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EDITORIAL Place Your Bets

In the business of education the student is the consumer. We have not yet seen Nader's Raider's investigate possible hazards in the system. Even Herb Denenburg, the crusading consumer advocate, hasn't yet delved into possible inequities. Until the "Unsafe at any Speed" of higher education is published, let these reflections suffice.

At a two-year University such as this, it is impossible to flunk. If everyone flunked then no one would graduate. If no one graduate...Who would come to a school where no one graduated?

Higher education is a business. And like all business, one of the objectives is the fast turnover. When the commodities sit too long, business stagnates.

Of course it's inevitable, there are those blatant cases where no remote semblance of "D" or better can be spotted atop the mast of academic standards.

But, these unfortunates pose a different problem, and are therefore carefully kept in check. The repeat student has already heard the joke. He'll give away the punch line to all the class. He'll expose method. He has seen the Econ 802 act before, but this time is ready for it. And will, to the best of his ability, find just reward, in his expose, of the Econ 802 prof.

But what about the prof? The very name, professor, what does it mean? One who is employed in the act of publicly professing. Professing to know, and be able to teach you, about his or her particular field.

How do you know if he knows. He may know, but is unable to relate information, so as to be understandable. Or, but no, one mustn't think this. Could it all be bullshit? Is the loquacious and sententious verbosity just a nefarious cover designed to mystify the plebs? Oh what abject perfidiousness, it couldn't be true.

Maybe not, but, how do you know? There is no consumer's guide to rate the Econ 802 prof. At least not one the consumer can get hold of.

Yes, there are evaluations, but consumers never see them. It's like asking corrupt city officials to insure against a dishonest police force. Or it's like asking God to argue against religion.

If on evaluation day one were write in answer to, "What did you like best about the course?" the excellent view my seat afforded concerning the pretty girls in the class, that person would indubitably be dismissed as a madman, and the evaluation be invalidated. So even if you do get your shot in at the prof., most assuredly you'd be considered a caviling malcontent.

Alternatives? Go talk to your Econ 802 prof. before Econ 802 gets underway. Get your impression as to his effectiveness as a teacher. It's not a foolproof method. You make a considerable gamble, 20 minutes to judge a ten-week course. Odds are considerably decreased, though, when you place your bet, before even knowing the terms.

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The Capitol Campus Reader is the school newspaper of Penn State's Capitol Campus. It is published by the students who attend this school. We of the Reader Staff try to accurately represent the voice of the students, and keep them informed as to current events and relevant issues. We are published on a weekly basis.

ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS

By Mike Burke

The reinstatement of the death penalty is a good example of the conservative shift in the mood of the American people. The Gary Gilmore may well be the precedent for a return to the barbarism we tried to abandon a decade ago.

However, while Gilmore may be the object of this exercise, he is not the catalyst that led to the return of the death penalty.

I saw the handwriting on the wall over a year ago when the liberal Justice Douglas retired from the Supreme Court and Ford nominated the more conservative John Paul Stevens to replace him.

Douglas held the key vote when the court split 5-4 in the *Furman vs Georgia* (1972) decision. The decision did not forbid capital punishment. It banned the death penalty as it was being practiced holding that it was so arbitrary and capricious in practice that it violated the 8th amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

With Stevens on the bench, it was only a matter of time before the conservative majority would uphold some form of capital punishment. That time came last July with the *Gregg vs Georgia* (1976) decision which held that the death penalty "is not a form of punishment that may never be imposed."

However, the court made it clear that its approval applied to murder cases only.

As soon as the decision was handed down, several states

began dusting off their electric chairs and preparing their gas chambers for executions with a perverse sense of urgency.

But I must ask what purpose will these executions serve. Those who support capital punishment claim it is the only fitting punishment for the taking of a human life and that it serves as a deterrent to others. I say no, on both counts.

To take the life of someone as a form of punishment is in effect saying that under certain circumstances, murder is justified, provided it is done by the state.

As far as its deterring value, Gary M. Gilmore's "Le Danse Macabre" with the Utah Criminal Justice System renders absurd the notion that capital punishment is a deterrent to murder. That argument is based on faulty logic. It assumes that all men are rational actors, that crime can be discouraged by the likelihood of punishment, and the greater the punishment, the greater the deterrent to crime.

If the greatest punishment to man is the forfeiture of his life, then capital punishment is the strongest deterrent to the worst crime.

The error in the faulty logic lies in the basic premise that all men are rational actors who weigh the possible gain of a criminal act against the likelihood and severity of the punishment that may result from such action.

That may work fine in the area of white collar crime such as embezzlement, which is

usually the result of rational decision based on a cost-benefit ratio.

Murder, on the other hand, is for the most part a crime of passion that is committed on impulse. It is not usually the result of a rational thought process.

Therefore, there can not be any deterrent to such illogical action. Gary Mark Gilmore is an excellent example of such illogical action. Gilmore has spent 18 of his 35 years behind bars. He now prefers death to life imprisonment. Yet at the time of his homicidal joy ride, he must have known that the most likely outcome would be life imprisonment, something he fears more than death.

That should have deterred him. Yet he committed two brutal murders in a 48-hour period. So much for the deterrence theory.

However, some action must be taken to restrain future Gary Gilmores. I believe the way to do this is through limiting the opportunities people like him have to commit violent, impulsive crimes, rather than through state inflicted murder.

This can be done by: first, the revolving doors in our prisons by tightening up on plea bargaining and qualifications for parole (Gilmore was out on parole). Second and most important, enact some effective gun control (Gilmore used a stolen hand gun).

Measures like these will save more innocent lives than a thousand executions.



Tish and Tush on the prowl for a Big Mac at the Spring Concert.

SGA SEEKS FEEDBACK ON CONCERT

Hey, what are you doing next May? You don't know? Well neither do we. And we have to try to help you decide. We are the S.G.A., and we fund and help organize one of the more interesting traditions of this campus, the spring rock concert.

The question which we would like you to help answer is this: Has the tradition outlived its usefulness?

The project costs a great deal of money that might be

better spent elsewhere. More importantly the project eats up a hell of a lot of human effort. Now, we S.G.A. types are a lot like other Capitol students. We'd much more prefer to sit at home and contemplate our beer cans, than beat our heads against a wall, but if you want a concert this year and are willing to work with us for it, starting now, it will happen in May.

You can start helping by letting your S.G.A. representa-

tive know your answer to these questions:

1. Do you want a concert this year?

2. If so, do you want it to be a one-day public event, as it has been to date, or as a series of events, for the campus community alone, spread over several days?

3. Are you going to help it happen?

It's your move.

Ray Martin