

Columnists Rob Gioelli and Emily Streyer will be back with their second installments of columns, giving their opinions and insights.

"Living off campus, this helps you see what types of organizations are available to students."

Leah Pennington, junior

VIEWPOINTS

Wednesday September 2, 1998

The Gamecock

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The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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TAKE OUR WORD

Business pokes nose into politics

Collins Entertainment Corporation wants you to "Ban Beasley," as you have probably gathered from their billboards and radio advertisements. What you may not have gathered is the reasoning behind these statements.

The billboards emphasize South Carolina's poor education records and suggest that those records are somehow Beasley's fault. Our test scores have been low for generations, and one gubernatorial administration cannot be expected to change that.

Collins doesn't care about the specifics, though. Their stake in this issue is predictable and entirely financial: they are South Carolina's largest distributor of video poker machines, which Beasley and his Republican Party would like to ban.

To save their profitable business, they are pretending to be concerned about our state. Whether you support video poker, you should feel insulted that Collins is trying to manipulate you with their intellectually dishonest ads.

Unfortunately, ads such as these are not the only ways that business interferes with politics. Other video poker groups are bankrolling Democratic Party cam-

TOPIC
Collins Entertainment, anti-Beasley billboards.

OUR OPINION
There should be a separation of business and politics.

aigns, including that of Beasley's challenger Jim Hodges. Not surprisingly, the Democratic Party, which in other situations attempts to protect citizens from their own mistakes, is supportive of video poker.

We feel that it is a shame that business interests can affect the positions of politicians, who are entrusted with making decisions for the common good. Perhaps we are hopelessly idealistic, but we long for a system in which each lawmaker votes on each issue according to the dictates of conscience rather than those of his or her campaign cof-

fers. Many Americans are concerned—almost obsessed—with the separation of church and state. They feel that the First Amendment not only protects our right to worship as we choose, but it also protects the state from the interference of matters of faith.

We should also concern ourselves with protecting the state from business and other special interests.

There should be real, radical campaign finance laws that address this concern. We need a separation of business and government. Maybe then, we could trust the motives of political advertising.



Student body president discusses plans

I want to take this chance to welcome you all back, and I hope that everyone is excited about starting a new year! The fall semester is always a busy time filled with football games, classes and new opportunities to get involved on campus.



KIM DICKERSON
columnist

Student Government is a great place to begin your involvement. One of the easiest ways is to become a member of a University Committee. The committees are comprised of students, faculty and staff, and they deal with such issues as parking, safety and dining. If

you have ideas or concerns that relate to any of these, this would be the best way to make your voice heard.

In addition to our efforts on campus, Student Government is also trying to create an avenue for student's voices to be heard outside of our University. We will be holding a voter registration drive on Greene Street on September 29 and 30. If you are a resident of the state of South Carolina, please come by so that you will be able to vote in the state elections this year. As the future leaders of this state, we need to exercise our right to vote.

Student Government is also working on several other projects in September. One of these is serving as the host for the SEC Student Government Conference. Student representatives from each of the twelve schools, will convene on the USC campus in order to discuss issues that face our institutions. We are honored to have been cho-

"Along with all of the programs and events we have planned, our main goal for this year is to make the University of South Carolina a better place."

sen to serve as the host, so that they too can get a taste of true Carolina pride.

Another popular program that Student Government sponsors is block-seating for the USC football games. Any group of ten or more students is invited to blockseat for any home football game. Lastly, Freshman Council is now being selected through an application and represent the Class of 2002, and participate in the day to day activities in Student Government.

Along with all of the programs and events we have planned, our main goal

for this year is to make the University of South Carolina a better place. In order to accomplish this, we must have input from everyone including faculty, staff, and students. We must not only voice our concerns, but we must take action if our ideas are to be put into motion. I would like to encourage everyone to use Student Government as a means of getting involved and making a difference on your campus. Please feel free to come by Student Government anytime, we are located on the first floor of the Russell House.

Image is everything

Image. It seems to be important to a large number of people. It gives a passerby a generally specific idea about what you may be like or what kind of person you may be.

Thinking of Columbia can easily conjure images of concrete and train tracks. But the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau seem to think this image can be expanded.

A \$15 million marketing plan to help promote the area is currently underway, according to an article in the Aug. 19 issue of The State.

But right now, Columbia's image, no matter which way you think about it, is USC.

This university is the pulse of this town. Its 26,000 students inundate the economy with steady cash floods, create the "scene" at

TOPIC
Leaders are trying to revitalize city's image.

OUR OPINION
USC should be the center point of their support.

places such as Five Points and the Vista, and keep this place on its toes, catering to specific needs.

And with sporting events, Columbia is the focal point of a majority of the state by viewers and visitors Saturday afternoons during the fall with Gamecock home football games. The spring is not much different with the basketball team.

Cultural events are courtesy of the university as well. And the university seems to provide endless community service with groups like Carolina For Kids.

And a final tidbit that proves USC is Columbia's image is the fact that USC owns 40 percent of the land in Columbia, according to the city manager.

USC is Columbia's image. USC is Columbia.

Internet access loses touch with real world

Only connect," wrote E.M. Forster in "Howard's End."

We're connecting, all right, but likely in a way of which Forster would disapprove. We're connecting via modem, communicating anonymously, and many of us think we enjoy it.

I'm not sure why. I guess it's easier to connect with people we'll never meet. Their distance makes them safe.

They can never hurt us, never challenge us because we can always log off and never hear from them again. (And we certainly don't have to worry that they'll run off with our umbrellas, resulting in unpleasant face-to-face encounters.)

At any rate, I've finally gotten some data to back up my general displeasure with our latest collective fetish. The New York Times reports that a study at Carnegie Mellon University has shown that Internet use makes people more depressed and lonely.

Yes, it's actually causal. Pre-existing depression did not increase the amount of time spent on the Internet.

According to the study, "(the subjects) reported a decline in interaction with family members and a reduction in their circles of friends that directly corresponded to the amount of time they spent on-line."

Mary Pipher, author of "The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families," could have predicted the results of the Carnegie Mellon study. She warns that we are living in an "electronic village."

That is, many of us are living in a world in which media, such as TV and the Internet, have severely reduced ties with real people and thus, with the real world. This is particularly true of children who have been "babysat" by television. She quotes Bill Moyers: "Our children are being raised by appliances."

There are at least two major problems with living in an electronic village: 1) it does not help maintain real social ties, and is probably detrimental to that endeavor, and 2) the actual village itself reprograms our thought processes in an unhelpful fashion.

Pipher feels the first issue is one of reciprocity—or the lack thereof. She points out that, while we "know" celebrities better than we know our neighbors these days, "Tom Hanks won't scoop the snow off your driveway when you have the flu." Yet, we watch Hanks on "Oprah" instead of inviting our neighbors over for tea. We feel like we've got these connections with people whose faces we see plastered about, so we don't

"That is, many of us are living in a world in which media, such as TV and the Internet, have severely reduced ties with real people and...with the real world."

invest in building relationships with our families and communities.

The second problem is the reason Pipher calls our country the United States of Advertising. Advertising is necessary to finance the media we consume, so we get it aplenty. The point of any advertisement is to convince us of two things: first, that there is some hole in our lives that needs filling, and second, that a certain product will fit that hole nicely. We've bought that message, and it has (there's no better way to put this) screwed us up.

It makes us think that we are the center of the universe, because it makes us think in terms of satisfying our most inconsequential wants. Only the strongest minds resist such messages when heard constantly, every day. It's conditioning, as in "Brave New World," but even more pervasive, and it has changed our priorities and values as a culture. Very few reject the message and find a definition for themselves outside of their own consumption habits. I know that scares me, and I hope it disturbs you as well.

A slightly related idea of Pipher's could be applied to correct this problem. She emphasizes the importance of enemies; that is, when there is a known enemy threatening survival, people forget petty concerns and work together to fight that threat.

Families only start getting angry over shallower issues "in times of plenty and relative security." Right now, we're feeling pretty secure, so we don't worry about what is happening to our society of electronic villagers.

I think we should identify the effects of the above-mentioned (and other) media as the enemy and fight it with weapons that will help make our true connections stronger.

These weapons include evenings spent playing board games with loved ones, reading to children, walks through parks and anything else that can encourage real conversation and bonding among real human beings. Use them, and we'll win a war for the ownership of our minds, our allegiances, and our time.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Column not journalistic, humorous

To the editor:
I am disappointed to see that Jane Frederick has turned her campaign for Congress into what a good campaign should never be—a character assassination. At her recent press conference, Frederick stated that Congressman Floyd Spence is out of touch with the needs of his constituents. She claims

that the fact that he surrounds himself with the likes of beauty queens, cheerleaders and football heroes is proof. However, in her attempt to discredit Congressman Spence, she has discriminated against anyone who has ever worn a crown, a cheerleading skirt or a football jersey.

In my eyes, Congressman Spence is the epitome of a true southern gentleman. The presence of beauty queens, cheerleaders and football heroes at his campaign rallies, parades and other political functions lend to this image. In

this day and age, we have seen beauty queens go on to become spokespersons for many important issues, such as the former Miss America who has spoken out about being a victim of incest. From my own experience, I have seen cheerleaders and football players who take active leadership roles both on and off the field. So I must ask Jane Frederick, "Why are you labeling these people as one dimensional characters?"

It is time to get back to the real issues. A congressman, like all political

figures, should serve people from all walks of life. This includes beauty queens, cheerleaders and football heroes as well. This campaign should not be centered on a character debate, rather, it should focus on which candidate is best suited to carry out the job of a true representative.

Tiffany M. Burkett
Wofford Student
West Columbia resident

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The Gamecock is the student newspaper of The University of South Carolina and is published Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the fall and spring semesters and five times during the summer with the exception of university holidays and exam periods. Opinions expressed in The Gamecock are those of the editors or author and not those of The University of South Carolina. The Board of Student Publications and Communications is the publisher of The Gamecock. The Department of Student Media is the newspaper's parent organization.

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