

Editorial

The cost of free speech

Controversy abounds this week in State College, PA, after a controversial column advocating violence ran in last Tuesday's edition of *The Daily Collegian*.

Chino Wilson, a sportswriter for the newspaper, wrote the column which called 85 to 90 percent of white people devout racists and stated, "white people are devils." (See story on front page.)

Many students are upset with the violent suggestions the columnist makes. Some have demanded that the newspaper take action against Wilson, perhaps removing him from the staff.

Protesters have been seen in front of *The Daily Collegian's* office, one with a sign reading "Collegian Prints Racist Trash."

Despite these protests, and a windfall of letters and phone calls, the editors of the newspaper have decided not to take any disciplinary action against Wilson.

How could they?

Many people will argue that in writing this column, Wilson was merely exercising his right to freedom of speech (expression) as protected by the First Amendment.

That's true. People have the right to express themselves freely. That is one of the most basic and important rights we enjoy as Americans.

The columnist was well within his rights. However, the editors that decided to run the column in *The Daily Collegian* were not acting responsibly.

They have abused their positions by allowing a potentially riot-inciting piece to appear in their newspaper.

The power the media wields in the modern age is tremendous. Such irresponsible journalism should not be tolerated.

No one should deny this writer his right to express himself, but such violence-invoking material has no place in a responsible publication.



Letters to the Editor

SGA thrashed

I was disappointed in *The Collegian's* blurred focus on student government last week. Furthermore, your editorial appears to be a commentary on the assorted "facts" revealed in the SGA article ("Politics on campus: Personality clashes mar SGA image") which fails to justify any major restructuring.

I cannot dispute the factual accuracy of the article, had it been published in November of 1991 when it was written. Unfortunately in the two months that have passed since my colleagues in SGA were interviewed, the article has aged less than gracefully. Furthermore, considering the selection of quotations, an intentional thrashing of SGA seemed the order of business that issue instead of honest reporting.

The editorial ("Students' interest or student interest groups?) contained in the same issue is an insult to the student body's intelligence.

Everybody must realize that the members of student government are as busy as anyone else. Therefore, we cannot afford to dedicate 24 hours a day to student government without neglecting academics or employment.

I say this to emphasize the difference between us and a professional politician who can work full time for their constituents. Instead, we welcome the Council Presidents to voting positions on SGA as they bring with them a specialty knowledge that the senators cannot possibly acquire without being actively involved in every single organization on campus.

I thoroughly agree that some students do have more than one representative, but I fail to see how this shorts anybody. Any concerned student is welcome to bring any comments or concerns

to the SGA office. Also, they are welcome to call us...our phone numbers are listed separately inside the front cover of the student phone directory. (Incidentally, that student directory is a product of student government and its divisions.)

I fail to see your justification for concerns that some students are over-represented. If a student is actively involved in a variety of activities, we should be able to accurately represent his concerns, and this is uniquely possible with the current system.

I realize that *The Collegian* is understaffed, or at least I gathered that from counting but ten different writers attempting to fill a twelve page paper, but I fail to see how an inadequate staff is justification for such shallow journalism techniques. In the future, please print your articles in a more timely fashion, or at least have the courtesy to update them sufficiently before publication.

Greg Farrell
Sixth semester
Economics

What day?

Only your (Tom Strunk, columnist for *The Collegian*) much despised cultural relativist would agree with your analysis of "academic freedom" and "democratic government" as practised by "the Greeks and Romans."

From their inception and for centuries, universities served to educate priests, nobody else, and those "question[ing] natural phenomena scientifically" did so not in "academic freedom" but against established authority. Basing my definition of "democratic government" on the most fundamental of its principles--one person, one vote--I dare say only this century has

seen it anywhere. As for "spreading culture," any cultivator will tell you that what's spread often stinks.

However, what stinks often gives growth to beautiful flowers and nourishing plants, and it seems to me that "western civilization's" one redeeming feature has been its ability to accommodate growth and change. Thus, your tirade against "multiculturalism" goes against the grain of "western civilization" rather than supports it. We can all deplore the excesses of whichever group that promotes its own interests, but we need to remember that those interests are defined by resistance to change.

The absurdities of multiculturalism come only in response to the stubborn resistance of policy-makers to share political power. "Good intentions" turn into frustration eventually, and only through massive frustration does change occur. If you accuse the multiculturalists of wanting to "divide America into warring factions similar to those of Eastern Europe," you also need to recognize that by doing so you equate the U.S. government with the repressive Soviet regime and the multi-culturalists with the freedom seeking Soviet peoples. An analogy I don't think you intended to draw.

What has happened in the U.S. since the death of Dr. King and the civil rights' movement? Nixon, Ford, Carter (he never had a chance), Reagan, and Bush--barbarian (in the ancient sense of the word: "non-Greek" and "non-Roman" [Dukakis and Cuomo, anyone?]) do-nothing's. Culture means growth. The only things growing in the U.S. today are dissatisfaction (yours, mine, everyone's) and the national debt.

Forget "Indigenous People's Day"; let's get together to celebrate Indignant People's Day.

Monica Irwin
Lecturer of English

The Collegian

Published weekly by the students of Behrend College, Erie, PA

Editor
Todd J. Irwin

Ad Layout & Design
Rob Pfendler

Business Manager
Adrienne Shrawder

Distribution Manager
Joe Mycka

The Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by the editorial staff, with the editor holding final responsibility. Opinions expressed in *The Collegian* are not necessarily those of *The Collegian* or The Pennsylvania State University.

Advisor
Dr. Mike Simmons

Letter Policy: *The Collegian* encourages letters on news coverage, editorial content and university affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced and signed by no more than two persons. Letters should be no longer than 400 words. Letters should include the semester standing and major of the writer. All letters should provide the address and phone number of the writer for verification of the letter. *The Collegian* reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters. Letters should be submitted to *The Collegian* office no later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the desired publication date.

Features Editor
Robb Frederick

News Editor
Mark Owens

Entertainment Editor
Christi Luden

Sports Editor
Greg Gaibel

Photo Coordinator
Craig Brater

Copy Editor
Dawn Brenneman

Postal Information: *The Collegian* (814 898-6488) is published weekly by the students of The Pennsylvania State University at Erie, The Behrend College, First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, Pa 16563.