

Noise proposal a logical move

When a tree falls in the woods and no one's there to hear it, does anyone care if it makes a sound? Similarly, when a bar is being loud and no one nearby minds, does it deserve a noise citation?

Under current regulations of downtown bars, no noise whatsoever is allowed to be heard emanating from these facilities.

A new proposition from the State College Tavern Owner's Association challenges this and would benefit the community as a whole.

Obviously, noise can always be heard outside bars. Considering the number of people who fre-

quent these establishments and the inclusion of bands and other entertainment, it's expected.

The proposal raises the legal noise level for bars to 62 decibels, which makes more sense than a rarely enforced zero tolerance law.

This will not only be more realistic but also will help local businesses and give bars greater freedom.

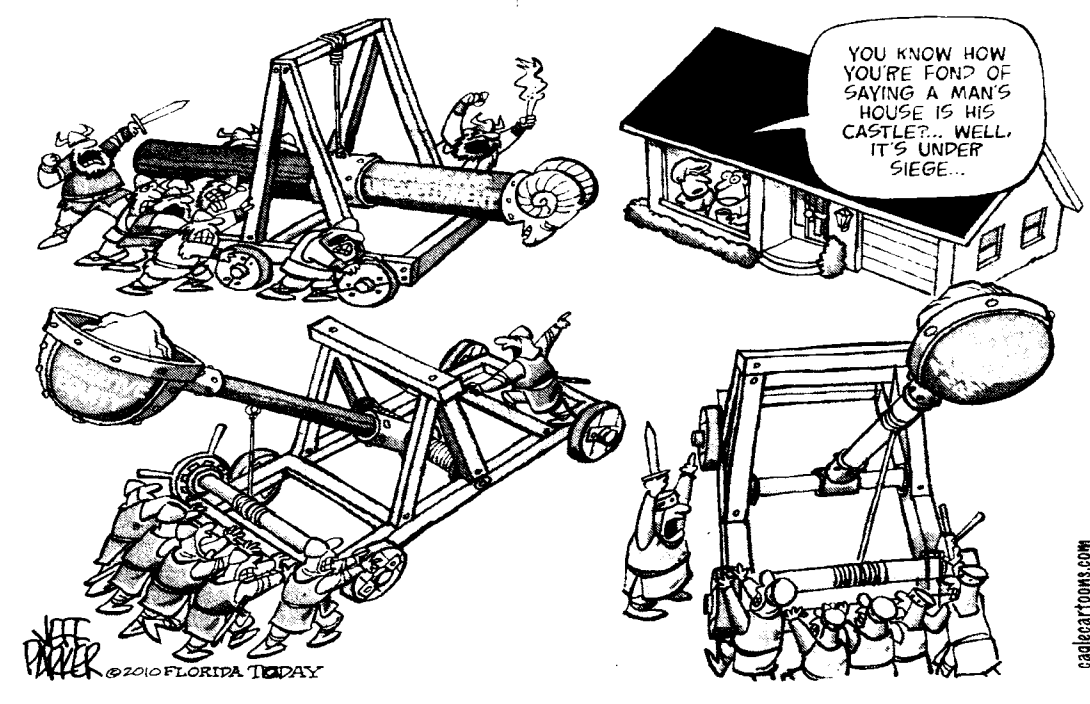
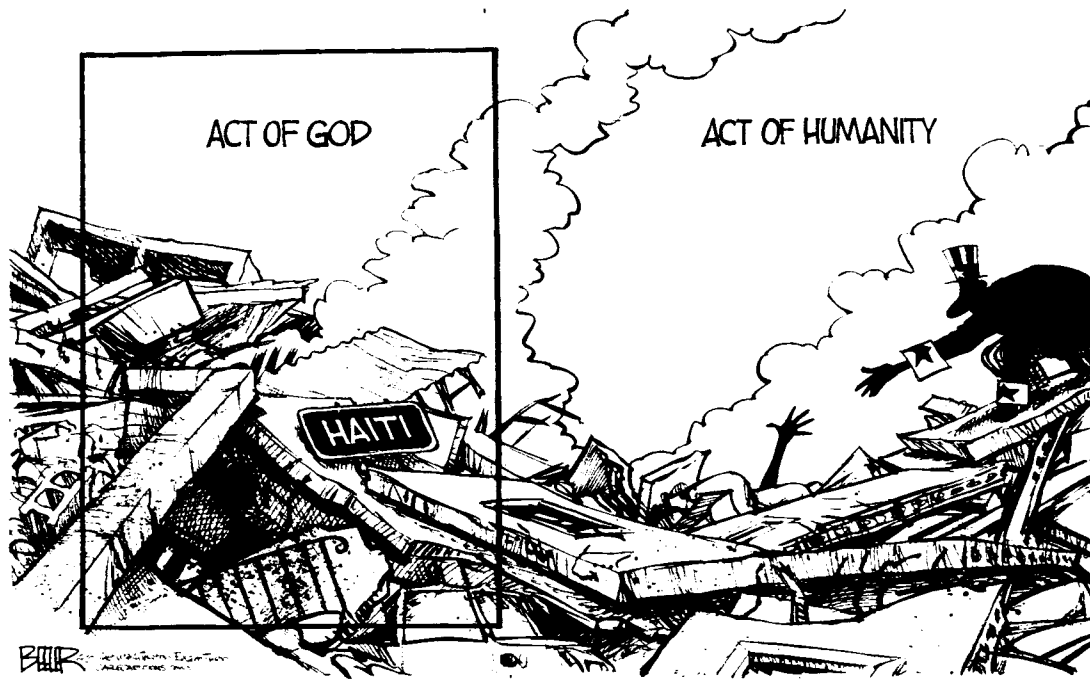
The proposal will also hand regulation — currently handled by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board — to the local police force. Such a plan allows for more localization.

Enforcement would be

handled primarily on a complaint basis. Currently, authorities only receive about 12 complaints a year about noise, so the plan wouldn't highly increase the need for law enforcement.

The new plan is fair, with checks and balances for both businesses and local residents that wouldn't result in additional expenses. Having received support from both police and local bars, the plan seems more efficient.

Residents do not usually move in next door to bars expecting silence, but with the plan, they can still make complaints when necessary.



NPR program embarrassing for PSU

By Rich Coleman

Ira, what have you done? Thanks to Ira Glass, host and producer of the radio/TV documentary series "This American Life," I feel uncomfortable about my relationship with State College.



MY OPINION

I say "relationship" because when you live in the same place for a significant amount of time, you unknowingly develop a relationship with your surroundings. You get to know the location's habits, its idiosyncrasies, peccadilloes, traffic patterns, where the closest ATM is and little things like that.

But the relationship with State College isn't the same for all. I could always discern that living in this town as a resident and a student are probably two completely different experiences.

But I never really got a true feeling of that difference until listening to "This American Life's" recent episode titled "#1 Party School."

That would be us. Glass and his team of producers (which includes local resident Sarah Koenig) documented a football weekend last semester. They interviewed and observed students in their natural environments while talking with local businesses. President Graham Spanier and other staff in order to get a feel for what it is like to be at a No. 1 party school.

Turns out we're all just a bunch of destructive alcoholics. OK, well, that's a harsh gener-

alization. But when the residents here install motion sensors around their houses to combat trespassing drunks or can correctly identify the sound of a stop sign being dragged across the ground, then we have officially become, at the very least, bad neighbors.

If you're a student and haven't listened to this 70-minute exposé, I recommend doing so. You'd have to be living in some fantasyland of complacency to listen to this and not feel a tiny bit disgusted. Glass and Koenig begin the episode by simply observing drunken activity around Koenig's house. The amount of times they come across public urination and destruction of property in a mere half-hour on a Friday night is astounding.

But hearing about this stuff secondhand from me won't result in any startling revelation. We all know that mostly everyone's got the ability to be a royal schmuck when they're wasted. If you haven't been the sloppy drunk then you've at least been affected by one in some way. This is just one of those involuntary improprieties of the "We Are!" culture that are unfortunately too familiar.

But when you step back from everything and see how our dependence on alcohol and its effects must look to an outsider — in this case through the eyes of a radio show host and his crew who make their living documenting different places and people — you start to rethink things.

Suddenly, the normalcy of binge drinking and pre-gaming turns into absurdity.

In one segment of the episode, Glass goes to a fraternity party and asks one of the

brothers why he thinks this is so routine.

"You can only do this stuff now when you're in college," he answers, "I wouldn't be able to do it six months from now."

I can understand that sentiment but only because it stems from the mentality this town nurtures and fosters right from the get-go as a freshman: We're a drinking school with a football problem.

I really hate sounding like an embittered curmudgeon who wants to permanently abolish fun. Trust me, I don't.

But there has to be a point when you grow up and realize that getting wasted and pissing in someone's yard or destroying someone's property is just immature and reflects poorly on all of us.

Besides holding a mirror up to ourselves, the most remarkable thing about this episode is when Glass interviews people who have lived here for years: the neighbors who know a used tampon on their lawn means a used condom can't be far or the ones who can attest to once having removed drunk, confused trespassers from their children's bedrooms.

This behavior is just old-hat for them.

And that's a sad fact. If Joe Dado's death and the sudden crackdown on alcohol use by fraternities haven't clued you in yet, then maybe you need to listen to this program to get a real outsider's view of Happy Valley.

Expect feelings of guilt mixed with nausea.

Rich Coleman is a senior majoring in journalism and is the Collegian's Friday columnist. His e-mail address is rmc5074@psu.edu.

Scholarship program doesn't help tuition cost problem

In response to the Jan. 14 article, "Wagner brings HOPE to PSU," Jack Wagner has done what any idea-deficient politician would do — he looked to another state for a proposal to copy. What he picked was "HOPE," an ill-conceived scholarship program that was first implemented in Georgia. The program was a failure in Georgia and will be a failure here.

HOPE is designed to increase college enrollment by providing scholarships to public universities for students with high school GPAs above 3.0. In Georgia, HOPE was unsuccessful. Total enrollment was unchanged, but more students shifted from private to public colleges.

The result: more overcrowding in public colleges, while the private colleges become the increasingly inaccessible domain of the wealthy and the privileged. Meanwhile, high schools (eager to ensure their students qualify for the program) will make their grading standards less rigorous, until having a "3.0 GPA" is meaningless. In fact, this is already a foolish criterion because different high schools have wildly different curriculums. That's why we have standardized testing.

You cannot fix the costs of higher education by throwing money at the problem. The solution lies in identifying why the costs are rising in the first place. Our higher education system is inefficient, riddled with bureaucracies, bloated by state subsidies and perpetually unable to decide whether to focus on research or teaching. Solving this will not require more money, it will require a smarter money. None of the Democratic candidates for governor seem to appreciate this. Least of all, Jack Wagner.

Samuel Settle
sophomore-political science and history
Young Americans for Freedom

Tuition appeals to Sen. Casey not worth students' time

Regarding the Jan. 14 article, "Students ask Sen. Bob Casey to lower tuition," with all due respect to the students who are appealing Sen. Casey for tuition relief, their time would be better spent appealing to members of the state — not federal — legislature, which directly controls tuition levels at Penn State.

Unless of course this is all about Campus Progress lobbying Sen. Casey to vote for the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. I urge the students to read the bill: There's nothing in it that helps 75 percent of the students who attend Penn State. It does not lower tuition. It does not cut student loan interest rates for most students.

Alex Hamilton
Washington, D.C.

Greek community shouldn't receive all blame for culture

With all the recent publicity this past year regarding Penn State's No. 1 party school ranking and drinking culture, a lot of heat has been taken by our greek community. New policies have been put in place for fraternities in an attempt to limit alcohol consumption and make partying at Penn State fraternities a bit safer.

However, fewer than 20 percent of students are even involved in greek life. So where does that leave the larger part of the student population? Surely greek life isn't all to blame for the partying that occurs. Why then is it only greek life that is looked at with scorn? Where is the regulation of partying in apartments and non-fraternity houses? The drinking culture is far larger than just greeks.

Kyle Dunleavy
sophomore-biotechnology

blog lines

Can You Dig It?

For the second season in a row, a Penn State women's volleyball player was chosen as the best athlete in the sport.

Last year the honor went to Nicole Fawcett, and this year it goes to Megan Hodge.

Hodge was awarded the 2010 Honda Sports Award in volleyball and was chosen over other standout athletes including Texas' Destinee Hooker, California's Hana Cutura and even teammate Alisha Glass.

The senior outside hitter finished the season with 560 kills and averaged 4.67 kills per set, leading the Big Ten in both categories. Hodge also had a hitting percentage of .371 and tallied up 83 blocks.

Read more from **Can You Dig It?** and the rest of The Daily Collegian's blogs at psucollegian.com.

Snap, Crackle, Pop

For lack of better word, my heart is filled with "Glee."

I am glad to announce that "Glee" has officially signed on for a second season — although I am not in the least bit surprised.

The idea behind "Glee," a musically-infused high school "drama," is genius and it seemed pretty obvious — and even more obvious when the show was nominated for four Golden Globes — that the show would stick around for a while. The soundtrack is addicting (and the best Christmas gift I received this year), and the realistically corny high-school drama is lovable.

Read more from **Snap, Crackle Pop** and the rest of The Daily Collegian's blogs at psucollegian.com.

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