

Flag burning

Flag burning is heinous act, but a freedom we should have

The Senate approved a ban on burning or otherwise defacing the American flag Thursday, and this country won't be the same again.

The ban, previously approved by the House, cleared the Senate, 91-9. It was returned to the House for consideration of changes.

Key votes came on two GOP-sponsored changes in wording that Democrats said would skew careful phrasing that was designed to beat back expected court challenges to the bill's constitutionality.

Republican critics say the bill already is likely to fail such a court test. They call for a constitutional amendment as urged by President Bush after the Supreme Court in June overturned the criminal conviction on Texas flag-burner Gregory Lee Johnson on the ground his freedom of speech had been violated.

The skirmishing on the Senate floor, however, was between Democrats seeking to push their bill through and Republicans hoping to replace it with the proposed amendment. That measure comes up later this month.

The bill calls for up to a \$1,000 fine and year in jail for anyone who burns an American flag or defaces it in any one of several other ways.

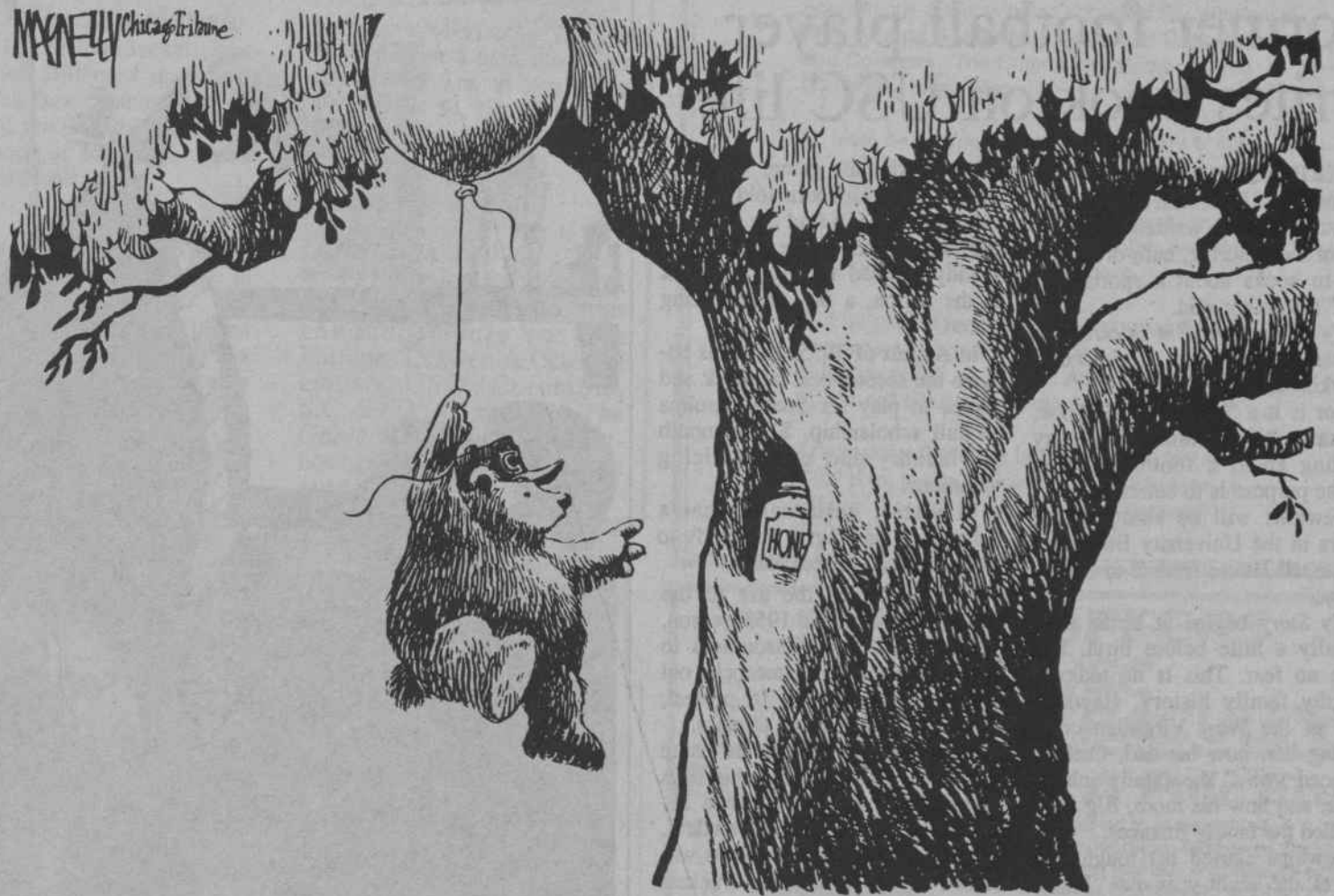
Conservative Republicans urge the amendment on grounds that it would settle the issue once and for all — it could not be challenged in court.

But an amendment is far too drastic a measure for this issue. A law is bad enough, but at least a law can be challenged everywhere. An amendment can't be so easily challenged.

It is true that burning the flag and defacing our national symbol is a heinous act worth contempt and scorn. But it is an act of expression no matter how it's viewed.

There should never be a law outlawing one's right to express himself. Hopefully this law will be struck down by the courts, but noting the record of the court in power right now, that could be a long shot. And that is too bad.

What could be the next mainstay of freedom to bite the legal dust?



Bush's credibility is lost with crack lie

As President George Bush sat there behind his desk last month and looked straight into the camera while holding a bag of crack cocaine, the country gasped. Every person in the nation saw that huge bag of "useless chemicals" and said to themselves, "Oh my god, the president is holding crack sold right out in front of the White House. This drug problem must really be awful."

It was an effective visual aid. Here is the president sitting in front of a television camera, with most of the country listening to every word to hear how he is going to attack this drug problem, and he holds out drugs for us to see. We believe what he is saying is a heartfelt appeal for the entire country to rally around his new drug plan. He wants us to believe in him and what he is doing.

And we did. We believed when he spouted off statistics and rhetoric. We believed him when he held the drug up to our scrutiny. We believed him when he said the crack had been obtained from a drug dealer right across the street. And we believed him that he was seriously attacking a serious problem with serious programs.

But he lied to us. He sat there and looked us

right in the face, smiled and lied through his teeth.

The crack was not just randomly picked up in the park across the street. The drug dealer did not just happen by. The drug deal was a set up so Bush could fit that little political nugget into his speech — for dramatic effect.

He lied. HE LIED.

Most of the country knows there is a tremendous problem with drugs in our society. Most know that indeed crack could probably be found within a few blocks of the White House, if not right across the street. But it is irritating, if not downright insulting, that our president, in an attempt to unify the parties under one common goal, felt he had to lie to make his point. We would have gotten the point anyway, but he and his speechwriters felt it was necessary to fabricate an ideal visual example of the problem.

On the large scale of the drug problem and the way Bush is handling it, the lie was a little one. It really didn't hurt us that much because we understand the intent of the effect he was going for. But for a president to sit there and boldly lie to the entire country about a problem we should be trying to be as honest and forthright about as we can, did great damage to his credibility.

Who is going to believe him now about anything? Will the country be now watching his news conferences waiting to catch him in another fib?

Maybe, maybe not.

But either way, the country will always have that in the back of its mind and will always be skeptical of anything he proposes.

Bush has hurt himself badly on this one.

It's one thing to say things you thought were correct and be wrong. People can understand that from their elected officials. They're human too.

But when one of them gets on the tube and outright distorts the truth, people are going to be offended. Did Bush think we're all too stupid to ever find out? Obviously so.

This kind of tactic is typical of Bush and his political hootenanny. They've been presenting this kind of staged political event since he ran for the Republican primary.

First, it was a flag in every shot, now it's crack from a bogus drug deal. What's next? A computer-generated picture of Gorbachev burning babies?

Bush didn't have to lie about this. He could have just held the crack aloft and told where it really came from, but he chose not to. He chose to go for the effect and damn the truth. Whether it was all his doing, or none of his doing, or all his staff's idea or just something they kicked around the office, it doesn't matter.

A trust has been compromised, and the country won't forget it.

He's really hurt himself and us by treating such a terrible problem with such awful judgment.

And how long will it be before anyone trusts his judgment again?



Jeff Shrewsbury



Letters to the editor

Writer's letter was personal

To the editor:
Ms. Simmons,

I feel it unnecessary to attack you personally in a public forum, as you seem to find it necessary to attack me. Please feel free to get in touch with me, and we can discuss your difficulties in a more private manner.

I never claimed that Marie-Louise Ramsdale "sold out." In fact, it may interest you to know that I am working with her in an effort to satisfy the different factions at USC. Also, what you have chosen to call complaining is actually students exploring all options of free expression, including university-approved protest.

A second point in your most recent letter explains that students who choose off-campus housing sign leases and forfeit certain privileges in the process. This is true. However, those policies are outlined pre-signing, not post-agreement. Your guests or private activities are not the concern of your landlord (unless those activities are damaging).

Your next argument is that each housing contract is totally independent. You are wrong. It is a standard issue contract outlining the obligations of both parties. These obligations are outlined in pre-signing. However, with regard to visitation, the contracts were changed AFTER signing. To paraphrase section 7 of the general housing contract: All changes to this contract will be held null and

void unless reduced to writing and signed by both parties. This was not done — the students' choice was removed without a student voice.

I will agree that most students were given an option. I fail to understand your logic that because a student did not agree with the housing contract but signed it, that "they as individuals sold out." These students simply chose the lesser of two evils, a home with high restrictions or becoming homeless.

Ms. Simmons, I do feel it appropriate to continue a lawsuit against the university at this time. I am not charging the university for any monetary value, or lawyers fees. In fact, my lawyers are supportive of my position and are offering their services pro-bono. The university's only expense will be its own defense. At an institution of this size, I feel quite sure that there is a legal staff that handles matters such as this. Your money is not going to bickering with undergraduates.

I will agree with you that tuition is high enough, and the university does need full funding. Housing went up 6 percent. To again paraphrase the contract: Housing costs will only go up 1.5 percent and no more than 2 percent only if the Federal Minimum Wage Law is increased. The conditions for increase were not met.

The dictation of morality is wrong. I am not engaging in slander, nor am I suing the innocent. Encouraging students not to sign the housing contract is an option, but it does not solve the problem.

Laurie Kay Snelson
English junior

USC thinking is backward

To the editor:

As a junior here at USC, I have experienced the good and bad judgments of Holderman, Fair and other decision makers at USC for three years. Consequently, I have finally decided EXACTLY what is wrong with this institution. It seems the ultra-conservative leaders of this state and the university refuse to let USC grow up into the major university that it is. No one of any authority has the guts to take the first step to do something that sheds national light on USC. USC will NEVER become THE USC as long as this small-town, backward, naive train of thought continues.

For a perfect example of what I am writing about, look at the absolutely sacred opportunity the university could have had if the Rolling Stones had performed in Williams-Brice Stadium, one of the largest stadiums in the Southeast. Mr. King Dixon and his decision making staff made a crucial blunder, and a selfish decision, by denying the use of the stadium to the Stones.

This concert, were it to have occurred, would have brought millions of dollars in revenue to the university, and to the entire Columbia metropolitan area, money this area will never know because decision makers in cities like Charlotte, Raleigh and Atlanta are smart enough to seize an excellent opportunity. So long as USC remains passive and ignorant to this fact, USC and Columbia will re-

main a nothing. Gee, maybe after a few concerts, USC would have enough money to better the parking situation, or buy a new computer, or go a year without a tuition hike. Wouldn't that be nice?

Why was this decision made? Perhaps old blood and guts Dixon thinks only football should be played in football stadiums. Giant Stadium? RFK? L.A. Coliseum? Hoosierdome? Measly Carter-Finley Stadium? ...? I saw the Stones at RFK stadium in Washington, D.C., last week. The security force was minimal, and in fact was never even needed. What's more, I am quite certain that the Redskins will be able to play there next week.

Perhaps officials are understandably reluctant to hold a concert as immense as the Stones' tour for the maiden performance in the stadium. But what excuse will officials use when they turn down another smaller show?

Columbia and USC stand on the verge of being propelled into a multi-million dollar concert market, and unless someone takes the initiative to allow something like this to come to USC, Columbia and the university will continue to play subservient roles to the likes of Charlotte, Raleigh (N.C. State), Durham (Duke and UNC) and Atlanta (Georgia Tech).

The naive, the backward thinking, and the small town attitudes of USC's decision makers must change. Students, local residents and Columbia merchants are all being deprived of an outstanding opportunity.

It's time for Columbia and USC to really DO something!

Scott Saunders
Public relations junior

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