

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Tuesday, Dec. 8

editorial opinion

It's back

But abortion bill still misses the point

Chances are good that an anti-abortion package will be passed by the state House today. Chances are very good.

And, although the bill has gone through a number of changes that have substantially weakened one of its purposes — discouraging women from obtaining abortions — it still carries enough bite to deter many low-income women and minors.

The legislation, proposed by state Reps. Gregg L. Cunningham and Stephen Freind, makes abortions on well-developed fetuses illegal unless the mother's life or health is endangered; makes abortions by state facilities illegal unless the mother's life or health is endangered or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest; requires a 24-hour waiting period before the abortion is performed and requires parental consent for minors.

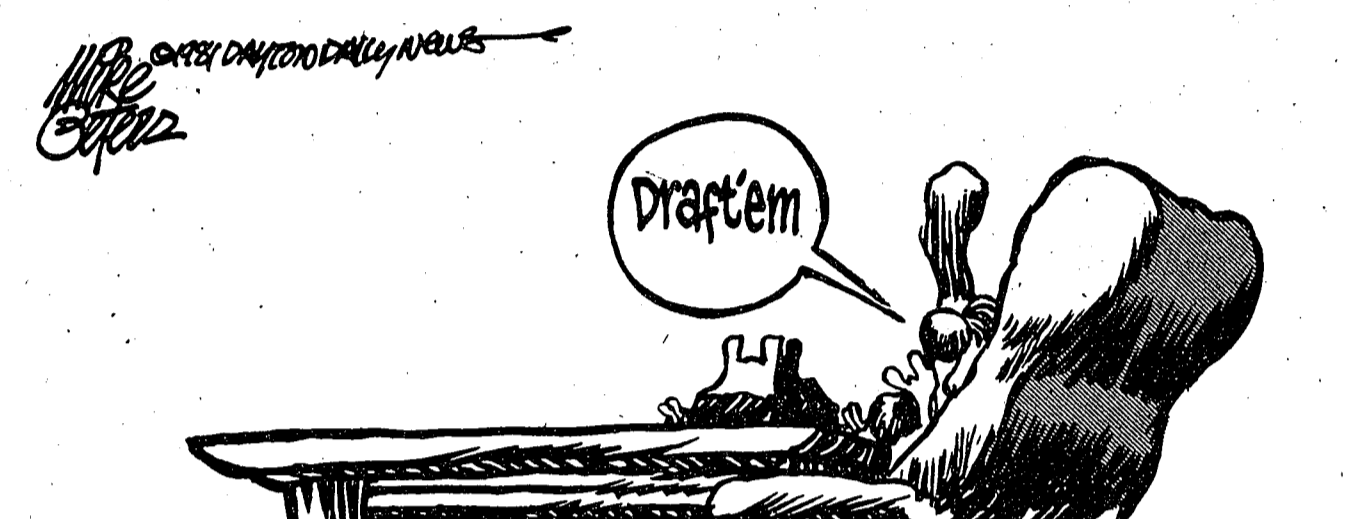
But like the well-intentioned parent who sends his wayward child to prep school to "shape 'im up," the bill misses its mark.

Making abortions more difficult to obtain won't stop abortions. It may make an already traumatic experience even more upsetting, and may force some women to pay more for the operation, but it won't stop abortions. That was evident when abortion was illegal.

The efforts of Cunningham and Freind would be more effective and better appreciated if they were directed at the source of the problem rather than its aftermath. Introducing legislation that encourages ways to prevent unwanted pregnancies — contraceptive education, for example — is a much more logical way to deal with the abortion problem.

Because even as the parent sends his child to prep school only to have the kid become more unruly, legislation that serves only to discourage women from having abortions ignores the root of the whole problem.

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility.



A true-life saga: I sent students to the blackboard

I tried an experiment on the classes I taught last term. It frightened several of my students, but benefited most of the others. I'm reasonably pleased with the way it worked out. What's more, most of my students enjoyed it, and I think it helped many of them show the kinds of feelings I like to see in a classroom.

I taught four Math 162 (calculus) recitation sections. Recitation sections are intended to supplement lectures, but usually turn into "answer the homework problems" sessions. They are also usually incredibly dull.

To change this, I used an idea I had gotten from a Math 121 student evaluation form: I made my students go to the board to do most of the problems they wanted to see themselves. I sat among them, gave hints or instructions, and asked questions.

I began each class by asking for volunteers to do the problems requested, but called on students who hadn't been volunteering. I made vague threats — threats I eventually decided not to keep — to lower the recitation grades of those who didn't go to the board a minimum number of times.

I intended to use going to the board to teach my students to write clearly, use proper notation, and write in a series of complete equations. I hoped to make them think about what these equations were saying, and why it was true.

My main reasons for having students go to the board, though, had less to do with mathematics than with psychiatry. I'm an outgoing but demanding person who many students find intimidating. I had discussed this with several undergraduates

during the 1981 Encampment, and had decided that having students be the ones standing in front of the board would mute my "authority," making me less threatening.

This approach also made things emotionally easier for me. It meant asking my students to carry parts of the "let's keep everybody awake" and "let's give each class some style" burdens, and they did a good job of it.

Going to the board might also have frightened some students so badly that they skipped class because of it.

Most of the students who filled out my student evaluation forms liked the idea, though. Out of 65 replies, five hated it, 13 thought it was a bad idea, 31 liked it with some reservations, and seven were enthusiastic. The other nine either didn't comment on it or were so firmly wishy-washy that I couldn't tell what they thought of it.

Many of those who liked it, particularly those who were enthusiastic, said it had had exactly some of the effects I had hoped it would have.

Demanding classroom participation might have seemed harsh, but it had the effect of making going to the board an

unexceptional thing that involved all students. And while grading participation as I'd threatened to do might have been "negative," it avoided having students think of grades as their rewards for participating.

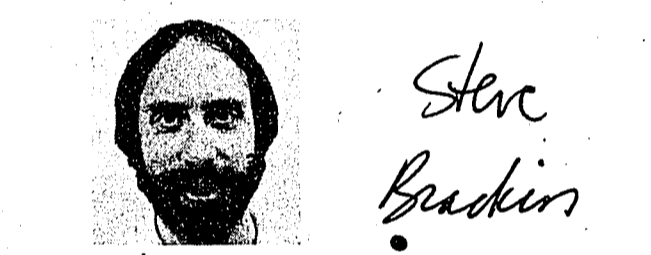
I think most of the students who went to the board regularly did it, after the first few times, simply because they enjoyed it. Every section had its "quietly proud hard-worker" and its "ham who happened to be one of the best students in the class." Several students liked the challenge of thinking on their feet.

They also did it because they wanted to be helpful. Students helped each other with the problems. They didn't complete for problems they knew how to do. When I told them I needed help in covering everything in the time we had, they gave it to me.

My "cruelly" helped create classes where students could show off and be proud of themselves without having to feel self-conscious about it, and where shy people could learn to be not-so-shy. These classes also had generosity and indifference to grades — and they happened in a low-level, required math course.

Every once in a while I get the feeling this teaching business might not be such a bad idea.

Steve Brachin is a graduate student in mathematics. His column appears on Tuesdays.



Steve Brachin

reader opinion

Use this space

The Daily Collegian prints nearly all letters, provided they are one-page, typed and double-spaced. Please bring letters to 128 Carnegie between 8:30 a.m. and 11 p.m. with proper identification.

Still disgusted

Maybe I am naive. Perhaps I am missing a few essential elements in my educational background. It is even possible that I cut class on the day that they lectured on certain fundamental truths, and as a result am stigmatized for life. All of these are possibilities, but with the possible exception of the first, they are not probabilities. This being so, why is it that a relatively well-educated person like myself, as speaker of two and a half languages and the possessor of several key historical dates, cannot check out a book from Pattee Library in less than 25 minutes?

At the risk of exposing myself to public ridicule and a subsequent potential loss of self-esteem, I am forced to concede that I constantly find myself asking the same questions whenever I am approaching the dreaded circulation desk:

- (1) Why are the librarians at the circulation desk so intent on being rude?
- (2) Why do they seem to ignore long lines of people for what seems an eternity, while paying

such strict attention to the new book return/conveyor belt that no one is permitted to use?

(3) Why do I have to wait in line the afternoon eternity, only to discover that one of my books is not "coded," and that I must go elsewhere for this basic procedure, and then return to the end of the original line (standard punishment)?

(4) Why — and this is the big one — must I depend on the incredibly inefficient new machines at the circulation desk, operated by persons who seem better equipped to service drink machines in office lounges, to inform me that the four books I returned three weeks ago are overdue?

(5) Why must the previously mentioned drop-outs from charm school then proceed to resume their rudeness, demanding that I, who am gullible, find the books that they misplaced? These gripes may seem petty, and it could be that I just have a lot of bad luck, but when I am confronted by a variation of three or more of these questions every time I approach circulation, and I see other innocent victims struggling with the same, I am forced to conclude that the people who are in a position to help the students are not really very interested in such an eventuality and are in fact part of the University-wide bureaucratic conspiracy (a well-kept secret, heavily guarded at Shields) to deprive me of my sanity.

M. Roosevelt, graduate-history
Dec. 7

Lousy crumbs

In reference to the Dec. 4 letter from Gary R. Frantz and Fred C. Stair, the Abbott and Costello of the South Bethlehem State Store:

This is just a short note from an out-of-state resident who would like to let you know that he's nominating you for membership in the John Wilkes Booth Society. Your bit of back-biting on Joe Paterno is an excellent example of cheap-shottery.

I'm sure more than a couple of people in Pittsburgh would readily counter your inane contention that Paterno's teams choke. The "number of losses" you refer to in your letter, Gary and Fred, is two. Which is the same number of losses recorded in this season by the likes of Nebraska, Southern Cal, and Miami of Florida — all top 10 teams — and one fewer than the records compiled by Ohio State, Michigan and Iowa. Not bad company Paterno is in for being a "chocker," is it, Gary and Fred?

In football, gentlemen, there are winners and there are losers. At 9-2, with a strong possibility of seeing 10-2 with victories over Notre Dame, Pitt and Southern Cal, we know what Coach Paterno is.

We also know what you two are.
P.S. Why HASN'T Thornburgh gotten rid of those State Stores yet?

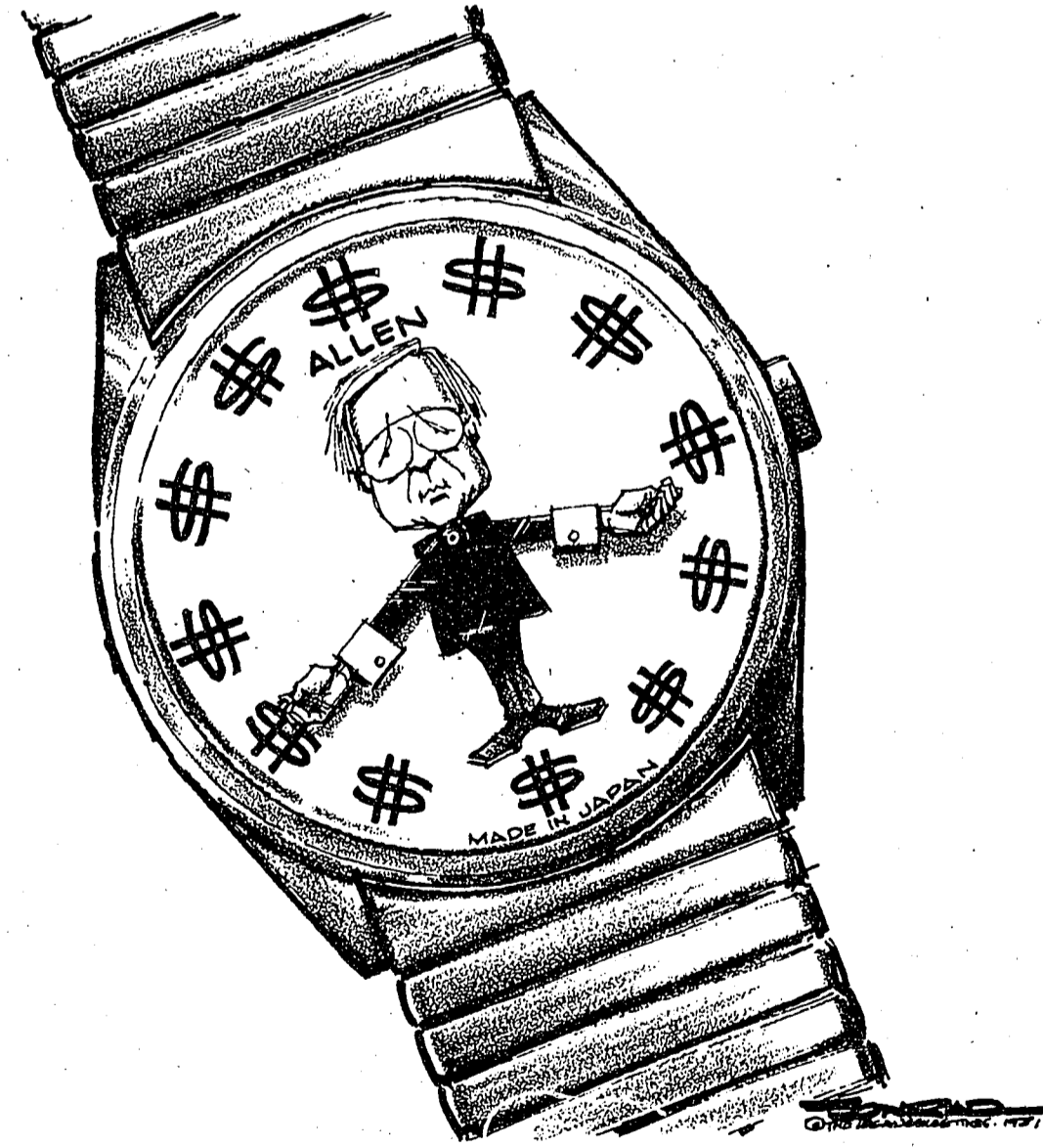
Dennis Boone, graduate-journalism
Dec. 4

Saidsaidsaidsaids

While sitting through an exciting session of Electrical Engineering 200, my eyes began to wander and happened to fall on The Daily Collegian. Seeking greater thrills than those provided by line currents and delta circuits, I eagerly began to read the articles on page 12. After a short time the Collegian began to bore me as much as my academic pursuits. How can this be? I queried.

After a thorough examination of the articles, I discovered the word "said" used not less than 35 times and few, if any, synonyms. I'm no writer, I may be nit-picking, and this may be some sort of journalistic technique, but it's boring as hell. Roget's Thesaurus contains well over one hundred verbs or expressions which may be substituted for the word "said." Please, have someone at the Collegian get a hold of one, or I'll never stay awake long enough to graduate!

Richard S. Wendler, 10th-industrial engineering
Nov. 16



the daily Collegian

Tuesday Dec. 8, 1981 — Page 2
Paula Froke
Editor

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opinions

Unfriendly service plagues local restaurant

Pollock Dining Hall, located on the corner of Pollock and Bigler Roads. Open weekdays for breakfast from 7 to 9:30 a.m.; lunch from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; and dinner from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Some handicapped facilities. Dress is casual.

Situated in the heart of Happy Valley is a large institutionalized building which daily serves more than 1,000 hungry students and some University staff members. Pollock Dining Hall is a cafeteria conveniently located atop the Pollock Union Building in the middle of campus.

Nearly divided into four dining rooms, the everyday crowds indicate that the facility is either remarkably popular for its food or needs a hostess. Unfortunately, only one dining room is usually open: Two usually close after an hour and a half (leaving the remainder of the 5:10 class crowd to wallow in masses of lines for dinner), and one is reserved for the football team, whose members love to tease the other patrons by leaving the establishment with large ice cream sundaes created exclusively for them.

The food, when properly prepared, has been decent on occasion. Alas, the only memorable meals this reviewer has eaten have been the once-a-month "special dinners," and even these can be poor if one arrives too late (at 5:30).

On a recent luncheon visit, I ordered tuna casserole. As I reached the counter after waiting in line for half an hour, the dining hall server announced there was no more. I resorted to eating spaghetti from two days earlier.

On another occasion, my partner asked for a chicken leg at dinner. After the server chastised her in front of the entire line for "holding things up," my partner received a piece of chicken — a breast. Her wait was not

worth the agony of being humiliated either: The chicken was dry and lacked taste.

On a return trip to this restaurant, I ventured to sample a simple American hamburger. I should have known better — the roll supply was exhausted just as I made by request. Again I tried to make the best of things: I ate my hamburger on stale American white bread.

The lighting is dim, and many of the tables are wobbly. The only attempts at artistic decorations are some large grotesque sculptures in the lobbies. One looks like the remains of a beehive destroyed by a large creature; another resembles the remains of a forest fire.

The service is a major flaw in this restaurant. If a customer asks for a specific food displayed behind the glass, the server often grumbles about the special effort that must be made to comply.

The managers have nothing but smiles, however. On one occasion, I complained to the supervisor on duty and she promptly went behind the counter to chastise the workers. This made things better the next time I came through the line, but in a few days the grumbles returned.

Sadly, this restaurant has potential. The amount of money generated by the many customers could make the quality of the food and service top-notch. But until the long lines are better controlled (perhaps by leaving the dining rooms open later?), the workers will still be frazzled and the overall quality of the food will suffer.

Overall rating:
Food: Good variety but poorly prepared.
Service: Unfriendly and intimidating.
Atmosphere: Institutionalized.
Price value: Expensive.
Suggestions to customers: Rent an apartment or eat out.

Joyce Venezia is an 11th-term journalism and American studies major and campus editor of The Daily Collegian.



Joyce Venezia

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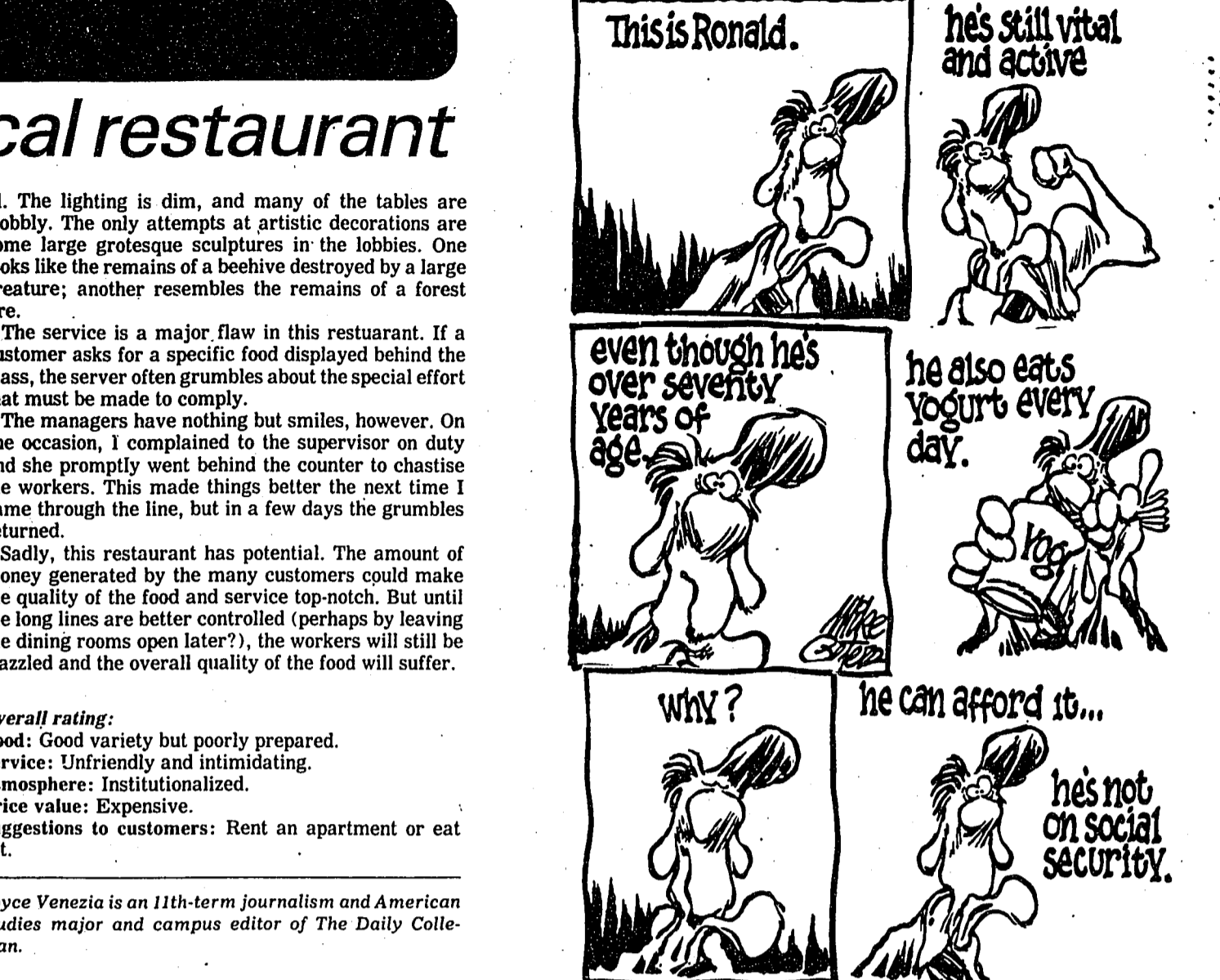


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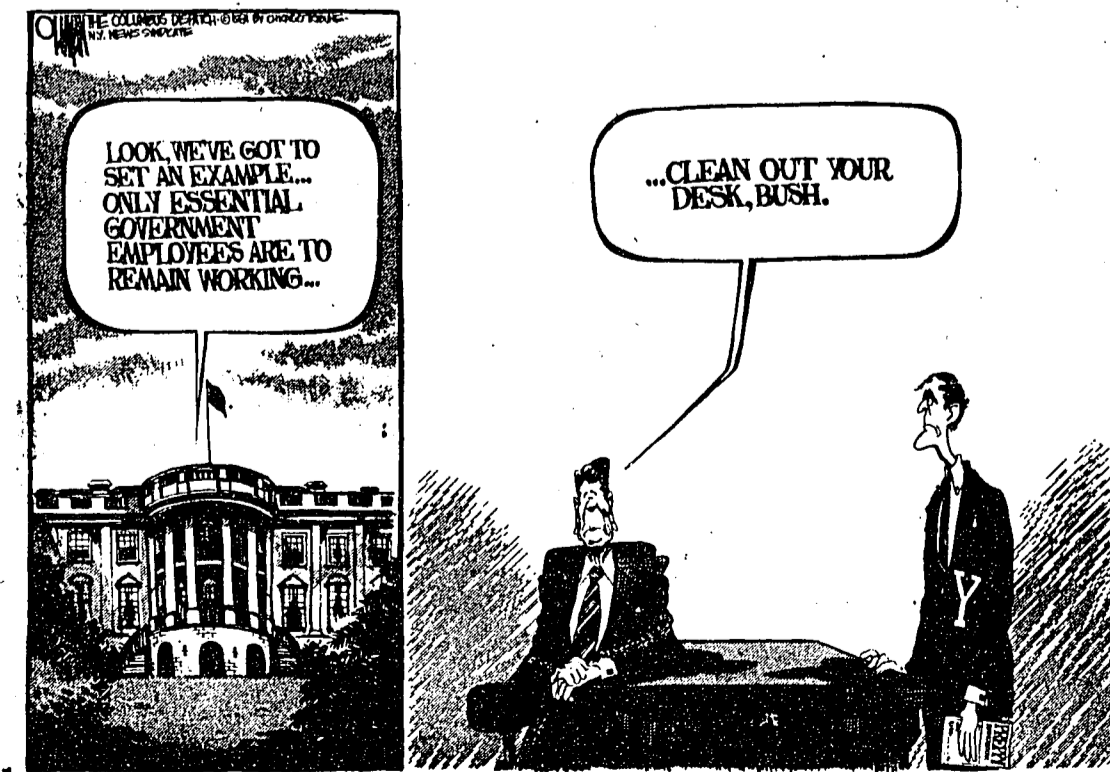
Hey, Mom! Hey, Dad! I'm coming home for Summer Term.

December 8, 1981
Leete Hall
University Park, Pa.
16802

Dear Mom and Dad,
While I'm home for the holidays, let's talk about my spending the summer with you. I can enroll for the Commonwealth Campus and the advantages are, you know, living at home; getting a part time job; your cooking, Mom; and a full schedule of classes. And just think, you'll have the pleasure of putting up with me all summer!

Love,
Tara

P.S. Class schedules and detailed information for all campuses will be published soon in the Daily Collegian.



Steve Brachin

Alert consumers spot the bargains in Collegian ads.