

VIEWPOINT

Scandal

Lawmakers' check bouncing reinforces public cynicism

It's no wonder our country is billions of dollars in debt. Our lawmakers can't even balance their own checkbooks.

A lot of information is coming out in a very helter-skelter manner about what some are calling "Rubbergate." It's a scandal in which hundreds of federal lawmakers, past and present, overdrew their personal checking accounts in the House of Representatives Bank up to 700 or 800 times over the course of many years.

What to think about this?

Some representatives say it was carelessness, some say it was a bad banking system, others say it was plain wrong.

All of the above.

And of course, the Republicans and Democrats are politicking and blaming each other. How typical.

Positive aspects of Rubbergate are that we found out about it, which is a tribute to our somewhat open system of government, and that the House banking system will be overhauled.

There are obvious negative aspects. Public cynicism about government justifiably sinks deeper, and heads spin as people try to think of a way to achieve honest government.

Rubbergate is a stinging slap in the face to us. The underlying message says, 'Because we have power, we don't have to play by the rules.'

The average person would be imprisoned for committing a similar offense.

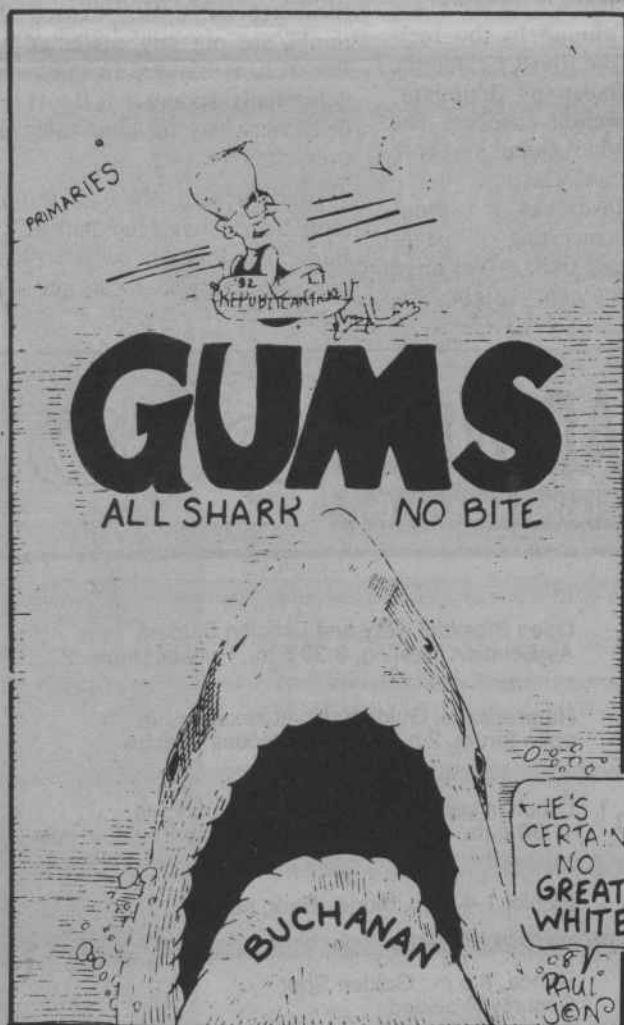
Some representatives wrote huge checks for cash knowing that the bank would cover them. That amounts to interest-free loans and is quite likely a violation of United States tax laws.

News reports are circulating that the Internal Revenue Service will investigate those who did so. The IRS should investigate and prosecute if any laws were broken.

But when we sit on the couch staring blankly into the television screen in disillusionment wondering how, what we can do, there is one thing to consider.

Depending on how you view people in specific and government in general, consider that perhaps, and unfortunately, it's a constant fight. That power corrupts, and it's our job to check the power, fight the power. People are people and occasionally, or often, they do the wrong thing.

And when we find out, consider it not another sign of a corrupt system, but another sign that our system is working the way it should.



USC VOICES

Question: How would you feel if your roommate told you he or she was homosexual?



Ashley Duncan
English major
"I don't think he would, but if he did tell me, I would have to treat him the same because I do not want to be a bigot."



Sherry Hays
Journalism major
"Initially it might make me uncomfortable, but if it is my friend, then I would get over it and get on with my life. I would still be friends with her, too."



Chris Duncan
Graphic Design major
"I have absolutely no problem with that because it is their business, and it is their life. There is nothing wrong with homosexuality."



Avery Weaver
History major
"I'd be surprised, but I couldn't hold it against him. It is his decision to make, and I'd support him through it."

Cross Fire

Expansion shows disrespect

\$17.5 million. That's how much our university wants to spend to expand Williams-Brice Stadium. \$17.5 million for a stadium, not for you. Not for me. Not for our professors.

\$17.5 million for a football stadium. All of it. And how much will go for academic programs? Not a single dime.

Is it just me or is the center of this university shifting from the Horseshoe to the stadium? Something's wrong. Something's dead wrong.

This is a university for the students and by the students, not for and by the football team. Lord knows if they judged universities by the football team, we'd be one of the worst.

But they don't. They judge it by the quality of students. So, is it fair to disregard the academic quality of this institution? Absolutely not.

It's time to stand up to King Dixon and tell him this school is not run by the athletic department. It's time to tell him he is not the ruler of this university and that we, the students are. After all, our tuition does help to pay for the food on his table. It's time for him to listen to us. It's time he considered this school a place of learning and not a training ground for jocks.

Sure, expanding the stadium does mean money for us. But, let's at least show where our priorities are. President John Palms has said we can't cut any more and that we're operating at minimal funds.

So what happens? We propose spending \$17.5 million for the stadium. I have a bright idea! Let's use some of that money for academic services! Or would that be too much for us to comprehend?

What good is a university if its academic programs are hurting? What good is a university if the only good thing it can show is a wonderful football stadium?

That's the question we have to answer. That's the question we have to pound into the heads of the administration.

USC has shown its students and faculty disrespect. It has said it doesn't give a rat's ass about the students and that the only important thing is having a huge stadium generating a lot of money.

So, what gives? Does USC care more about money or its students? The answer's quite obvious. Why don't we ask King Dixon and the Board of Trustees who they really care about.

—Tige Watts
Tige Watts is Managing Editor for The Gamecock.

Stadium addition helpful

Imagine a sunny Saturday at Williams-Brice Stadium. The Gamecocks are playing Georgia. South Carolina is the three point underdog. Now you tell me, would 84,550 screaming Gamecock fans be better than 72,400?

Of course more fans would be better. The proposal for expansion at Williams-Brice would benefit not only the university but also the city of Columbia in many ways.

First of all, as most people know, the Gamecocks are now members of the Southeastern Conference. This is a big change from the football that this university has grown accustomed to. In the SEC, visiting teams actually bring fans, loads of them. Georgia and Tennessee have already told South Carolina Athletic Director King Dixon they want 10,000 to 12,000 tickets.

A problem arises here. With the current seating, only 11,457 seats remain after the allotment to students, season-ticket holders, faculty and staff. If schools like Georgia and Tennessee want 12,000 tickets, what tickets will be available to the general public?

Another advantage to expanding Williams-Brice is the money that will pour into the university. Revenue from suites and skyboxes to be constructed from 1994 to 1997 are estimated at \$1.1 million a year. Admission fees and South Carolina's share of SEC revenues will bring \$800,000 to \$950,000 each year. This will pay off the expenses for the construction in a few years, and by 2001, the money will stay with the university.

Columbia will be aided by the expansion too. As long as there are seats for visiting SEC fans, they are going to need a place to stay. The fans also will be spending their bucks at local restaurants and other places of entertainment in Columbia.

One final reason to add seats is because the orange clad bums from the northern part of this state have a stadium with 81,473 seats. With the estimated 84,550 seats, South Carolina will be a step ahead of Clemson.

—Sean Ryan
Sean Ryan is Assistant Sports Editor for The Gamecock.

If you have an issue or question you would like to see addressed in Cross Fire or USC Voices, please drop it in a Suggestion Box or Call The Gamecock Newsroom at 777-7726.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Athletics setting image for USC

To the editor:

Here we go again. USC is once again demonstrating to its students and to the state that the priority in South Carolina is not on higher education, but higher entertainment. All of a sudden we need to spend \$17.5 million on more seating at Williams-Brice Stadium so our SEC partners will have enough places to sit. The administration at this institution might as well give up the charade of being a university and just join the NFL!

We aren't here to play football or exercise; we are here to get an education. While I realize that athletics are a big part of university life, they are not why universities were started in the first place, and they should not become the focus of this or any other school.

A recurring theme of the administration is the desire to see more talented in-state high school graduates stay in South Carolina and come to USC. I'll

tell you plain and simple what the problem is, and how to fix it. USC is seen as a sports school. The perception is that the amount spent on sports far outweighs that spent on education. For this reason, talented high school students look elsewhere to universities which do spend the money on education, because the students feel they will get a better return on their investment if they go there. And who can blame them? Who blames them for taking scholarships that are given to them by better institutions? I certainly don't.

Some time back there was an article about the computer labs in the Humanities and Social Sciences Department. Come over to LeConte and check out the Computer Science labs some time. Of 16 computers in one lab there, four are broken bad enough that they can't be used. They are all wearing signs saying that there are no funds for repair. The others have a bare minimum of software installed on them, and most of that is virus infested and causes the system to crash if you try to use it. Now take a trip over to the Biology

Department. Ask them how their microscopes are holding up. I'll bet they could use some new ones. In fact, I'll bet \$17.5 million that if they were asked, the faculty at this school could come up with ways to spend that money on equipment for education in less than one week.

The Athletic Department should not be setting the image of USC to the public. They are a part of this university, and should play the game with the rest of the team.

Doug Hellmann
Computer Science junior
Robert Park
Computer Science senior

Housing hike inevitable

To the editor:

I told you so!
Back in February, I wrote a letter to the editor which was critical for presi-

dent Palms' decision to buy the Carolina Plaza Hotel with student housing money, money which should have been used to improve the living standards of the Carolina community. We were promised that no tuition hike would be needed to pay for the purchase. NOT!

Just one month later, it was announced that students living on campus would have to pay an extra \$38 per semester for dormitory improvements.

Wake up, boys and girls! YOUR money was spent so that overpaid administrators could have skyline views and private bathrooms. As you swelter in your rooms this spring and next fall, take comfort in the fact that your administrators are doing their work in air-conditioned comfort. One final thought

— where was our student government during the time the housing hike was being contemplated? Oh, I forgot, they were very busy putting up re-election signs up all over campus.

John W. Griffiths
History graduate student

B-GLAD week fights prejudice

- Shelley Magee

Look around you. Are you sitting in a class, in the Grand Marketplace, in the lobby of your dorm?

It doesn't matter where you are because it's the same everywhere.

One in 10 people are gay.

They don't wear signs on their foreheads. They don't look funny. They look just like you. And there's a really good reason for that. Because they are just like you.

They are people.

They may be black or white, Asian or Hispanic, male or female, attractive or plain, outgoing or shy. To quote a slogan, love does not discriminate.

But people do.

Every one of us is the member of some minority. Whether it is our ethnicity or the fact that we like anchovies on our pizza, there is something about every one of us that is different. And that's what makes us individuals.

It's what makes people worth knowing.

Being gay or bisexual is not a disease. It is not something you just wake up one day and decide might be a nice change. It is what you are. It is as much a part of a person's being as skin color or a sense of humor.

You can't change it. If you ignore it, it won't go away. It's part of you, and denying it only succeeds in creating an unhappy person who isn't honest about his or her own identity.

You have gay or bisexual friends. Every one of you does. You just may not know it. You like them for who they are, because they make you laugh, or maybe because they always listen. But because you couldn't deal with a homosexual friend, they hide that from you. Because of hatred and homophobia.

You teach them to hate themselves. And it's wrong.

You're wrong.

Everyone of you who crosses the street because you see the Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Association have a table set up in front of the Russell House. Everyone of you who wouldn't wear a shirt supporting gay rights because someone might think you're "one of them." Everyone of you who sits and listens to someone tell a hateful joke, but doesn't stand up and say "that's wrong" because you're afraid of what your friends might think.

You're all wrong.

B-GLAD week is trying to make it right. This is an effort to eliminate prejudice and eradicate homophobia. It's just another step towards breaking down bigotry. If you believe in equality among men, support it.

Don't let hatred make a slave of you. The only way to overcome is to endure, and if we don't stand up and fight, there's no way we can win the battle. Apathy is advocacy.

A world in which people must be afraid to face themselves is a world we must change.

Homosexuality is about love. Hate is the opposite of love. Let's keep them separate.

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