

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Monday, Dec. 14

editorial opinion

One more line

The '11th line' gives dorm dwellers a choice

Like early settlers braving the elements to secure a homeland, many Penn State students wait outside for days to secure a residence hall room. Most are not thrilled with their little adventure, but consider it the only way to make sure that they get a dorm contract. The theory is that if one suffers enough, one deserves reward.

An alternative to the spring ritual of suffering is a lottery system. Students hand over their contract request to the bowels of the University bureaucracy and a computer determines their fate. This arbitrary decision-making apparently hasn't appealed to most students—at least those surveyed in the pre-standing-in-line era. According to a survey two years ago by the Association of Residence Hall Students, 71.3 percent of the residence hall students said they would prefer the line system.

But in the spirit of compromise and common sense, the "11th line" system has been developed by the Office of Residential Life Programs in consultation with ARHS. Such a system would consist of 10 lines for those rugged individuals willing to spend hours/days waiting, and an "11th line" for students wishing to submit their contract request to a lottery instead.

The idea seems to make sense. Give the people what they want. If three-quarters of the students want to stand in line, let 'em. If the other quarter feels lucky, give them the lottery option.

It is not, however, the ultimate solution to the mess that is the dorm contract submission process—if there is such a thing as a solution. Under any system, some people just will not get contracts.

Under the present first-come, first-served system, the administra-

tion calculates, after all the contracts are submitted, what percentage of the total applicants can get dorm contracts. That percentage is then applied to each of the 10 lines. In the proposed system, the same percentage would also be applied to the "11th line."

But a big problem with the 11th line system is the uncertainty about how many students would choose the "11th line" (lottery) option. If a large majority of students decided to try the lottery system and only a few had chosen to stand in line, a line containing only 30 people would see the last eight left without contracts, if for example the acceptance rate were calculated at 75 percent.

This problem could be partially solved by announcing ahead of time the number of students who opted for the lottery, an announcement that ARHS President Chris Calkins said his group supports. But that could force the students who didn't want the lottery to get in line even earlier than in the past.

Calkins also said there are other problems to be worked out with the proposed 11th line option—most importantly, the question of whether roommate requests would be filed together.

Despite its problems, the 11th line proposal seems the best way to make the dorm contract submission process fairer. If the plan is implemented, however, it is vital that students be made fully aware of the risks associated with each option.

If they're left in the haze with only a vague idea of the consequences of their choice, the ever-present dorm contract "hassle" will grow into pandemonium.

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



—reader opinion—

Diverse crowd

This letter is in response to the forum article in the Dec. 10 issue of The Daily Collegian by Kevin Mosley regarding the introduction of interest houses into Beaver Hall. In his forum Mosley described interest houses as "another clique of people, but worse, who have the same classes, study, eat and basically live together 24 hours a day with no or very little change, which would be sparked by individuals of varying ideologies."

We feel that Mr. Mosley is uninformed about interest houses. We are residents of the Foreign Language Interest House and would like to present our view of the situation.

On our floor we do have some language majors (about 10 percent); however, most of these people are double-majoring. There are also students enrolled in engineering, business, education, recreation and parks, political science, architecture, management, economics, biochemistry, pre-dentistry, theatre, journalism, English, nursing, biology, art, math, and metallurgy. Obviously we are a diverse group of students.

Far from being "a non-interactive clique" floor residents participate in a wide variety of activities as intramurals, ROTC, women's chorus, Glee Club, Theatrics, Society of Women Engineers, Collegian staff, Women's Soccer, College Young Democrats, International Student Organization, honor societies, National Inter-Collegiate Flying Association, National Organization of Women, Boredom Busters, Student Government, Debate Team, Outing Club, AIAA, bands, classical guitar, College Bowl, folk groups, religious organizations, University Scholars Program, Monty Python Society as well as Language House dinners, conversations and projects. We even have a Women's National Collegiate Powerlifting Champion on our floor!

Although there are many advantages to coed living, we did not apply to live in an interest house because it is coed. In fact, my roommate and I did not even know it was coed housing until arrival day! Many students on our floor have no time to take foreign language courses within their crowded schedules, so the interest house is the only opportunity we have to get to use the language skills we have learned.

We understand and sympathize with the position of the residents in Beaver Hall and we hope that the situation can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. We do not have any answers to the problems presented by so many special groups (such as sororities and interest houses) in South Halls. Our purpose in writing this letter was only to correct any false impressions about the interest house program at Penn State.

Jennifer Gromada, 2nd-engineering
Dec. 11

Sicko system

I've just been initiated to Penn State's infamous "red-tape" system. Everyone's battled it

at one time another, this I realize. But during this specific run-in with the system not only did they harass my mental health, but showed no concern about my physical health.

My battle arose from a need to drop a course retroactively (after the eighth week) due to illness. I've had a respiratory infection for nine weeks, and visits to Ritenour and a local doctor proved that rest was needed. I promptly discussed the matter with my instructor and department head, who both approved of my dropping the course. At this point I thought that their approval and a letter from my doctor and Ritenour would be sufficient to drop the course.

Wrong! They wanted blood.

A visit to a secretary in the appropriate office produced a list of papers required before the drop could be made. I needed a formal letter from myself, a letter from my instructor, a letter from my advisor, a letter from my doctor to give to Ritenour so they could write up a letter themselves, a signed drop-add slip, my transcripts from Shields (\$2 charge) and a check for \$5.

If I were a healthy student, maybe I'd only grumble a little at such a list and go about the crazed scavenger hunt (finding people in their offices was the toughest) running to Shields, the dean, and Ritenour, and catching my instructor after her classes. But I'm not a healthy student. Being ill and needing rest was the crux of the issue. If I'm sick and need rest, how can I go running about the campus with papers to be signed? This is a perfect example of "defeating the purpose."

When the list was first given to me, I quietly protested on the grounds of my illness. "If I go running around the campus for all these things I won't get any better; in fact, I might get even sicker." No matter who I complained to, I got the same reply: an unsympathetic "that's the system." Uh-huh.

I'm open to suggestions as to whom I should talk in order to discuss this system problem. If there was some loophole I should have taken to bypass the "late course drop due to illness" conflict, then I'd love to know about it.

I value my health and I think the University should, too.

Dead students can't pay tuition.

We understand and sympathize with the position of the residents in Beaver Hall and we hope that the situation can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

the daily Collegian
Monday Dec. 14, 1981—Page 2 ©1981 Collegian Inc.

Paula Froke
Editor

Debby Vinokur
Business Manager

Puttin' it in

Listening but not hearing. It's a problem at the University, one that many say obstructs communications between students and administrators.

But is that the real problem? Do students really have input into administrative decisions and don't use their power properly? Or is student input a farce, an illusion?

On Thursday, Dec. 17, and Tuesday, Jan. 5, The Daily Collegian's Op-ed page will examine the question: Can students really ever have an effective voice in the workings of the University? And if not, why?

Part One will represent the student point of view. Part Two the administrators'. If you feel you have something to contribute, bring your letters (one page, typed and double-spaced) and forums (two to three pages, typed and double-spaced) to 122 Carnegie. Part One material must be submitted by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 15. Part Two material must be submitted by 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19.

Now's the time

This is to all of you who've been begging for Springsteen, demanding the Dead, and commanding me to bring in a comedian. To all of you, you who've cared enough about concerts up here to complain, we're listening.

You're probably aware of some of the University Concert Committee's problems: our middle-of-nowhere location, small sized halls, scheduling struggles, etc. There is not much that you or we can do about this. The only solution would be to build a large indoor arena seating perhaps 10,000 at a time. Many University people do recognize this need, but the money is not there to undertake such a project. So, when you engineers and computer programmers become well-to-do alumni, you can help the PSU concert scene and contribute much to the UCC Memorial Arena. Then we can try for Springsteen.

Until then, there is something else you can do. We're going to analyze these surveys to death, and then use them when we meet to decide who to try for. That's our part. Please do yours.

Audrey Allison, UCC policy board member
Dec. 11

—reader opinion—

Reach out

I am a patient in an Ohio hospital and expect to be here about six months. Because of the length of my stay I am unable to attend college and will miss college life very much.

One benefit of college life is that you get to meet interesting people from all walks of life. This is something I don't want to give up because I'm in a hospital. Therefore, I'm interested in corresponding with people and interested persons at Pennsylvania State University.

I'm male, 5'10", 180 lbs., light brown hair, blue eyes, cheerful disposition, and have many interests including all kinds of music, Zen, Christianity and travel.

So please feel free to write.

Jack Allen Gladding, 2611 Wayne Ave.
Dayton, OH 45420
Dec. 7

Outrageous

The first week of the term, all students find themselves faced with the problem of buying the books so necessary for college education. Obviously, purchasing them at the book stores is the simplest method of obtaining these books, and for most people, the only obvious one.

I'm sure the book stores are well aware of this, as is evidenced by their prices, the magnitudes of which never fail to elicit gasps of disbelief, banhee-like screams, and cries of "I don't—ing believe my eyes!"

Most students angrily pay the required prices, muttering doubts about the human ancestry of the book store's owner, and stalk out, vowing

never to return, only to find themselves in the same position next term.

There's always been the same, and found myself caught in the ritual once more upon the arrival of Winter term. When I apprehensively peeked at the price of my Electrical Engineering 414 text, I blacked out and awoke on the floor of the book store with a crowd of people around me. I guess it was a kind of innate defense mechanism; my brain knew I might die if I saw the price. As it turns out, (after intensive therapy allowed me to return to the book store) the text cost \$44.50! Mind you, this is not Gray's Anatomy or a medical encyclopedia, but merely a book which I will use for one term.

The next day one of my classmates told me he purchased the book from the publisher for \$20. After tapping a few keys on my calculator (which, incidentally, cost only \$30 and does a hell of a lot more than a textbook) I found that, with 68 people in my class, the book stores stand to make \$1,440 (minus shipping) on just that one class! I personally, think this is a bit out of hand.

Now I shall put forth a suggestion which may help 11 ease the handbook pain of textbook purchasing, and 2) bring these outrageous prices back to earth.

Those tired of overpaying for their books should find out from their college what texts they will be using, and write to the publisher asking for ordering information. Granted, it takes up to six weeks to get the books, and it takes a little more effort than the "Gasp of Disbelief" method, but those of us who are scraping for every penny we spend will certainly appreciate the dollars saved. Keep it in mind to stop this tyrannous monopoly!

Miles Wroblewski, 12th-electrical engineering
Dec. 9

Trendy ignorance

I tried to refrain from acknowledging the senseless nature of a deranged mind, but I could not resist the temptation to respond to Sean de Hora's column in the Dec. 7 issue of The Daily Collegian. De Hora exemplifies the very ignorance and isolation that he attributes to a majority of the WASP population in America today.

Sean, be careful, your white hood is showing.

Sheila Joyce Arthur, graduate-human development and family studies
Dec. 10

For the people?

The Dec. 10 issue of The Daily Collegian reported that recent action on the "Abortion Control Act" included that the House "reversed a previous decision and voted 100 to 83 to reject an amendment that would have allowed the voters to decide whether the Abortion Control Act should take effect." Does this mean that your legislators do not think the people of Pennsylvania are capable of making such a decision? Or, does it mean that the people of Pennsylvania might vote against the Abortion Control Act?

In Italy (a rather Roman Catholic country), a recent referendum was held to determine if abortion should be severely restricted. The Church campaigned vigorously for the anti-abortion legislation, but it was substantially defeated by the voters. Perhaps Pennsylvania legislators fear that a similar referendum would mean a similar fate for the so-called Abortion Control Act. Contrary to so-called pro-lifers' claims, a majority of the American people do believe that abortion should remain legal in at least some, if not all, cases.

large corporations, or politicians with pervasive political power and influence.

Anti-abortionist legislators Gregg L. Cunningham, R-Centre County and Stephen R. Freund, R-Delaware County, have claimed that "all of Pennsylvania wants" this anti-abortion legislation, yet there seems to be some reluctance to submit such legislation to "all of Pennsylvania."

The restrictive abortion language was amended into a Senate-passed bill; the Collegian did not report the nature of the "Senate-passed" bill, but I suspect that it had little to do with the abortion issue. Supporters of the Abortion Control Act claimed that the amendment strategy was necessary to keep Senate leaders from burying the bill in committee. I wonder why Senate leaders were reluctant to put such a bill up to a vote, and I wonder if they will easily pass the "newly-amended" version, as well as go along with House refusal to let the people decide what "all of Pennsylvania wants."

Jean S. Guertler, graduate-higher education
Dec. 10

LETTERS POLICY: The Daily Collegian encourages comments on news coverage, editorial policy and University affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced, signed by no more than two people and not longer than 50 lines. Students' letters should include the term, major and campus of the writer. Letters from alumni should include the major and year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification of the letter.

The editorial editor reserves the right to edit letters, and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste.

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Reagan-Khadafy affair just a three-ring gossip item

Not since Sue Ellen walked out on J. R. Ewing and Maggie and Jigs disappeared from the comic strip pages has the public been treated to such an interesting pile of soiled linen as they have in the current luff between Ronald Reagan and Moammar Khadafy. The vulgar accusations, potential for gossip and intensity of emotions make this one of the most interesting affairs in years; by comparison, the petty squabbles of Billie Jean, Farrah and Jackie cannot hold a candle.

between Reagan and Khadafy defies analysis, and although the fruits are comic it does contain the seeds of tragedy.

The whole romance is so complicated that to start from the beginning would severely overwork our brains. It is best to leave us wiser than before, so let us get right to the point: Reagan has bluntly stated that he has every reason to believe that Col. Khadafy has commissioned a gang of thugs to kill him and several other prominent American politicians; and Khadafy has more or less responded by saying that if you really mean that you are saying to me darling, prove it!

Let us arbitrarily examine some points in this case:

Is it wrong to violently dispose of the president of the United States or any head of state for that matter? A high school social studies teacher would probably reply: "Yes, even if it is Richard Nixon." But transcending the nursery garden atmosphere of high school subjects, let us remember Edmund Burke's warning that it is the circumstances which surround an event and not the event itself which give an action its moral character. After all, could the world have been much worse off if the British had picked a Khadafy rather than a Neville Chamberlain to deal with Hitler? Therefore, this question cannot be answered out of context.

And while we are on the subject of dumping heads of state let us not forget that only last May Alexander Haig—a man who, we should all pray, is at least more intelligent than he is articulate—

suggested that the state department might be making plans to dispose of Khadafy. If you thought to run your neighbor out of town, you should hardly expect much sympathy when he replies by threatening to blow your head off.

Ultimately, it is the difference between Khadafy and Reagan is ideological. Expecting the two men to understand each other on the others' terms is like expecting a six-year-old to understand an empty Christmas stocking in terms of inflation, unemployment and high interest rates. The Weltanschauung are simply incompatible.

Reagan's world is one of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. It is the world of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill; it is a world that measures things in material terms and equates happiness with consumption. The leaders of this world are driven by visions of rising gross national products and favorable balances of trade.

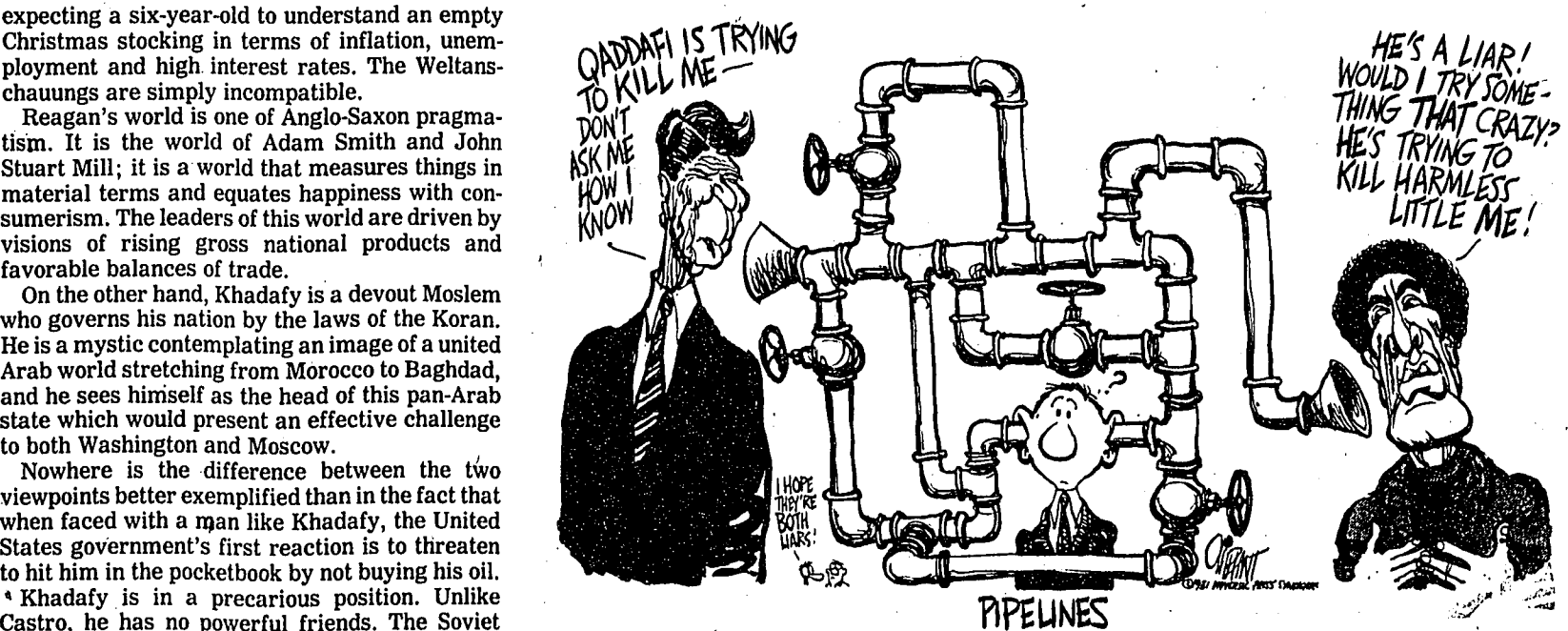
On the other hand, Khadafy is a devout Muslim who governs his nation by the laws of the Koran. He is a mystic contemplating an image of a united Arab world stretching from Morocco to Baghdad, and he believes that the head of this world state which would present an effective challenge to both Washington and Moscow.

Nowhere is the difference between the two viewpoints better exemplified than in the fact that when faced with a man like Khadafy, the United States government's first reaction is to threaten to hit him with the pocketbook by not buying his oil. *Khadafy is in a precarious position. Unlike Castro, he has no powerful friends. The Soviet

Union finds his Islamic zealotry and dreams of Arab unity more disturbing than we do, and even many of his fellow Arab heads of state have little use for him.

In the final analysis, one can respect Khadafy's idealism, and because of his isolated position, one must admire his courage. However, given the the magnitude of his audacity—assuming that the Reagan administration's charges hold up—one can hardly blame the president if he sends in the marines to bring Khadafy back in a circus cage.

Sean de Hora is a graduate student in history. His column appears on Mondays.



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