

# opinions

The Daily Collegian  
Thursday, July 28

## editorial opinion

### The Central America guessing game

Exactly what President Reagan intends to do in Central America is not easy to determine: He has developed a bad habit recently concerning the area — that of saying one thing and doing another.

Even members of the Senate Intelligence Committee seem confused. Last spring, they voted to end covert aid to anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua on Oct. 1 unless Reagan explained "in plain language just what it is he wants to do relative to Nicaragua and the other (Central American) countries."

In a nationally televised news conference Tuesday, Reagan seemed to be trying to do this. "We want to see an end to violence and bloodshed, to the export of revolution," he said.

However, this is not the signal that his administration is sending to Congress. The Reagan administration has compiled a report advocating more covert aid for anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua, The Washington Post reported yesterday. The increased aid would be used "to cause the same kind of trouble for the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua as the leftist insurgents are causing in El Salvador."

The Reagan administration hopes this will slow the flow of arms from Nicaragua to the leftist (communist) insurgents in El Salvador, the reason aid was given to the rebels in the first place. But it seems like a direct contradiction of his news conference rhetoric.

At the conference Reagan said: "It's especially important in our own hemisphere for the United States to continue to be the foremost protector of peace." But covert aid to guerrillas — trained in Honduras — is more like exporting revolution than protecting the peace.

Also at the news conference, Reagan denied allegations that U.S. military exercises to take place in Honduras and the Caribbean over the next six months were aimed at increasing U.S. military presence in Central America.

Fighting on the Honduras/Nicaragua

border has reached a fever pitch lately, with Honduras suffering particularly large amounts of shelling. Some Central and South American countries, namely the Contadora group — Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Mexico — have called for the United States to participate in negotiations to avert an all-out war between the two countries.

U.S. military exercises in Honduras, by their very nature, increase U.S. military presence in Central America. By placing 4,000 troops in a volatile area, with orders to shoot back if fired upon, Reagan increases the chances of the United States being drawn into a war.

Reagan questioned why military maneuvers "we have performed before and regularly" are suddenly the object of such "suspicion." Maybe it is because chief U.S. representative to the United Nations Jeane J. Kirkpatrick said the operations were a response to "a very clear and substantial escalation in the importation of heavy arms into Nicaragua this calendar year."

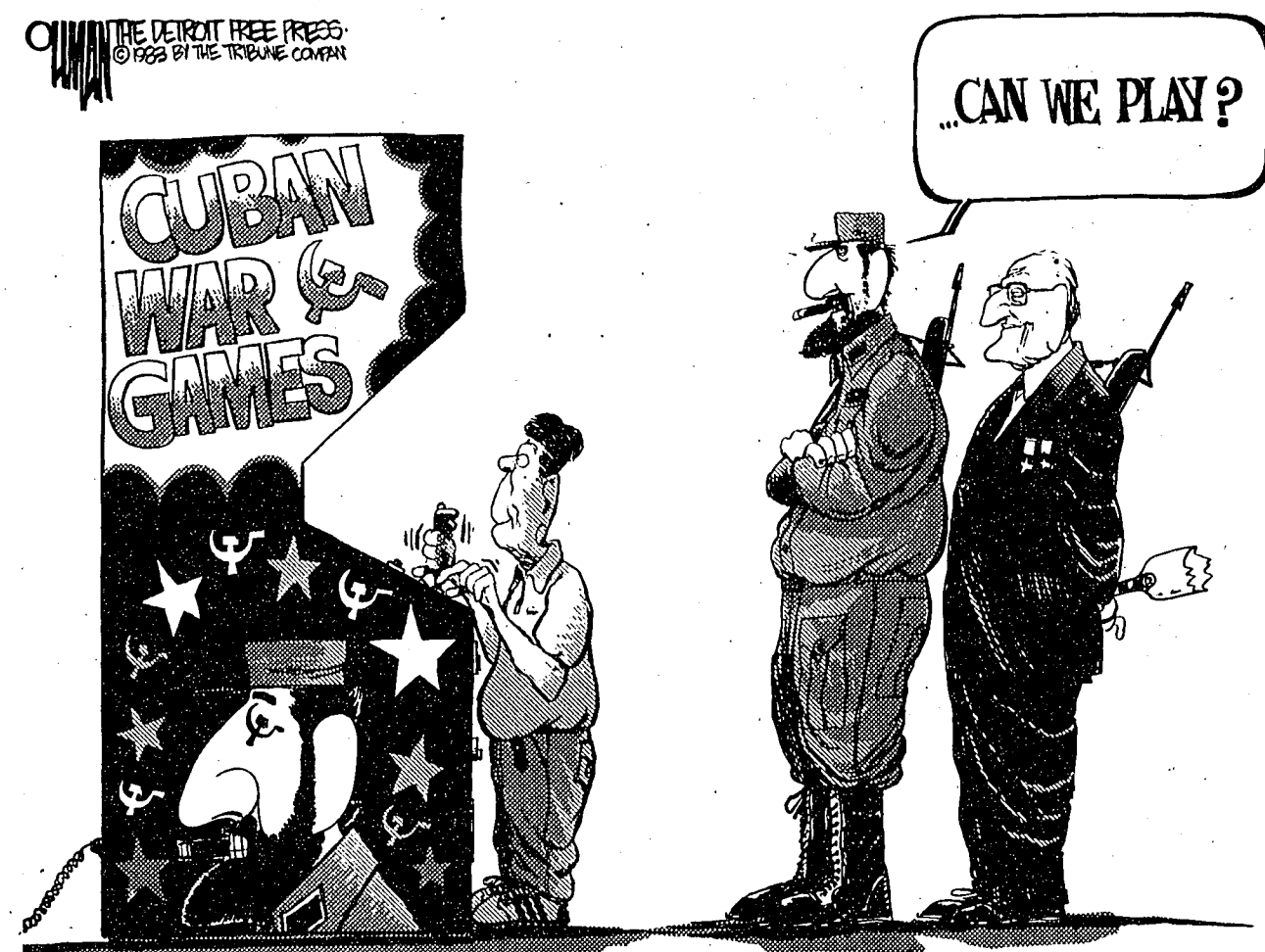
This is no way for an administration to quell fears that military operations in a guerrilla-infested area might lead to war.

At the news conference, Reagan said he believed many people are upset about the Central America issue "because of the confused pattern that's been presented to them."

And answering a question concerning whether people support his policies in Central America, Reagan said: "Those that have been informed and understand it do. 'Now if we all get together and explain what's happening down there, maybe that'll resolve the situation in that regard.'"

Well, the "confused pattern" is largely the result of mixed signals from his administration. And the people who have "get together" are those in the Reagan administration.

If Reagan wants the public to trust his policies, he should do a better job of informing the people about what is actually going on.



## the Collegian

Thursday, July 28, 1983  
Suzanne M. Cassidy  
Editor

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## reader opinion

### Control spending

Why can't the government (any government) learn to live within its revenue? I am specifically talking about those governments whose funds are based on a percentage of someone's income.

The proposal by the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and signed by the governor, raising the state income tax from 2.2 percent to 2.45 percent sparked this letter. With the state of the economy as it is now, a

few dollars here and there means a lot to a lot of people. With this idea, why should a government be allowed to raise its percentage of income? I have to plan expenses? I, as an individual, cannot just plan what I want to spend and then make my income match it by raising my salary. I have to plan what I am going to spend around what my income is. The government should work the same way.

Government income that is based on a percentage of, say, personal income will fluctuate with that other

party's income. Say that I get a 1.25 percent raise this year. That also means that what I pay to the state will increase by 1.25 percent.

In this way when the economy is good, both the government and I make out with larger raises, but when the economy is bad and raises are raising my salary. I have to plan what I am going to spend around what my income is. The government should work the same way.

Government income that is based on a percentage of, say, personal income will fluctuate with that other

Rex Knepp, senior systems developer  
July 20

## reader opinion

### Permit parking

How would you like to have your water supply cut off without prior notice? This was precisely how it felt when the residents of Graduate Circle found their mobility impaired by the cancellation of the Campus Loop for the Summer Session.

I would like to bring attention to the problem of residents of Graduate Circle who have teaching and research responsibilities in the west end of campus in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences and the College of Engineering.

Most graduate students have cars but cannot drive to work because of a lack of parking in the west end of campus, unless they choose to park illegally. The 25-minute walk each way from Grad Circle to, say, Deike in the sweltering heat takes away a lot of energy that would otherwise be spent fulfilling one's duties.

The problem could be greatly alleviated (not solved) if temporary parking permits were issued to graduate assistants allowing them to park

in under-utilized lots. I came to know from an official source that most lots are under-utilized during the Summer Session.

I spoke with one person responsible for an campus parking. In spite of his willingness to help resolve the problem, he was unable to do anything because of red tape and protocol. I came to believe that issuing temporary permits to graduate assistants required a major policy decision. A decision that would take time... enough time for the problem to solve itself.

I would like something to be done now, not when Fall Semester begins and the Loop is back. Shouldn't someone look into alternatives before a drastic action is taken? I really doubt if even an iota of thought went into the effects of canceling the Loop on the user. Administrators sure thought about the money it has saved.

It is a real shame.  
Indra K. Singhal  
graduate-mineral processing  
July 22

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## Making excuses for who we are, what we do

As students of Penn State, fortunately we have been presented with several examples of rationalizations that we can use to justify our behavior — and lack of behavior. The comedy film "Trading Places" and a recent Collegian forum, "Women must prudently rethink roles" by Holly Wilson, expose three views of explaining away our mistakes and our apathy: human nature, our environment and gender differences.



The premise of "Trading Places" concerns a bet between two gentlemen on whether people's behavior is determined by human nature or by their environment. The premise of Wilson's article is that people are biologically determined and that it may be better for them to follow their biological inclinations.

By adhering to any of these views, we can appeal to a "higher" direction for our lives. When we are asked, "Why did you lie?" or "Why must women be confined to the traditional roles of wife and mother?" we can just answer, "It's just human nature" or "I'm only a product of my environment." In other words, we can make excuses.

Wilson argued that we should probably accept our traditional sex roles because of our gender differences. In other words, we should not rebel against our biological nature. Women should be wives and mothers. Men should be wage earners. That is very prudent advice. However, it is not necessarily justified.

If we can choose who and what we become, then why not really choose — even if that means to rebel. Women may be physically inclined to be nurturing and, therefore, inclined to stay at home, but that does not mean they should stay at home. The same is true for men: they need not have a job, when

their wives could support them, just because they have a greater biological tendency to hold a job. In fact, they do.

Insofar as people are biological creatures, they are equal to biological tendencies. But we cannot and should not ignore the rest of our beings as this type of determinism suggests. It is only conjecture that our physical beings determine our psychological beings. Who can really prove that because a woman can have children she is more nurturing than a man? Perhaps women have a greater authoritative ability in order to discipline their children. What may be true, we can only hypothesize. Indeed, part of our difference from animals is that we do not just follow our instincts.

Consequently, we should think again about the Equal Rights Amendment now before Congress. We can ask, are women equal to men? But that's not really the correct question. Instead we should be asking, do women and men have the right to the same opportunities? All the ERA would secure is the possibility for that right of opportunity.

If we are to believe that we are only biological creatures, then perhaps we should reject such a proposal of freedom of choice. Let women be discriminated against in their ability to have jobs and men be discriminated against in their ability to raise children. However, if we realize there is more to men and women than the ability to become pregnant or their hormone levels, we can accept the possibility of their potential. We can allow people to choose their own roles in life.

In addition, the danger of society's forcing

men or women into "a conflict between what is a natural tendency and what is socially rewarded," as Wilson argued, would subside. Looking at the 14th Amendment and the existing racial prejudice, we see that legislation cannot immediately change attitudes. However, this prejudice has decreased since the Amendment's passage, partly because of its ability to change our nation's perception of itself.

There is one final excuse — one that is a frequent but vague reason for what we do wrong. Claiming that we do things because of human nature implies that we have no control over ourselves. It is the ultimate rejection of responsibility. It is a cop-out.

Philosophers have argued for centuries about the nature of man. What is man's given nature? Does man have an intrinsic nature? Yet, no one accepted theory of human nature has resulted from this debate. So we are just relying on an excuse that really has no accepted justification.

My invitation, then, is to believe that we can make ourselves. If we do not accept that man is not just a mechanistic creation of outside forces, we can realize that we are already making ourselves; that only we have responsibility for what we become. To say that we choose our destiny is not some trite, meaningless phrase. This responsibility is important and even terrifying. But it is one that we all share. And it is about time that we accept it.

Linda Menghetti is a 7th-term political science major and a columnist for The Daily Collegian.