

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Monday, June 27, 1983

editorial opinion

Who's responsible here?

It was a tough job, but somebody had to do it. Somebody, that is, had to point out the flagrant disregard for the Interfraternity Council's policy that prohibits fraternities from taking any money except for philanthropies.

No one objects to the members of the fraternities and their guests enjoying a few parties during the summer — or during any other time of the year for that matter.

What was objectionable was the blatant disobedience of the IFC's policy — and of statutes of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requiring liquor licenses to charge admission or take donations at fraternity parties — by some members of Penn State's greek community.

And what was further objectionable was the attitude expressed by some that the violators — the fraternities — were not the ones who were wrong, but rather that the wrongdoer was The Daily Collegian — which reported the violators.

Like every newspaper, the Colle-

gian has a responsibility to its readers to endeavor consistently to report the truth. To overlook the truth when it is not convenient, or makes some people uncomfortable, would be a breach of that responsibility.

And the fraternities, which individually and collectively represent the entire greek system at Penn State, also have certain responsibilities. One of the most important of these is to obey the rules of their governing body — IFC — which exists to ensure that they maintain a respected and viable position in the University community.

If the offending fraternities disagree with the law, they should have tried changing — not disobeying — it. Civil disobedience may have worked for Henry David Thoreau, but only because he was willing to accept the consequences of his acts.

Unfortunately, some fraternity members seem more concerned about next weekend's parties than the future good of themselves and their fraternities.

Tolerating noisy debate

The National Commission on Excellence in Education's special report has created a lot of hot air around the nation. However, it seems that some would prefer the air to blow in only one direction.

In his weekly radio address Saturday, President Reagan advised the nation to stay the course in its pursuit of remedies for the nation's ailing education system.

"The commission gave us a course to follow. It leads to better education for our sons and daughters. Let's ignore the noisemakers and set sail," the president said.

In other words, let's not debate the issue of education. But that's a contradiction in terms. What is education, if not the exchange of ideas? And what's the use of having an issue in a democracy if politicians and regular folks can't make a lot of noise about it?

The commission presented some good ideas for improving the sagging quality of education in the nation. But the ideas should be taken as recommendations, as starting points for discussion, not as definitive answers to complicated problems. Debate is essential in determining what changes must

be made in the education system — and who must pay for those improvements.

The people in this nation have been subject to "political voices that saw a campaign horse to ride" in the education issue, complained Reagan in his address.

But if people — that means voters — did not care so much about their children's educations, presidential hopefuls would not have jumped at the chance to add their own ideas. Education will be debated and it will be an issue in the 1984 presidential election. Whether Mr. Reagan cares to ride that horse or not.

Further, Reagan chided politicians and special interest groups because in the two months since the commission released its report, "the taxpaying citizens of this country have been treated to a noisy debate about what to do."

But noisy debates help to keep this nation alive. In fact, next week we'll be celebrating the 207th anniversary of another noisy debate, one without which Reagan's advice would not have meant very much to anyone.

CENTRAL AMERICA RETURN OF THE VANQUI



Write to us

We want to know what's on your mind. The Daily Collegian's editorial page is for some students the only opportunity to be heard at the University. And the page is here for other members of the University and State College communities as well.

Letters to the editor and forums may be written about topics as far out as the space program or as close to home as the residence halls. The issues raised may affect many or just a few, but if they're on your mind, they deserve to be heard.

To insure that your letter is published, please limit it to one page (typed double space). Forums should be three to five double space typed pages centering on a theme.

All letters and forums should include the name, ID number and phone number of the writer. Students should also include their term standings and majors; University employees should include their titles; and alumni should include their years of graduation and majors with their letters.

Letters may be brought or mailed to The Daily Collegian office in 126 Carnegie.

Write a letter to the editor and if Penn State know what you're thinking about.

the daily Collegian

Monday, June 27, 1983 1983 Collegian Inc.
Suzanne M. Cassidy Judith Smith
Editor Business Manager

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor holding final responsibility. Opinions expressed on the editorial pages are not necessarily those of The Daily Collegian, Collegian Inc. or The Pennsylvania State University. Collegian Inc., publishers of The Daily Collegian and related publications, is a separate corporate institution from Penn State.

Board of Editors — Editorial Editor: Marcy Mermel; News Editor: Rosa Eberly; Sports Editor: John Severance; Photo Editor: Thomas Swarr; Arts Editor: Ron Crow; Assistant Arts Editor: Ron Yeany; Campus Editor: Alicia Swayze; Town Editor: Mike Netherland; Copy Editors: Dana Succilli; Tom Sakell; Weekly Collegian Managing Editor: Brian Gowers; Weekly Collegian Assistant Managing Editor: Lori Musser.

Board of Managers — Assistant Business Manager: Valerie Plame; Office Manager:

Colleen Waters; Sales Manager: Terri Avino; Layout Coordinator: Kimberly Fox; Creative Director: Lori Hilt; Marketing Manager: Beverly Sobel; National Ad Manager: Kimberly Fox.

Complaints: News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the business manager. If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved, grievances may be filed with the Accuracy and Fair Play Committee of Collegian Inc. Information on filing grievances is available from Gerry Lynn Hamilton, executive secretary, Collegian Inc.

About the Collegian: The Daily Collegian and The Weekly Collegian are published by Collegian Inc., an independent, non-profit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and professionals. Students of The Pennsylvania State University write and edit both papers and solicit advertising material for them. The Daily Collegian is published Monday, Tuesday and Friday during the summer, and distributed at the University Park campus. The Weekly Collegian is mailed to Commonwealth campus students, parents of students, alumni and other subscribers who want to keep abreast of University news.

Reasons, resignations and Russian

Journalists should be interested in everything. This is the only aspect of the profession in which lack of discrimination is a positive asset. But not every story a reporter encounters can, or should, appear in the newspaper. Reporters must show some compassion for the reader and answer a very important question before setting fingers to keyboard: "why would anyone care about this story?" If the reporter cannot answer the question, the reader will not be able to, either.



Last Thursday's article "Small business grant proposals are due tomorrow," was a story in which the "why should anyone care?" question was never asked. The story reported that Friday was the deadline to apply for a federal grant to promote the export of products by small businesses. The reporter could find no one in the Centre Region who had applied for the program, or who had even heard of it. The information coordinator of PennTAP, the University's Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program, Paul Houck, said that the University had made no application, and that, in any case, "you would almost need a full-time person sitting around logging in all the grant possibilities."

The Small Business Export Expansion program has a \$1 million budget this year (a tiny sum in federal terms) and last year spent only

\$150,000 in Pennsylvania (a grant to the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation). This year, the grants are limited to \$100,000.

My point is not that small business exports are unimportant — economists from Milton Friedman to Lester Thurow emphasize America's need to compete more effectively in the world marketplace — but that reporters have a responsibility to prove to readers why a story about small business exports is important.

Readers should know why they're reading a story as well as what they're reading.

A retirement is not a resignation and "recently" is not news. Last Friday's front page feature article, "Two senior administrators resign from University," which reported that "two of the University's senior officers have announced their resignations — giving incoming University President Bryce Jordan two more items for his list of administrative priorities."

But one of the so-called resignations was really a retirement — Loren M. Fortado, director of the Office of Planning and Budget, will retire from the University in October. And the other, the resignation of Theodore L. Gross, provost and dean of the University's Capital Campus, actually occurred at the end of Spring Term.

The juxtaposition of the two events implied a connection where none was demonstrated, and the inaccurate description of Fortado's retirement misled this reader into thinking the "resignations" had something to do with Jordan's impending arrival — which they did not.

In the category of "Let us believe that only the Collegian makes mistakes," comes this report from Bob Kierstead, Boston Globe's

ombudsman. The Globe's political cartoonist, Paul Szep, published a cartoon on May 27 captioned "Reagan asks for upgrading of hot line with Andropov." It showed Reagan asking "Hey Yuri, guess who's getting a new MX missile system to help arms reduction and world peace?" Andropov was seen responding with two short words in Russian.

According to Kierstead, these words turned out to be a Russian obscenity referring, depending upon the translation, either to oral sex or to a commonly used Anglo-Saxon profanity.

It seems that Szep had asked another staff member — who spoke Russian — to provide a few real Russian swear-words rather than use "hummy" or nonsense words. What Szep didn't ask was the meaning of the words provided.

But many readers did know the meaning of the words — and made sure the Globe knew, too. As a result, Szep was suspended without pay for two weeks and the Globe published an apology to readers for "the unacceptable phrase in a foreign language."

The Globe incident is the sort of thing that happens at every newspaper. All it takes is laziness and a certain exuberant disregard for detail.

The readers' representative is available for reader comments and complaints. You can be reached at 126 Carnegie Building, University Park, PA 16802.

Kathleen A. Pavetto speaks for the readers of The Daily Collegian and comments regularly on the newspaper's journalistic performance.

reader opinion

Plus/minus better

In the April 22 issue of The Daily Collegian, Erik Randolph stated that the plus/minus grading system is more a minus than a plus. He said that the plus/minus grading "would cause more hassle for professors — it will triple the amount of borderline cases — and will lower most students' grade point averages."

He supported his view with surveys showing the drop in the GPAs and the number of students favoring five-point system over the 12-point system. As a Penn State freshman, I was interested in Randolph's argument, but after reading his column, I remain convinced that the twelve-point plus/minus grading system is better.

Randolph said, "a general drop in GPAs can be expected..." By adding minuses to the letter grades, obviously the grade point averages would decrease. Students who would receive the higher straight letter grades deserve. On the other hand, students who would receive a plus would get the lower straight

grade. How fair is that? Randolph supported his theory that GPAs would drop with a study of 2,000 high school students taken by science teacher James L. Shannon. The results of the study indicated a "significant" decrease in the GPAs. But the study cannot represent the change in GPAs that the plus/minus system would have on Penn State's student body.

Actually, the GPA in the five-point system inflates the grade, thus making the grade an inaccurate representation of the student's progress.

The Daily Collegian supported the plus/minus system in the April 1 editorial, "A plus for grading." The editorial stated that through the 12-point system "students would receive a more accurate assessment of their abilities and course work."

Also, the plus/minus system "would make a student's transcript a more accurate description of academic achievement. This would aid potential employers by providing them with a more accurate picture of what a student has done and could do." That truer recording of a stu-

dent's accomplishments in classes outweighs the insignificant decrease of GPAs.

Another reason for Randolph's support of the five-point system is based on surveys of student opinions. In 1983, a poll of 558 University students showed a 57 percent preference for the five-point system. Randolph contrasted the 1983 survey with the most recent survey of 251 University students and stated that the recent survey had a "slight majority" of students who preferred the plus/minus system, but he failed to mention that the "slight majority" is 67 percent. The April 1 Collegian editorial stated that "of the 251 students surveyed, 67 percent said the would prefer a 4.0 plus/minus grading system." Besides, his incorporation of the 1983 figure into his argument was not valid. These students have since graduated; should we not focus on education in the '80s?

Randolph's support for the five-point system is also flawed in his statement, "the systems (plus/minus) are no good; they would not

benefit students or faculty." Randolph also said that the change would cause more problems for professors.

But, many faculty members favor the change to the plus/minus system. In an article in the April 7 Collegian, Faculty Senate Chairman-elect Peter Bennett said, "It hurts me to give a student who just squeaks by that same C." By changing to the plus/minus system, faculty members would be able to give their students a more precise evaluation of their past work. With the five-point system, each letter grade has "a range of 10 percentage points; there is no way to tell where the student was in that range." Borderline students also benefit from the plus/minus system, because of the better chance to receive the next higher grade. A student will find it easier to raise a B to a B plus than to raise a B to an A. More precise and fair grades from the plus/minus grading system will benefit both the faculty and students.

Elizabeth D. Hummer, 3rd-arts
May 1



Arthur's
is having
ICED TEA NIGHT
tonight
and
IMPORTED BREW NIGHT
Tuesday night
Don't Miss Them!
214 W. College Ave. 237-3449

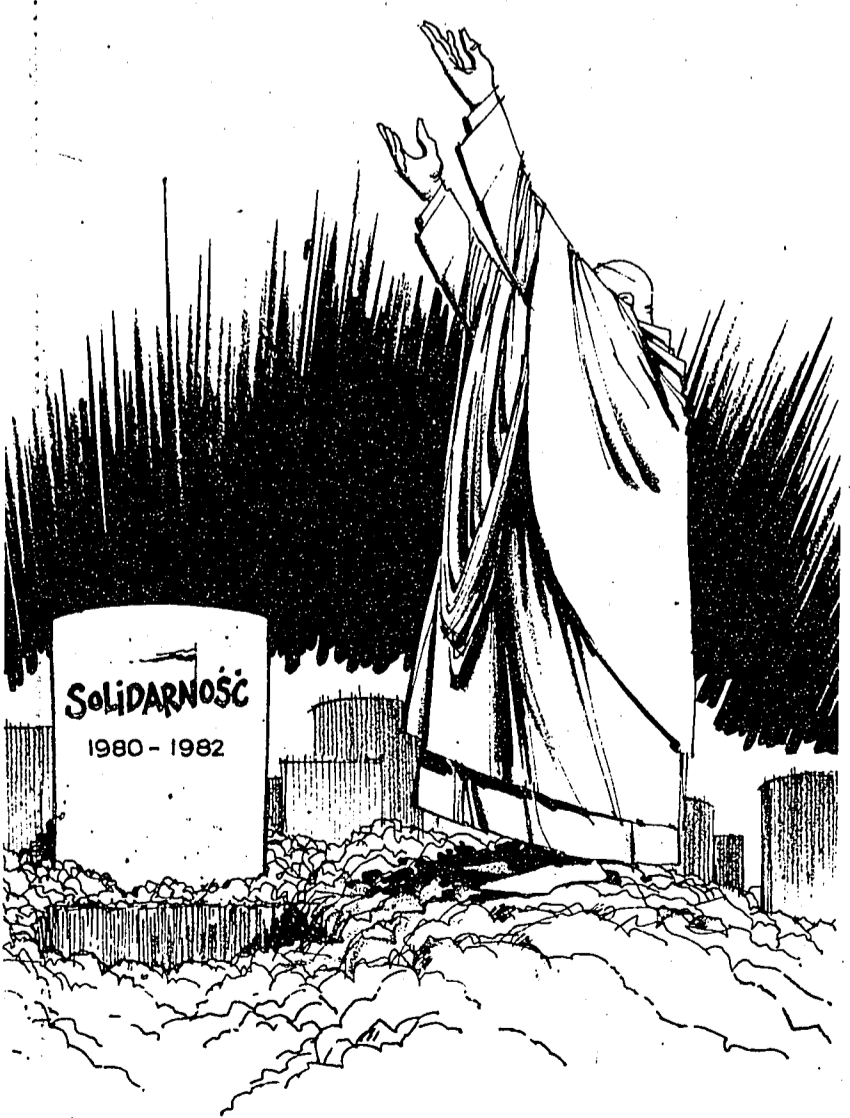
The Scorpion
232 W. Calder Way
presents
tues. — "TERRY WHITLOCK" no cover
wed. — "HARPO"
thurs. — "HARPO"
fri. — "OROBOROS" from Clev. Ohio
sat. — "OROBOROS" play
Grateful Dead
(coming July 8-9 — "CRISIS")

EXECUTIVE HOUSE APARTMENTS
FALL APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED
DELUXE 1 AND 2 BEDROOM APARTMENTS
• Free Bus Pass • Free Parking
• Cable TV • 24 Hour Maintenance
• Laundry & Storage Facilities • Fully Equipped Kitchen on Premises • Gas, Heat
238-7211
411 Waupelani Drive
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9-5 Sat 9-12

Attention All Business Administration Students
Fall Pre-Registration Workshop
Wednesday, June 29, 7-9 p.m.
Pollock Rec. Room
or
Thursday, June 30, 1-4 p.m.
HUB, Room 225
Core Advisers will be available to assist you.

wdfm
Fills the musical gap in central Pennsylvania
MUSICAL — an uptempo mixture of classical, jazz, and folk, along with information. Weekdays 6-9am.
JUST JAZZ — from big bands to avant-funk. Weekdays 9am-1pm.
JAZZ ALIVE! — live performances from NPR. Friday 11am & Sunday 7pm.
FREE FORM — rock, and a little bit of everything else. Weekdays 1-5pm, Sunday, Tuesday and Friday nights.
FINE ARTS SHOWCASE — classical music. Weekdays 5-8pm, Saturday and Sunday 12-6pm.
UNIVERSITY OF JAM — a smooth mixture of funk, disco and jazz. Monday & Wednesday 9pm-6am.
INDEPENDENT RADIO — experimental. Thursday 9pm-6am.
FLASHBACKS — oldies, up to mid '70's. Saturday 6-9pm.
METAL WIND — ear crunching heavy metal. Saturday 9-12pm.
TOO MUCH, TOO SOON — State College's only punk show. Saturday 12-3am.
ROOTS, ROCK, REGGAE — reggae, ska and rock steady. Sunday 9-12pm.
No matter what your musical preference is, wdfm has something for everyone!!
91.1 fm

Now Open
Walk-In Service Only
Open daily 10-9
Nittany Mall State College, PA
main event
Haircut \$1000 Reg. \$12
includes shampoo & styling
Coupon expires July 30
Register to win gift certificates of \$50, \$25, or \$15 at Main Event.
Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Drawing will be held Saturday, July 2.
Perm Special \$3500 Reg. \$40
includes haircut & styling
Coupon expires July 30
Register to win gift certificates of \$50, \$25, or \$15 at Main Event.
Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Drawing will be held Saturday, July 2.
main event
"The Great Haircut Store"
ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence
ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence
ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence ambivalence



"LAZARUS, ARISE!"