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Editorial Board

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Put vegetable libel out to pasture

Did you just say you didn't like broccoli? You're under arrest, buddy.

Actually, you can't be arrested for saying bad things about your veggies...yet.

Unfortunately, that might change as South Carolina's Legislature debates a vegetable libel bill that would make criticizing the state's crops illegal. That means people commenting in newspapers and on television would be subject to fines if they suggested all was not right in the pumpkin patch.

The bill is motivated by farmers who see "veggie libel" as a threat to markets for the goods they produce. They often point to the Washington state apple crisis of several years ago, when media reported the chemical Alar contaminated apples. Sales of Washington apples plummeted and took about two years to recover, though the claims of contamination were never substantiated.

It makes sense that farmers would want some kind of restriction on comment about their products; it appears to them that a few unkind words will ruin sales and put them at quite an economic disadvantage.

The American right to freely comment and criticize, however, outweighs the potential threat to vegetable profits. If every industry could regulate through libel laws what people say about products, we might never find out about products that are poorly constructed, falsely advertised or potentially dangerous. Just because farmers are often characterized as the lifeblood of this country doesn't mean they are free from criticism.

If insecticides are injuring us, if vegetables are contaminated, if crops aren't edible, the public should know. Of course, the press is responsible for proving claims that certain crops should not be distributed or that a danger exists; no respectable journalist is going to perpetuate unbased rumors and villainize farmers for the purpose of selling a few newspapers. To punish someone for promoting caution in choosing products is ridiculous. To make laws protecting vegetables from criticism is ludicrous.

Generation X isn't lazy, unmotivated



BYRON JAMES
Columnist

Is Generation X lazy or just unmotivated? On the way back from Charleston, a friend and I had this discussion about our age group. Dave argued that most of us were lazy and didn't work hard enough. I argued that, just like any age group, there will be a wide range of personalities: hard drivers, lazy, motivated and cynical.

I believe Gen X is given such a bad reputation because we tend to be more adventurous and daring. We bungee jump, streak and pierce anything not tied down. We like rap music, raves and the TV show "The Grind" — well, that's just me.

I don't think you can generalize or label a group by a few outrageous 20-somethings. We like to party and have fun, but we are serious about the causes we support. For instance, we are more environmentally and socially conscious than our money-grubbing baby boomer predecessors.

Some Gen Xers are inventive and seek to rebuild America through programs like City Year and AmeriCorps. Those programs were started by and for the members of our generation. We are also preparing for bright and successful careers. The law schools of Virginia, Georgetown, Duke and Emory will be sprinkled with USC Gen Xers who want to sit on the Supreme Court, head the EPA and even occupy the White House. If these people are lazy and unmotivated, I want to see the successful examples.

Dave also argued that we watch too much television and don't read enough. I call bull on

that argument. Sixty percent of my peers grew up as latch-key kids, and the television became our babysitters. Many afternoons, "Superstation Funtime" was my after-school entertainment. With the advent of MTV and ESPN, there was no need to read Alice Walker or Maya Angelou because there was "Downtown" Julie Brown. But I read Walker and Angelou anyway. It's easier to watch an image than to create one after reading a book. It's hard to break a habit that is so ingrained in your environment and culture.

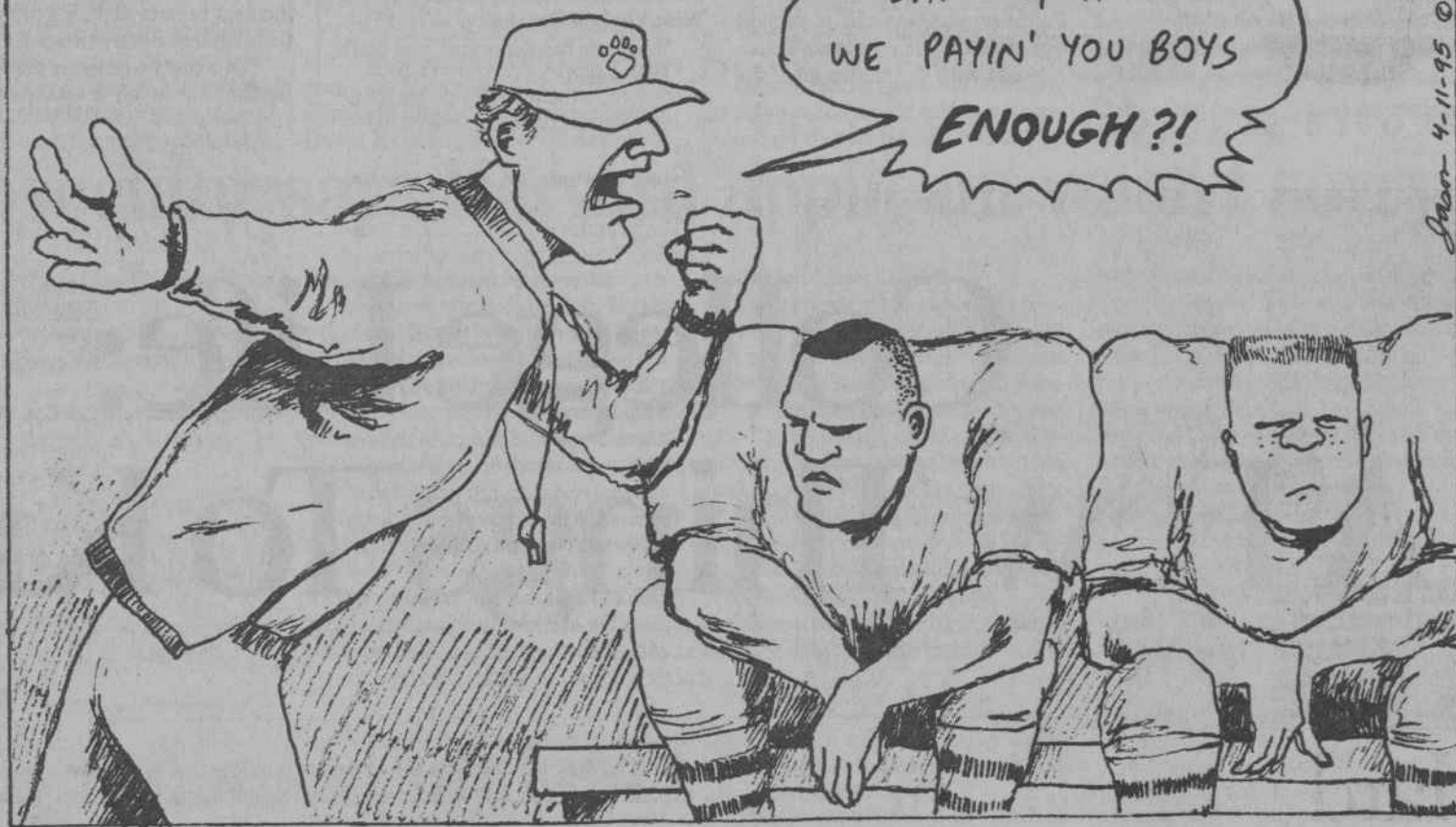
The baby boomers like to talk about how politically unconscious the Gen Xers are, but I would rather be unconscious than guided by the racism, sexism and classism that laws and policies have been laced with over the last 40 years.

We are a generation that read about Watergate and lived through Iran-Contra and the greed and stupidity of the Reagan years. No wonder we don't care or trust the government — what has the government done to gain our trust? Gen Xers seek a government that is representative and responsive to all the people of the United States.

Our generation is more diverse and racially tolerant than the baby boomers, and we seek to heal the wounds of a racially intolerant past. Gen Xers refuse to be categorized in terms of time tables for success. We don't lock ourselves in being "this" by age 25. We want to live life and enjoy every minute of it — I sure have. At the end of the debate, Dave thought Gen X was lazy and unmotivated, and I told him to shut up and drive because I wanted to get home to see "The Grind."

Byron James is a political science senior.

FALLOUT FROM THE ROBBERY...



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QUOTEUNQUOTE

"The fact that people spoke out against bigotry, the fact that people spoke for tolerance, the sheer diversity of the speakers and participants is really a relief to see."

BGLA member Christa Tumell

Anti-violence rally exploited women's pain

Event excuse for NOW to bash Republican policy



PAT MCNEILL
Columnist

Here at the Mean-Spirited, Smug, Intolerant, Right-Wing Division of The Gamecock editorial page, we spend countless hours searching for stupid people to make fun of in this column. This week, we were aided in our efforts by the good folks at the C-Span cable network (motto: "You don't need a doctor's prescription to get a good night's sleep.")

Sunday afternoon, C-Span broadcast live coverage of the "Stop Violence Against Women" rally from the Mall in Washington. You might be asking yourself, "Pat, what on earth is funny about violence against women?" There is NOTHING remotely amusing about violence directed at women. This rally, however, was sponsored by our good friends at the Nutty, Out-of-Touch, National Organization of Women (NOT-NOW), and whenever Patricia Ireland's gang is involved, you know there will be some hilarious hijinks going on.

The day's program was designed to protest violence against women in America. According to NOT-NOW, what is the primary cause of violence against women?

- a. Rapists, murderers, abusive boyfriends and

other scum masquerading as men.

b. The lack of attention paid by law enforcement to domestic violence and abusive relationships.

c. The continued positive media attention given to women-beaters such as John Wayne Bobbitt, Jeff Stone Gilooly, the late Kurt "Cocaine-Brain" Cobain, Axl Rose, O.J. Simpson and Mike Tyson.

d. The steady mass-media diet of misogynist rap and music videos, gory Oscar-nominated films, soft-core pornography and trashy television shows where women are treated primarily as sex objects.

e. Newt Gingrich and the Republicans' "Contract with America."

Needless to say, if you picked "e," you, too, could have been a guest speaker at the NOT-NOW rally Sunday. In fact, I heard at least two news reports explain the rally was designed to stop the "anti-woman agenda of the 'Contract with America.'" The afternoon's final speaker, one Jackson Katz, told the thinning crowd that the problem is "not just batterers and rapists who are in prison or are in treatment programs. It's the men in this building right here. (Points to-

ward the U.S. Capitol.) The Newt Gingrichs, the Dick Armeys (pause for tasteless "Dick" joke), and the Rush Limbaughs of the world...we as men need to call attention to how ridiculous some of these men are."

After hearing this excellent summation of the issue, I have decided to agree with Mr. Katz that the solution to violence against women should begin on Capitol Hill. I am therefore recommending that any members of the Columbia chapter of NOW should purchase a copy of "Senatorial Privilege: The Chappaquiddick Cover-up" by Leo Demore, which details how one evil, rich, white male Senator left a beautiful young female aide to die rather than risk sully his public image. Knock yourselves out, people.

I am sure that many readers have friends or relatives who have been the victims of rape, sexual assault or some form of abusive relationship. These are traumatic experiences that some people never recover from. The women who have to deal with these problems are real people with real emotions. They need love, understanding and support. If NOW had thought things through, perhaps it would not have exploited the women's pain for the sake of stopping a balanced-budget amendment.

Pat McNeill is a third-year law student.

Social Security sacred cow that needs reform



RYAN WILSON
Sports Editor

In today's society, we are becoming inundated with Newt and the boys' cries for less government. That's all you hear coming out of the mouth of Georgia's finest. One of ol' Newt's targets is something that many politicians have tried to attack before because they use the negative connotations of society to drive their attack. That's right, I'm talking about the welfare system.

Before you stop reading this because you agree with Mr. Gingrich, I would like to give you some facts about welfare and also suggest something else that even takes more of our tax dollars every year. If you doubt the figures, check Donald Kettl's book "Deficit Politics" or talk with Professor Shirley Geiger in the political science department. I would suggest doing both because you would be amazed at the facts and appalled by the lies our Republican Congress is telling us.

Many past attacks on the welfare system have been focused on the black community's abuse of the system.

Well, contrary to this popular belief, the majority of people on welfare are white.

Most people also believe that welfare spending takes up a large part of the federal budget. Yeah, it takes up a huge 1 percent of the budget. That's right, just 1 percent, Mr. Gingrich.

About 34 million to 35 million people receive the benefits of welfare, and in 1992, 14.5 percent of families were below the poverty line.

South Carolina would lose over \$4 billion if welfare is cut. Trust me, these proposed cuts will affect everyone.

Where will Mr. Beasley come up with \$4 billion? Anyone? Anyone? That's a four with nine zeros after it.

Did you know that the fastest growing group in poverty is the two-parent household?

That's families with two people working to support them — now tell me how many people are affected by that, Mr. Gingrich?

Poverty among children has doubled in the last five years. Where is all this money going, you ask?

Well, to give you a hint, in 1986, \$200 billion was cut from youth welfare programs and given to Social Security.

Whoa, calm down, Bossy, I haven't killed you just yet, but I have found the reason for some of our spending woes, the "Sacred Cow" of politics: the Social Security system.

Did you know this entitlement system takes up 45 percent of all domestic spending? You would think this 45 percent would be going to a large part of the population, but it's not.

The 45 percent goes to a mere 12 percent of the population of the United States, or, in other words, the elderly.

I not saying the elderly do not deserve some kind of stipend after they retire, but the elderly are among the fastest growing segments of the population, and they already take almost half of all domestic spending.

Something must change. I have pretty much resigned myself to the fact that there won't be any Social Security for me when I am old enough to collect it.

Because the elderly of today are receiving money they have not earned.

It takes the average retired married couple (retiring at 65) 11 years, 7 months to spend all the money it has put into Social Security.

This wouldn't be a problem, but on average, today's life expectancy for males is 79, with women living, on average, five years longer at 84.

So if you take a rough average, most elderly

get 5.5 years worth of money they haven't earned and won't pay taxes on when they get it.

I hope these facts don't escape us when it comes to the '96 elections.

It is clear that welfare isn't the big problem it is made out to be. Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, must soon address its "Sacred Cow" before we are all led to the slaughter.

Ryan Wilson is a political science junior.

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The Gamecock reserves the right to edit all letters for style, possible libel or space limitations. Names will not be withheld under any circumstances.

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