

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

The Student Newspaper of Wake Forest University
Founded in 1916

EDITORIALS

Power surge raises safety concerns

Tuesday's power surge in the Scales Fine Arts Center and the resulting damage to electrical equipment in Tribble and Reynolda Halls, which cut off power to six buildings on campus, draws attention to safety concerns for the university.

While hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent updating the technological links of the campus and implementing precautionary measures, such as the keycard system and the gatehouses, problems with the internal structure may present the biggest threat of all.

The wires that transmit power throughout the campus have existed in their present form for too long and they are now showing the effects of years of constant use. Much like a car breaking down and a house falling apart as it ages, these wires have run their course and need to be replaced.

As a singular circumstance, this incident might not pose such a significant threat, but a similar problem occurred a year and a half ago, when the sidewalk outside of Davis House was, literally, blown up by an explosion underneath the cement. This accident was also due to faulty wiring.

No one was hurt, but if anyone had been close to the explosion, injuries could have been serious, if not fatal.

This is not something people should have to worry about when they are walking around campus.

There are precautionary measures being taken at almost every level of the campus infrastructure to ensure student safety. While the structural problems have not been ignored, it is obviously not for them to become more of a priority.

Interestingly enough, the electrical problems come after a campaign to educate students about fire safety. This issue grew in importance after a house fire at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in which five students died. Meanwhile, the university is dealing with fire hazards of its own.

With this power surge, it has become apparent that the university needs to spend additional time and money focusing on fixing the structural quirks within the buildings. Substantial funds have been depleted installing 27-inch televisions in every room in Tribble, stereo surround-sound in Pugh Auditorium and laptop connections throughout campus.

Although it may take a considerable amount of time and money, it is necessary that improvements be made. A future accident might not prove as harmless to the community as the past two have been, and that would be a tragedy, especially now that the problem is so apparent.

The university cannot afford to rest on its laurels. It is obvious that the wiring has problems, and these problems need immediate attention.

Homecoming lacks necessary pizzazz

It would seem logical that Homecoming, a time when alumni return to visit their alma mater and see the direction it is heading in, should be a time to celebrate the numerous achievements and abilities of its students. This year's festivities are disappointing in that they are limited in this facet as well as lacking the excitement that should be synonymous with the event, in general.

This year, the only student showcase is a stepshow. This is great, but more could be done. The university has numerous choral groups that are talented and available. With the likes of Racial Harmony, the Gospel Choir, Chi Rho and Temporary Reprieve, a concert showcasing each of these groups abilities would be perfect.

Additionally, the numerous instrumental and dance companies on campus should have the opportunity to play for those interested. Homecoming is a rare occasion where such organizations will be

able to perform for people who probably have some kind of vested interest in the show, as they were perhaps affiliated with that organization. It is important for alumni to see some of the future and maintain their ties with the university.

Student Union will be sponsoring, among other events, a sexy legs contest, a spirit yell and a banner contest. The problem is that nobody knows about these events.

As of last Tuesday, there were signs up for the Renaissance music fest, which will feature a variety of bands, from funk to reggae. However, this has been the extent of the advertising. This seems to be a recurring problem with SU, as one may recall the lackluster attendance of the They Might Be Giants concert, a show that should have filled Benson 401 on name recognition alone.

Homecoming has historically been a big event. It is time for this flavor to return.

Welfare needs systematic reform

I've become a bit numb to all the political advertising I've been subjected to over the last few months, but a radio commercial for a Senate candidate I heard the other day caught my attention.

The announcer said that even though the candidate's opponent said he favored welfare reform, he had opposed giving block grants to states and ending extra payments to mothers who have additional children while on welfare.

At the end, his opponent's voice came on, saying, "To get welfare reform right, we may have to spend a little more." The last phrase was repeated for emphasis.

The implication, of course, is that no program of welfare reform should end up costing more, and this is an assumption that seems to underlie many people's views on the topic of welfare. All too often welfare is seen as an issue about money; it costs hard-working, middle-class Americans too much, and therefore it has to be fixed.

BRIAN DIMMICK
MANAGING EDITOR

However, welfare reform should be undertaken in order to help its recipients (who are, in a way, its victims) break out of the cycle and become self-supporting, not just to produce a tax cut for the more fortunate.

I am not about to argue that welfare reform is unnecessary or that the system is fundamentally working. The mere fact that it exists on the scale that it does, some 60 years after it was instituted in the height of the Great Depression, is testament to the fact that it has not been successful.

Welfare reform is desperately needed now to break the all-too-familiar cycle of poverty that has taken over our inner cities. However, a solution to the problem of the welfare cycle will take more than just slashing benefits.

If we are going to address the fundamental causes of welfare, we must

think in terms of long-term solutions, and this might not be cheap.

If jobs were readily available to

Welfare reform should be undertaken in order to help its recipients (who are, in a way, its victims) break out of the cycle and become self-supporting, not just to produce a tax cut for the more fortunate.

welfare recipients, the task would be easy. With the loss of many once-stable manufacturing jobs, the only jobs open to many of these recipients are minimum-wage service jobs with no chance for advancement and which cannot support a family.

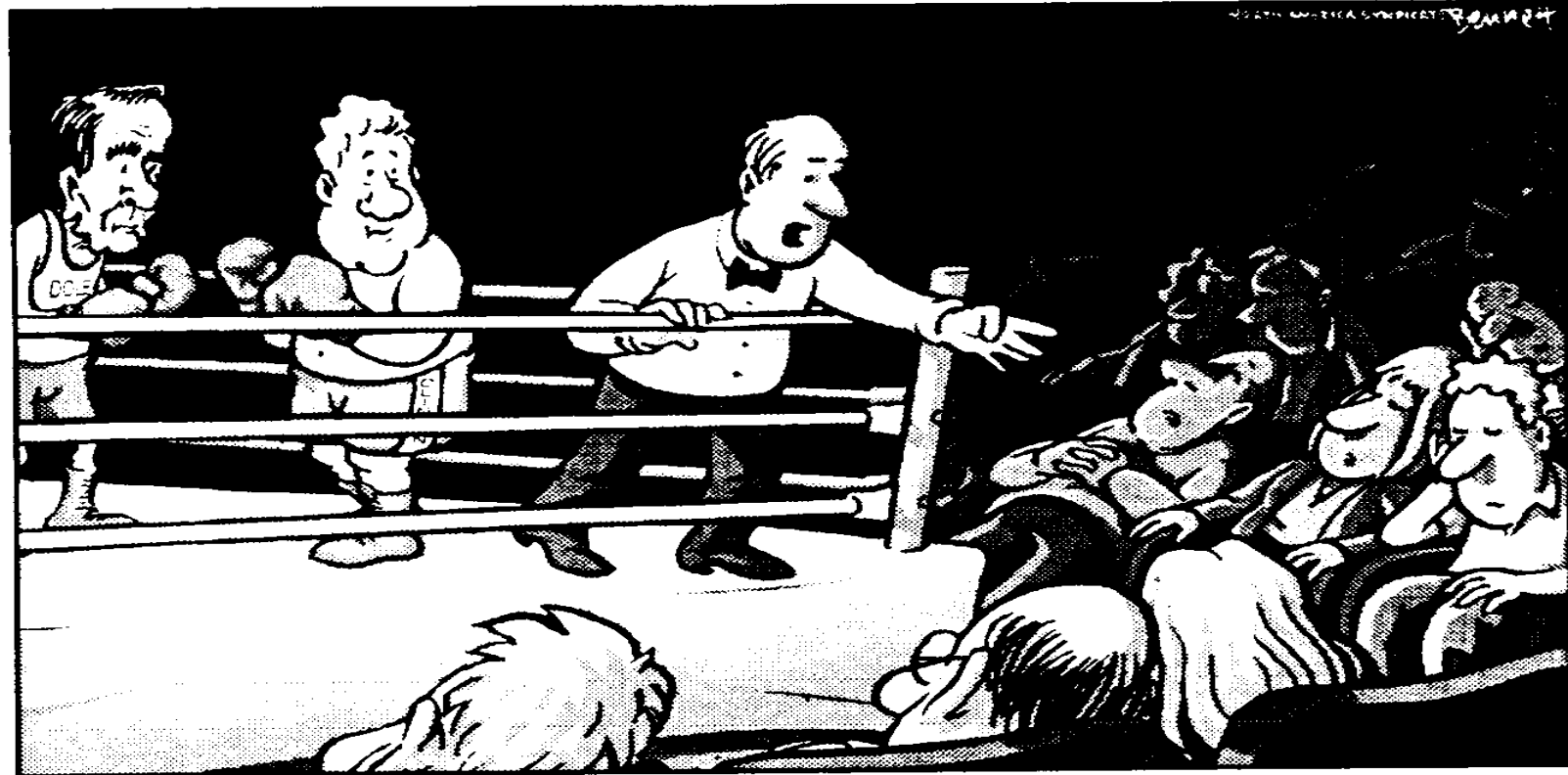
Many of the new jobs being created

today require skills that those on welfare are unlikely to have, so job training must be a key component of any reform plan.

Such a reform plan must also transform our inner cities, which have lost much of the economic vitality, so funds to aid small businesses in depressed areas will be needed as well. Otherwise, many jobs will continue to move geographically out of reach of those who need them most.

There are many other considerations, such as child care for working mothers, to be addressed, and they will inevitably lead to more costs. However, in the long run the economic and social costs of not addressing these issues would be much greater.

A plan that simply strives to save money will not end the cycle of desperate poverty millions of Americans are now trapped in. If we are really interested in breaking this cycle, it may cost a bit more in the short run, but it will be worth it.



'... seven ... eight ... nine ...'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SG punishment

Does everybody remember when your parents were anxious about letting you take new steps in responsibility while you were growing up? You may have begged them to trust you with the responsibility to get something done or take care of yourself, simply because you felt you were at a stage where you could do it.

And, when you screwed that responsibility up, as was the case on occasion, not only did the parents take that responsibility away from you, but they made sure that their distrust in your abilities was well known, making the situation even worse for you.

This is what Student Government, particularly senior Tina Schippers, the president of SG, and the two students involved with last year's ticket distribution system, have caused. Those students, whose names I cannot remember at this time, decided to revamp the distribution system, with the permission of the athletic department. Or, in keeping with my theme, the kids decided that they could do it by themselves and better, so the parents let them.

What happened? The system that was in effect last year was a disaster. Sure, the administration and the athletic department cried and screamed about the litter, the loitering and the ludicrous camping which occurred outside of the Benson University Center. This is what parents will do, being the pragmatists they are.

However, from what I have heard, many students thought the system was just as ridiculous, for more immediately important reasons.

The system required an inordinate amount of time to get a ticket, and even then, many students found themselves bumped down the list by large groups and Greek organizations saving places for upwards of 40 people just before the ticket handout began. It was a system marked by a lack of organization, poor administration and cheating at the line (something children should do, not adults).

Well, the parents are not only taking the ticket distribution responsibility away from the children, but they are punishing them as well. The athletic department's lottery system does discriminate against die-hard fans and their dreams of

ACC glory courtside.

The lottery system does neglect the interests of upperclassmen. The lottery system does represent a complete and utter disregard for the students who have to use it to get tickets.

Nevertheless, the punishment is deserved. I would most certainly bet that the athletic department developed the lottery system for two reasons.

First of all, last year's system was a disaster. This has been well established, both by the administration and by students.

Secondly the athletic department, I would argue, developed the lottery system as damage control to any bad publicity it may receive because of complications.

Remember, the athletic department does have to make sure that its ACC powerhouse image is not tarnished by the prying eye of the media and the general public.

So, what are the folks from SG really doing? They are whining about the consequences of their own incompetence. They are moaning and groaning to the athletic department about the lottery system, when, in fact, it is their lack of planning and organization that required the athletic department to take matters into its own hands. In essence, the children are complaining to the parents about something that is their fault to begin with.

Furthermore, SG is taking its beef to a higher level of potential failure by having enraged students sign a petition asking to go back to last year's system (or variations of the beast).

What the 2,000 students who signed the petition are forgetting is this — the same people who are asking for John Hancocks are the ones who created the problem in the first place. The students are very close to signing the death-knell of SG involvement in ticket distributions, and they do not even know it.

Basically, two things should happen to get around this lottery system. First of all, the imbeciles in SG who came up with the disastrous system last year and are complaining this year about the results of their own mistake should bite their tongue, swallow their pride and admit that last year's system was just wrong.

From that platform of admission, perhaps further concessions for a revision this year will be easier, as the parents are not going to listen to children who whine about their punishment without considering what

they did wrong in the first place.

Second, the students who are signing the petition in rage should remember who is asking them to support this regression over progress.

Students should now demand a preview of anything SG draws up concerning a revised ticket distribution plan, or they will have only signed away the hope for a fair system to the business-like pragmatism of the athletic department.

Remember, anger clouds reason, and in anger, 2,000 students have delegated the responsibility of rational decision-making to those who have yet to demonstrate such talent.

Be careful, or the same irresponsible children who angered the parents last year are going to do it again this year.

Michael R. Burns

DWI forum

Only a few weeks ago, this campus was shocked by the tragic accident caused by a man driving while impaired.

The sense of "community" that the university is so proud of was manifested through the immense outpouring of support by the student body.

However, where is that concern now? On President Thomas K. Hearn, Jr's invitation, Oct. 16, the university hosted an open forum to discuss ideas for strengthening the laws against DWI.

The panel guests included Governor Jim Hunt, Lt. Governor Dennis Wicker, the Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety, the head of North Carolina Highway Safety, representatives from MADD and SADD, as well as several others.

These distinguished panel members came to our university to discuss their ideas with each other and with our student body, on the assumption that we were interested in this issue. However, even though students were made aware of this event by a message on their voice mail, an extremely disappointing number of students were present.

The lack of support for this event seems to us to reflect an apathy in the student body toward an issue that should be of great importance to us all, especially now.

A lot of people on this campus have probably been personally affected by a DWI accident, if not this recent one, and now we should take the opportunity to do something about it.

During the discussion, Hunt invited all students to the North Carolina

Legislature in Raleigh to lobby for stricter laws involving repeat offenders. We hope that students will show more support for this issue, and concern for the safety of future lives than the turnout last week indicated.

Amelia Hummel
Jessica Lukas

Cultural divide

On the weekend of Oct. 11-13, the Student Government Executive Commission on Race Relations released its year-end report at the Presidents' Leadership Conference.

During the 1995-96 academic year, the commission compiled and evaluated information from the responses to a focus group study. The commission found some of the results and their implications to be quite alarming and disturbing.

Multiculturalism and race relations, as demonstrated by the discussion at the Presidents' Leadership Conference as well as in the findings of the Kuh and Montreat Reports, is a prevalent issue on campus.

The issue of the "good life" was also tied into our discussions at the leadership conference. From the perspective of the commission, the good life is within our grasps, however it is our racial and multicultural divisions that hinder us all from enjoying it.

One can grow so much by having an understanding of the experiences and history of another group or culture different from one's own.

As our university continues in its efforts to foster diversity, the community must take full advantage of that growing diversity. Diversity for the sake of diversity gets us nowhere.

The commission has accomplished its goal in helping to bring this issue to the forefront, however we have merely scratched the surface.

It is our hope that this will be an effort engaged from all spectrums of the community. For a copy of the report, please feel free to stop by the SG offices in Benson 304, or call Ext. 5293.

David Slade
SG Secretary,
Chairman of the Executive
Commission on Race Relations

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All letters to the editor must include the author's name and phone number, although anonymity in print may be requested. Submissions should be typewritten and double-spaced.

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