area so that future plans can be made which will guarantee an acceptable mode of life for all students. For the past several months the Office of Student Affairs has planned to do research on the present open house program. This research will be done during the spring term.

Taking all of the above matter into consideration it is the considered opinion of the Office of Student Affairs, that an extension of open house is not appropriate. We fully appreciate the enthusiasm and good will of many of the students who have worked hard to make this program what it is and hope that through proper research and more study a truly viable program can be developed.

Sincerely yours,
Benjamin A. Lane
Dean of Student Affairs

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All letters must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request. Term standing, major, and hometown must be included.

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