

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Thursday, June 23, 1983

editorial opinion

Playing politics with people's lives

All the people of Lock Haven have ever asked for is a way of supporting their families, putting food on their tables and making a living. To do that, many worked at the two nearby chemical companies, Drake Chemical Co. and American Color & Chemical.

Now many of these people are looking for a way to just keep on living.

Paed in recent years with a terrifying onslaught of health problems — including birth defects, respiratory ailments, skin rashes and high rates of bladder cancer — the people of Lock Haven are scared. And they want answers.

They want to know why they and their children are sick. They want to know what's going to be done and who's going to pay for it. They want to know how the chemical Beta-naphthylamine (BNA), which was manufactured at the Drake site from 1947 to 1962 — and which is also linked often to bladder cancer — has affected their lives.

And they deserve to have their questions answered.

State Rep. Russell Letterman, D-Centre County, is one legislator who is trying hard to see that the people of Lock Haven are treated fairly, but it hasn't been easy.

Letterman and state Sen. J. Doyle Corman, R-Centre County, have been working together to bring the State Department of Health to Lock Haven to conduct preliminary health screenings.

Last week, they met with a temporary setback when Gov. Dick Thornburgh "blue-lined" an amendment to an \$82 million deficiency spending bill, which would have provided \$120,000 to begin the preliminary health screening of 2,000 former employees of Drake and nearby residents.

Thornburgh gave three reasons for deleting the amendment: the lack of evidence that dioxin exists at Lock Haven; the possibility that the Centers for Disease Control would perform the screening; and the fact that the money would have to be spent by June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

But Letterman thinks the governor had other motives for holding back funding for the health screenings.

In Monday's issue of The Daily Collegian, Letterman said he was against the proposed tax increase in Thornburgh's budget. Thornburgh, Letterman said, needs "at least 25 Democrats" to pass his budget in the house. The governor, Letterman believes, was trying to gain his vote in exchange for health screening funds.

But Letterman didn't need to compromise his vote to obtain the health screenings.

On Tuesday, state Secretary of Health, Dr. H. Arnold Muller, said that based on a review of cancer incidents in the area, the health department would indeed fund preliminary health screenings for former chemical company workers and residents within two blocks of the now-closed Drake and AC&C companies.

And Letterman told the Collegian yesterday that he was assured that if further testing is needed, supplemental appropriations would be made.

That was one quick turnaround on the governor's part. Last week, he said no to funding the health screenings; this week, he said yes.

What made Thornburgh change his mind over the span of about a weekend is left to speculation. For, while it is good that the people of Lock Haven are finally getting the health screenings they so desperately need, the politicking that apparently went on before the governor's latest decision was distressing.

It may have been a pretty tricky way to play politics, but it was a pretty lousy way to deal with people's lives.

The bus stops here

The story is old but the University keeps changing the players and the scenes just to keep it interesting.

One chapter in this epic was written in the summer of 1979. While most of the student population was away on summer break, the University quietly raised the cost of a Campus Loop ride 150 percent. No students were consulted about the change. Ridership facts were withheld from students as they tried to determine if the increase was fair.

After the students performed their own ridership survey and found that the rate increase was not entirely justified, they negotiated a decrease in fees charged for term passes and more free evening hours.

What the University thought would be a small inconvenience for a few students who rode the loop was turned into an embarrassment for University officials by planned and cohesive student action.

The University should have learned the students have a voice and that voice deserves to be heard, if for no other reason than to avoid embarrassment.

However, last week, Vice President for Business Ralph E. Zilly announced that the Campus Loop would not operate this summer because fewer students are on campus and a larger deficit exists between fares and operating costs.

The fact that the loop is not running is not that tragic. If it is already operating under a deficit and ridership greatly decreases in the summer, then concessions must be made to ensure that a complete schedule is put into effect for the fall, when University enrollment is at its peak.

But how does the University know that ridership would so greatly decrease this summer as to warrant a complete shutdown of the Loop?

Some sort of trial period could have been set up to determine whether ridership would decrease this much. An unusually large number of students are attending the University this summer. A trial period would give the students the chance to be heard and might show that the University was right in cutting loop service.

Granted, the Campus Loop will probably not be missed by a majority of the people attending the University this summer. But the fact remains that the people who are attending the University pay to go here and deserve the same services as those who will attend in Fall and Spring Semesters.

At the very least, they should have had the opportunity to prove that they would not have supported summer service from the Loop.

That way, the administration could have kept another chapter out of a book that is already too long.

Limit to Congressional terms needed

In keeping with the recent rash of proposed amendments to the Constitution, I would like to suggest one more: An amendment to limit the number of consecutive terms a person could serve in the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate.

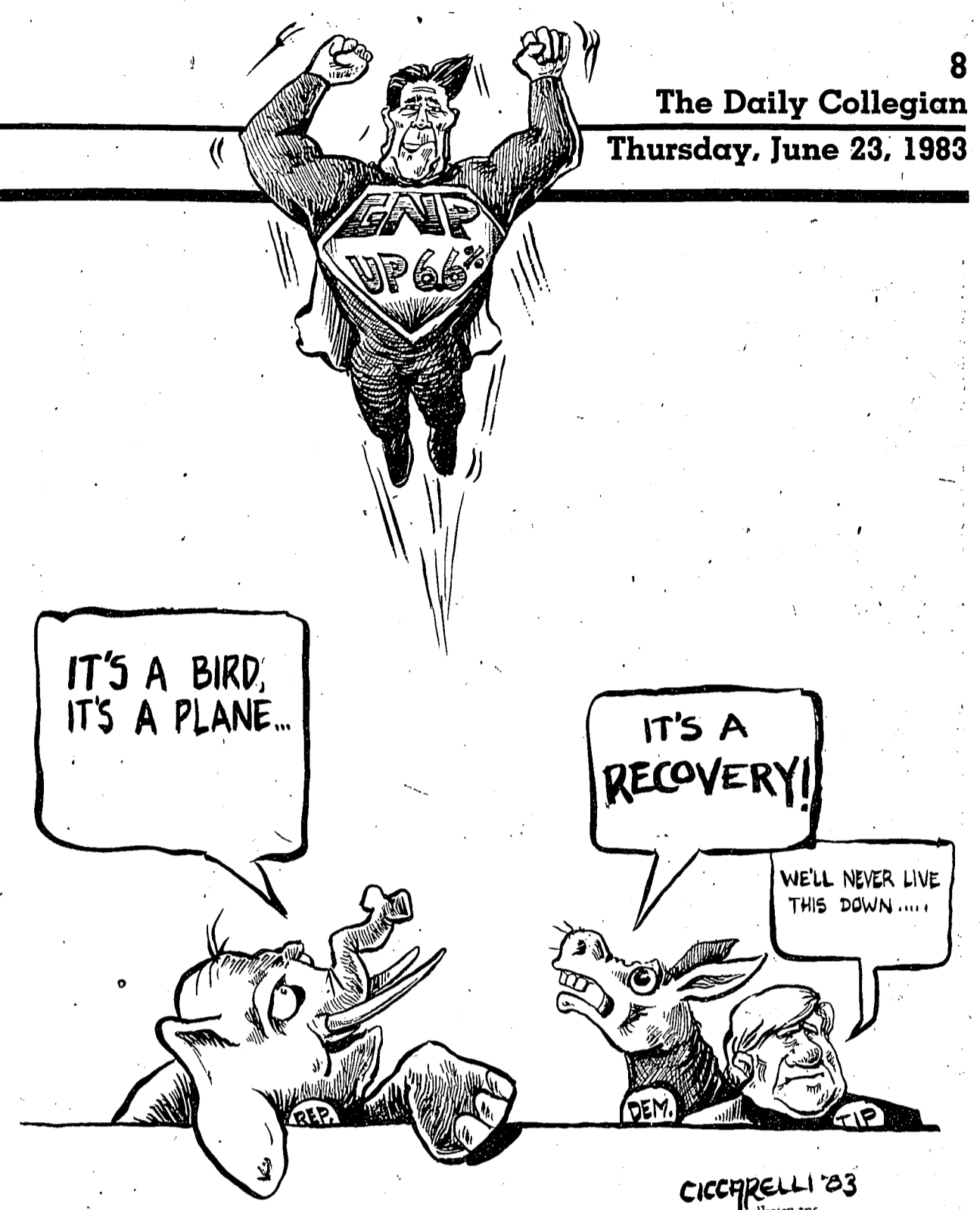
Does a legislator, after 20 years or more, hundreds or thousands of miles away in Washington, D.C., still represent his or her district or state? After living in the metropolitan area of Washington for the majority of his life and sending his children to that area's schools, does he remember his constituents' needs?

Such a situation compares favorably with the British form of representation in which members of Parliament are not required to live in the district they represent. Is that true representation?

Certainly not. Yet this is exactly what, in fact, is not in law our system has become. De facto, because our lawmakers spend about 10 months of each year living in Washington, with the other two months of the year divided between needed vacations, junkies (legitimate or otherwise) and the district or state they once truly resided in.

But Britain's form of representation is not ours de jure because our lawmakers are required to maintain a full-time residence in the district or state that elected them.

However, by maintaining that logic — that an empty residence is a political qualifier — we see that the tens of thousands of



the daily Collegian

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Mail letters to: The Daily Collegian, 126 Carnegie Building, University Park, Pa. 16802.

reader opinion

Tasteless

I have worked in a field of medical research which involved the use of donor organs, and I must say, Mr. Hasselbring, that I found your column (June 17) about the search for organ donors to be tasteless and insensitive.

I presume that you were trying to make the point that we should donate our vital organs after our own deaths so that others may live. I think that your time would have been better spent saying so, rather than on your attempt at humor and mockery. You see, there are some things that just aren't funny, and human misery is one of them.

The decision to donate all or part of your body to medical research or transplants is, of course, a personal one. For those who wish to be a

"give the gift of life," the best thing you can do to make sure that this will happen is to tell your family and your physician now.

Margaret Copenhaver, graduate individual and family studies
June 21

Be a columnist!

Don't waste your summer. While other students are lying in the sun and watching the world go by, you could be expressing your thoughts, observations and opinions about Penn State, State College and the world beyond.

We need talented, dedicated students to write columns for The Daily Collegian's editorial page. This is your chance to have your work published on one of the most-read papers in one of the nation's top college newspapers.

But first you have to apply. To do so, you'll need an application which can be picked up in the Collegian office, 126 Carnegie. Summer Session is short, so please submit your completed application by Saturday, June 25.

Wouldn't you rather have a column than a sunburn?

thirds difference in the length of terms between senators and representatives.

The argument against such a proposition is that we would only be punishing ourselves by throwing good men and women out of office. Then why do we limit the terms of our presidents and governors?

Besides, just how many of our senators and representatives are so indispensable? Those few individuals who are the best thing to hit Congress since paper shredders could be elected to other offices. Such a person could, for example, serve as a senator for 18 years, then as a representative for one and a half terms, then as a senator for three more terms, then as governor for two terms and so on.

What would be the effects of limiting consecutive terms? More people would participate in our government. Campaigning would become more vigorous, causing representatives to be elected on issues and not from habit. Exceptionally qualified politicians would be elected from office to office (much the same way large corporations transfer employees from plant to plant) gaining more and more knowledge and expertise in our government. Campaigning would be more and more serious and more to the detriment of all.

Today's Congress can barely pass legislation of emergency proportions (budget, social security) now, while working all year. And the lawmakers already abdicate their responsibilities by leaving the controversial issues to the unelected judges to decide. Shorter sessions would only further such undesirable behavior.

The answer is to limit the number of consecutive two-year terms a representative and the number of consecutive six-year terms a senator may serve to three each. (I arrived at these numbers by assuming that after 10 years a senator is out of touch with his constituents and by maintaining the two-

reader opinion

A critique

I have recently perused the 1982-83 issues of Kalliope and wish to go on record with a few comments.

First, I wish it known that I submitted a short story and four poems to that publication and all were rejected. Seeing how well the staff of Kalliope is represented in this issue, I suppose I should have accepted the invitation to join the staff which Mr. Seinfeld, co-editor of Kalliope, extended to me in the fall.

This is not to suggest that my work was rejected because of my decision not to join the staff. Such a suggestion would be unfair, and unbecoming. Besides, I am well aware that my work was rejected solely because of the ignorance of the people on the staff, or at least of the editors.

As I suggest, however, that had I been on the staff at least some of my material would certainly have been published to support this claim. I cite Mr. Seinfeld's story, "Their First Disordered Combatting," the printing of which goes to show that a staff member of such a publication can get any sort of atrocity at all into its pages. The next time Mr. Seinfeld lives through a "sunless" day I hope he'll have me along to witness such a miracle.

I have a similar regard for A.L. Wallace's, "The Life of Wound," which is about as engaging as a game of "war," even putting in the jokers. Compared to either of these blunders, my story, "The Second Baptism," reads like Tolstoy.

And alas, I fear I've just provided some housewife with an inspiration for a new modern poem. It could go something like:

We spent all night at war
Using jokers to make fifty-four

including these two, is written in the New Yorker style; and I'm certain that every person who contributed "poetry" to Kalliope knows just what I mean when I say, "the New Yorker style." This is the "poetry" of people who do not know that poetry is a matter of form; not of style, phenomenon, correlation. Form. This is the "poetry" of people for whom "poetry" is a hobby, like hook rugs or model airplanes; either of which objects would be more worthy of scrutiny than any of these "poems."

Perhaps it is well for the individual writers that such "poems" are written. I will grant that much. But it is most unfortunate for the rest of us that they are circulated. They are vapid, lifeless works by mediocre dilettants and housewives. This means, of course, that they have a very broad base of appeal; thus the proliferation and virtual canonization of this style by the literary papers, which represents the most unfortunate misunderstanding in all the annals of literature.

I provided Kalliope with an opportunity to display a more potent poetry, hoping that since this was a non-commercial venture they might seize the opportunity. The poems I submitted are each cast in a form which I found to be singularly suited to express the totality of the poetic event. They are not stuffed into a ready mold. Each one of them is far wiser than any publication than anything in Kalliope, but, of course, none of them were printed.

Sign me Gary Fulcomer, though I submitted to Kalliope under the name Gary Evans, which is the name I will write under for now on.

Gary Fulcomer, 9th-secondary education and math
May 22

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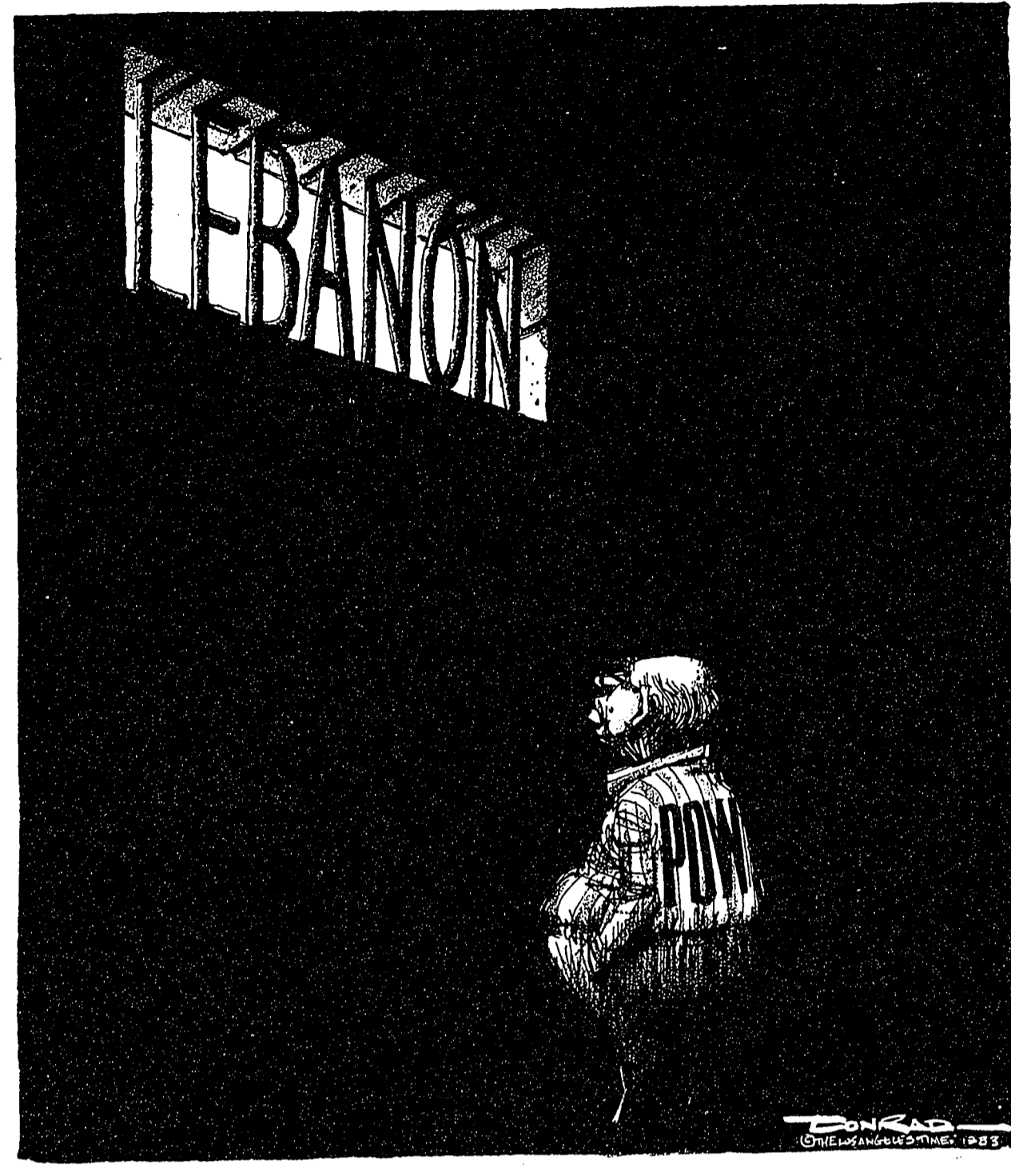
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