

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Tuesday, Oct. 28, 1986

editorial opinion

Political name-calling muddies the election

Put on the trenchcoats and get out the umbrellas, ladies and gentlemen. The way the mud is flying this time of year, you can't be too sure where it's going to land.

Political mud, that is. You know, the stuff questionable campaigns are made of. The kind that comes from the dirty hands of politicians and lands on the faces of their usually equally dirty opponents.

It's no mystery that most politicians enter election races equipped with a supply of ready-to-use filth. After all, the tradition of mud-slinging is right up there with kissing babies, handshaking and telling bad jokes.

But lately, muckraking has taken on a whole new role in campaigns, becoming more of a crutch than a supplemental activity for political contenders.

This year, candidates in Pennsylvania as well as throughout the entire nation seem intent on exploiting any insinuation they can dig up, any innuendo they can play up and any imputation they can make up against their rivals in hopes of winning the public's support.

They're convinced that burying rivals in a backbiting squabble can make them look like proverbial knights in shining armor coming to the rescue of each and every voter.

What the politicians don't realize is that playing upon a rival's legitimate weaknesses works best when used with discretion. Simply lashing out at an opponent with the hope he or she will be branded a loser by the public is a juvenile and blatant political ploy.

It seems some candidates avoid important topics altogether and resort to character assassination to compensate for a lack of political courage and/or knowledge. If they had stronger records and more faith in their personal abilities as statesmen they would not have to rely so heavily on making their opponents look bad.

Perhaps what is most disheartening about the entire situation is listening to political rivals whine about being the victims of a smear campaign while they simultaneously take aim at opponents with a handful of verbal sludge. Some politicians can't even sling mud graciously.

The public is becoming tired of all the defamations disguised as television campaign ads; the speeches devoted to slamming the opponent; the time wasted at

debates because each candidate insists on getting the last verbal jab.

Three races that directly affect the Centre Region have had more than their share of negative advertising. All candidates involved — Bill Wachob and Bill Clinger; Bob Casey and Bill Scranton; Bob Edgar and Arlen Specter — have thrown enough mud to reduce the races to nothing more than mere shouting matches.

May we offer a bit of last-minute advice, candidates? You have one week until election day. Please stop acting like children trying to win a useless game of name-calling. Stick with the issues and stop trying to stick it to your opponent.

The voters deserve better than having to listen to a barrage of rude comments aimed at your opponents. Believe it or not, you'll probably get more votes and respect from voters if you provide them with helpful facts and background to make truly informed decisions at the polls, rather than bombarding them with useless propaganda against your rival.

When Joepa talks . . .

Head Football Coach Joe Paterno knows how to win football games; that is unquestionable. But the aura of his infallibility should not spill over into other temporal realms, such as politics.

Indeed, Paterno's record at semantic games is not as impressive as on the field. Paterno has taped radio and television commercials supporting U.S. Rep. William F. Clinger's re-election and has made campaign appearances for him and Republican incumbent Sen. Arlen Specter.

Yet Paterno contends that his actions are not an endorsement. Well, if it's not an endorsement, we don't know what it is. Webster's defines the word endorse as "to express approval of publicly and definitely."

A University spokesman said in *The New York Times* that Paterno was acting as a private citizen. But everyone realizes that Paterno is a very public figure and that his actions will gain attention.

He should be the first to realize that and not try to pull the pigtails over our eyes by refusing to admit that an endorsement is an endorsement.

reader opinion

Crystal clear

I wish Bill Wachob would decide on the format of his campaign. For the past several months Wachob has attempted to lambaste Rep. Bill Clinger's voting record. His chief theme has been that Clinger has not fought hard enough to bring federal dollars into the district. Wachob and his Democratic colleague Sen. Gary Hart tried to sell us with the old Kennedy classic — "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

Wachob is sending us two clearly conflicting messages. I would like to suggest to Wachob that he stick to the latter of the two aforementioned plays for the remainder of his campaign. If Wachob tries to get himself elected on the grounds that he will make the House Appropriations Committee finally take notice of the 23rd district, he will have to face some disenfranchised voters in a re-election bid two years down the road if he wins this election.

Wachob seems to consider himself as an omnipotent personality who will storm Congress and shake the House to its roots. The most effective congressmen are those with seniority. If the issue is the ability to draw attention to our district, the choice is crystal clear: Clinger for Congress.

Crime laws

One of the most serious problems in criminal justice is that politicians often vote on crime policies on the basis how the votes will look in the next election rather than on whether the policies will work.

The important thing is whether the policies will work. Voting against a policy that looks "tough" but works badly might be good for crime control but is dangerous for a politician. We have a good example in this election. Bill Wachob is being criticized for voting against three bills that all looked "tough" on crime. Despite their appearance of being "tough," it was well known at the time that each bill would harm rather than help crime control.

The worst of the three bills was fortunately defeated, but the other two passed and have been law for several years. I don't think you could find a single person who is both politically neutral and knowledgeable about these laws who would say that they have had a positive impact on crime control.

Most would say the laws have been somewhat harmful. In our press conference, I described why these bills are harmful to crime control and

asserted that a vote against these bills was not being "soft on crime." The press ignored these arguments and portrayed the press conference as part of the routine "charge-countercharge" of the election campaign. I felt discouraged about that, and even more discouraged when I read my colleague Ed Donovan's letter in *The Daily Collegian*.

I had gone out of my way to have him read and comment on my statement before the conference. I thought he understood what I was trying to do, but I guess I was wrong. I have not endorsed Wachob in this election, but I believe that when a politician has voted responsibly for crime control and is being made to pay a political price for it, criminal justice experts ought to say so. Otherwise, how will we ever get a decent criminal justice system?

Thomas J. Bernard
associate professor
administration of justice

Student aid

After reading *The Daily Collegian* opinion page last week, I feel the record of Rep. Bill Clinger on education has been severely misinterpreted.

Many believe Clinger has done nothing but cut federal aid to students. It is a shame these naive students, such as the ones writing the recent opinion letters, do not really know what Clinger has done for the students of Penn State.

To start, Clinger has sponsored, co-sponsored and voted for at least five different bills for education. These bills have ranged from saving student aid from Gramm-Rudman Budget cuts to providing summer jobs to disadvantaged high school students.

Clinger has also been actively involved in obtaining federal appropriations for Penn State, which has increased by 30 percent since Clinger took office. He has fought to maintain or increase federal aid since coming to office and the record shows it. Overall funding is up 23 percent from 1980 with Pell Grants and Guaranteed Student Loans increasing 37 percent and 39 percent respectively over that same period.

To re-elect Clinger this November would only benefit the students of Penn State in the future. As former President Ford has stated, "He (Clinger) has clout, he has influence in the House. The higher you sit on the seniority list, the more effective you can be."

To re-elect Clinger to another term means increased security for the students of today and tomorrow.

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the Collegian

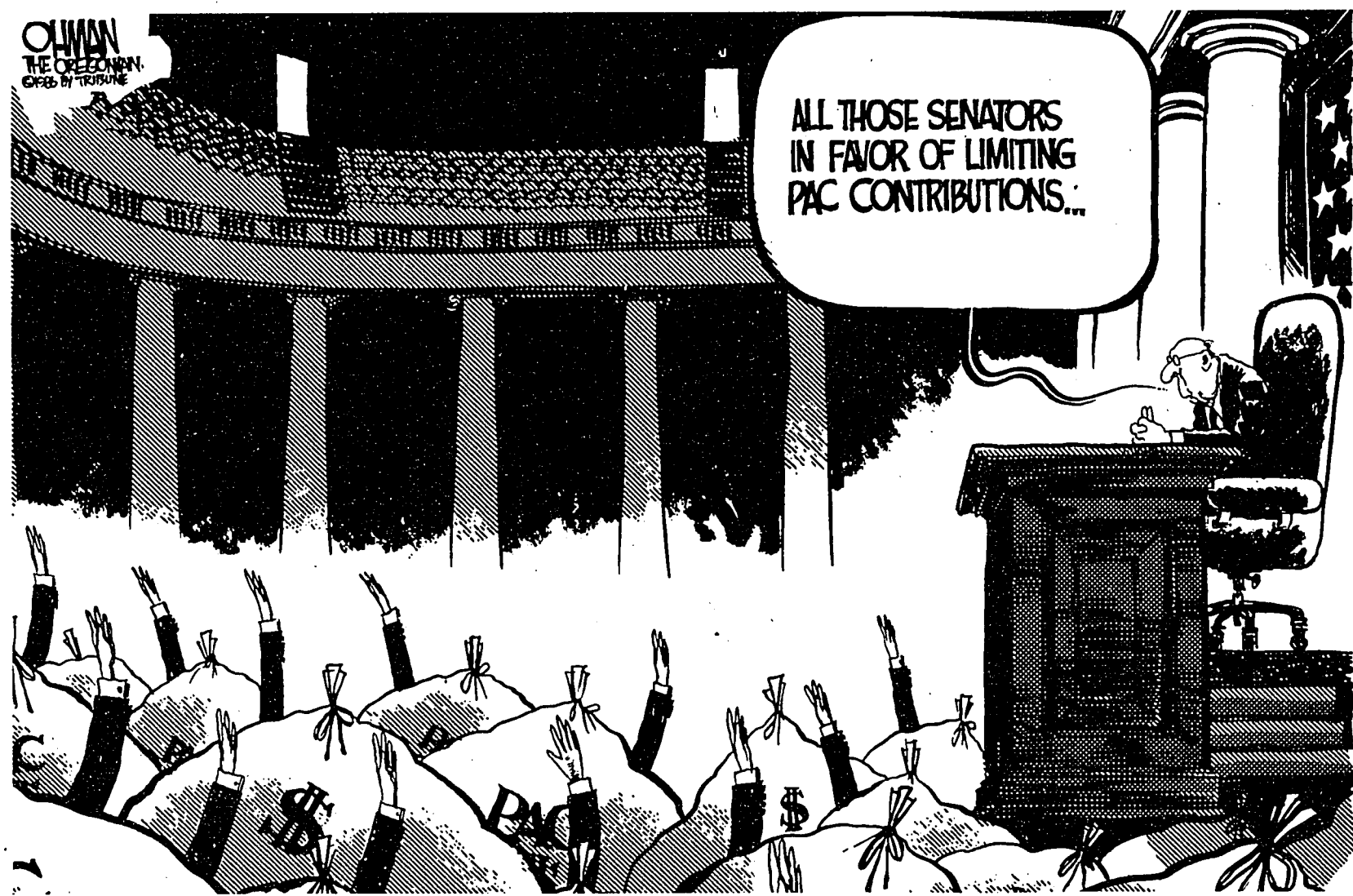
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Activism vs. apathy:

Students are the most powerful force on campus and must realize their power lies in tuition

Some would say that the following songs describe their decades well.

1960s: "The Times They Are A-Changin'" by Bob Dylan.
1980s: "I Don't Care Anymore" by Phil Collins.

I was quietly sitting in my room the other day, drinking some Perrier water and reading Plato's *Republic* when an activist suddenly burst into my room. I thought activists went out of style 10 years ago.

I took in the activist from head to toe. She definitely was a Mod, one of those English types of the mid-1960s who wore black and called for social rebellion.

She suddenly began talking. "I'm just involved in too many causes for my own good. I just got back from some divestment rally and a reggae concert. Don't you just love reggae?" She started to dance around my room.

Oh, you mean that music with unintelligible lyrics which you're supposed to smoke six-foot long joints while listening to?" I responded.

"You're just like all the other students



Brian P. Heflich

here. You're boring and apathetic." After she was done with the moral lesson she left the room.

If I hear another person condemning us for being apathetic in the 1980s, I'm going to get sick. You know what I mean. These people question why we're so apathetic and yearn for a return to the social consciousness of the 1960s.

For one thing the romanticism surrounding the 1960s is false. Someone once said the 1960s were two people having a good party and everyone else was trying to find it. Our memories tend to color past events and

make them seem better than they really were. That is the case here.

The extent of the 1960s counterculture is also exaggerated. The majority of the students of the 1960s weren't hippies or activists. Someone had to be operating the ROTC buildings which were being bombed.

All in all, the "revolution" of the 1960s was a failure. The Vietnam War did not end for another five years. Love did not replace materialism. One only has to listen to the spokesmen of the age, the musicians, to relate this. Bob Dylan turned into a country singer. The lyrics to The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again" and Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" acknowledge the defeat.

Why did the 1960s revolution fail and why are we so apathetic now? The answer is that we are mostly concerned with ourselves.

When we are faced with insecurity over our financial futures, social issues go right out the window. The "let me get myself set before I help anyone else" attitude. Don't get me wrong — I don't fault people for it; it's human nature.

To prove that money talks, let's look at divestment. This effort will only succeed when about 10,000 students decide not to pay their tuition in protest. Let's get back on track. What has caused the economic ists. Someone had to be operating the ROTC buildings which were being bombed.

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What can be said for the 20 or so activists now on campus? Although I admire what they do, their time is not now. By not realizing this, they are cutting themselves off from their time and the community. A person disconnected in time and place usually has like an unanchored ship and usually sinks.

But I'm not writing for the 20 activists here. I'm writing for all those people frightened by the prospects of not having a job upon graduation. What I'm saying is "ease up."

A human being is composed of both the material and the spiritual. Although economic hard times are a reality, to ignore the spiritual in pursuit of material gain is to lead a very unhappy life.

Now if you enjoy engineering or business, pursue it with all your enthusiasm, but if you're in them for economic reasons, get out. Your mental health is at stake.

Now after I'm finished listening to Dylan's "My Back Pages," I'm going to put on some Genesis, get out a pair of jams, grab a wine cooler and just sit back and relax. I just have to make sure I've got some money or a credit card if I need something.

Brian Metrick is a sophomore majoring in history and a columnist for *The Daily Collegian*. His column appears every other Tuesday.

Texas Instruments Job Fair

Tuesday, October 28, 1986

Penn State HUB Ballroom

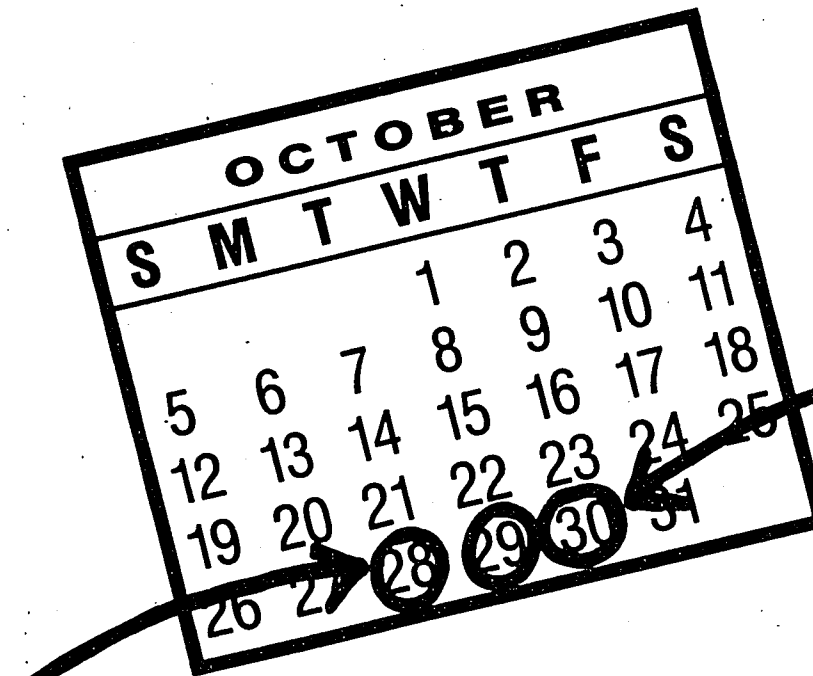
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