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Viewpoints

QUOTE, UNQUOTE
"We're disappointed; [we'd] like to serve all our constituents."
Jim Byrnes, director, Transition Year program

The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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TAKE OUR WORD

Hate crime laws raise new issues

During the past six months, we have witnessed some of the most brutal hate crimes in recent memory.

This has led to a sudden push for expanded state and national hate-crime legislation. A new bill in Congress, Hate Crimes Prevention Act, would add gender, sexuality and disability to federal hate-crime laws. And while it's encouraging to see many of our governing bodies finally recognize sexual orientation as a motive for discrimination, the desire for more hate-crime laws raises questions about their validity in the first place.

Unlike other anti-discrimination statutes, which guarantee a person's basic rights in areas like employment and voting, hate-crime laws are meant as a deterrent, to protect people from crimes based on discrimination.

One of the main problems with this type of legislation, though, is that even though these crimes might have been motivated by

TOPIC

The proposed expansion of hate-crime legislation.

OUR OPINION

Laws should punish people for their actions, not their thoughts.

hate toward a certain group, they are still punishable by law. The murder of James Byrd Jr. was racially motivated, making it especially abhorrent. But killing a man by dragging him behind a pickup truck is still considered

homicide, no matter what the circumstances.

Hate-crime laws seem to be an attempt to punish people for the motive as well as the crime. But in a country that embraces freedom of speech, we should only be able to punish people for their deeds, not their thoughts.

No matter how disgusting the deed might be, hate is not a crime. This is why the Ku Klux Klan has the right to advertise on the Internet.

At the end of this century, hate and intolerance might be two of the biggest problems our country faces, but there's only so much the government can do. You cannot legislate morality, you can only encourage people to treat each other with decency.

Regulation answer to right-to-die issue

Does a person have a right to die? A Michigan court said "no" last week when it convicted Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Death, of murder.

Kevorkian, who has been tried three times prior, taped the death of his patient, Tom Youk. During the trial, reports said Kevorkian made available the tape of the death and of an interview with Youk to finally force the state to make a decision regarding physician-assisted suicide. Thirty-six states so far have ruled it illegal.

Though we do not necessarily condone suicide, no matter the reason, people nonetheless have the right to make decisions regarding their own lives. Although Kevorkian illegally obtained the poisons used to kill Youk, Youk still died in a humane and non-painful way, and the government should respect the desires of the terminally ill to die in such a manner.

However, the legalization of assisted suicide could lead to its getting out of hand.

TOPIC

Michigan is the latest state to rule assisted suicide illegal.

OUR OPINION

Assisted suicide should be legal, but it needs to be regulated.

Just as there are licensing procedures for other physicians, there should be similar ones for physicians who assist their patients' deaths.

The government and medical community can oversee chosen deaths by first requiring long-term counseling to determine if the patient is of sound mind and by detailing procedural considerations, such as drugs and methods.

These sanctions will not only protect the patient, but the physician, as well. If physician-assisted suicide is going to be legal, which it should be, there need to be regulations.

Unlicensed doctors like Kevorkian should not be able to take someone's life in their hands. But nonetheless, physicians should be allowed to ease pain permanently when circumstances allow it. For these circumstances, there should be regulation.

There is an answer to preserving the sanctity of human life and protecting people's right to die: regulation.



Easy ways to blow Bill Gates' fortune

Being one of the student body's leading intellectuals, I often set aside time just to think about complex problems and issues.

A couple of weeks ago, I happened to be pondering what it would be like to be rich. Not affluent, not wealthy, but rich. Really, really rich. Specifically, Bill Gates rich.

Believe it or not, trying to conceive what it would be like to be as rich as Bill Gates poses some problems. Current estimates place the Gates fortune at \$56 billion. At a time when movies like "Titanic" gross \$800 million, the International Monetary Fund bails out small countries with billion-dollar loans and the national debt is somewhere around \$3 trillion, it's easy to take \$56 billion for granted.

So to actually fathom what it would be like to have the largest personal fortune in the known universe, it's neces-

sary to break the numbers down a little bit. Another way of saying a billion is a thousand million. Last time I checked, people who are millionaires are still considered extremely well-to-do.

So in these terms, Gates is the equivalent of 56,000 millionaires. If you filled up Atlanta's old Fulton County Stadium with millionaires and had them turn over all their personal fortunes to you, then you would be as rich as Bill Gates.

So Bill Gates has more money than most sovereign nations. But the thing that gets me is that he doesn't seem to spend any of it. He built himself a big house in Washington and jets around the country playing bad golf once in a while. But these are things your average, run-of-the-mill billionaire would do.

Bill has something special, but he seems more intent on taking over the world than actually spending his hard-earned dough. There are so many more creative ways he could blow the wad.

For the altruistic, the first option is for Bill to become a philanthropist. But instead of giving the cash away to worthy charities like most of the disgustingly rich do, Bill needs to create his

"Some might have a go-cart track, but he could build his own NASCAR track and pay Winston Cup drivers to race him."

own charities. Specifically, I think he should start his own university.

This may seem like a hare-brained idea, but many of our great universities, like Stanford, Rice and Vanderbilt, were started by the old robber barons of the Gilded Age.

Bill should go out and start Bill Gates University. BGU could be not only the newest American university, but also the most high-tech. And Bill would be sure that his legacy will live on. The next generation of techno-tycoons will aspire to be just like Bill: You don't have to have the great ideas, just enough money to buy out the guy with the good idea.

Bill has enough to start his own school and give billions more to charity, but he should have some fun money, too. Here I recommend the kind of childish extravagance Michael Jackson has exhibited in his "Wonderland Forest."

But instead of just a little amusement park and a zoo, Bill should build

on a grand scale. Some might have a go-cart track, but he could build his own NASCAR track and pay Winston Cup drivers to race against him. Of course, he'd have to win.

Another option would be to create his own television station. Imagine it: 24 hours a day, whatever Bill Gates wants. Of course, it will probably start out right around the level of the WB, but then there would be room for "Three Meatheads on a Couch" prime time on Thursdays.

The more I think about it, though, it doesn't look like Bill wants to spend his money on frivolities or charities. He seems a little too tied up by the Y2K bug and some antitrust suits. But it would be a shame to see all that money go to waste. He needs to hire someone to spend all his money. A person with plenty of free time, lots of creative ideas and some lazy roommates to help him out.

I volunteer.



ROB GIOIELLI
columnist

Intellectual property theft not rationalized

Chances are you'll use a computer today. I used a computer to write this column, and I'll use a different computer (or several) to help lay it out on the page. And all the software, for this, anyway, is properly licensed.



EMILY STREYER
columnist

When we buy software, we're not so much buying a product to do whatever we like with it as paying rent for the use of property.

Perhaps you're familiar with Info-warriors, as they are known. They're computer hackers and pirates, something akin to bandits of Web wilderness who'll take anything not nailed down. And how do you nail down something that exists only as is relevant to magnetic fields and electric switches?

Software pirates tend to think that if a thing is not tangible, it cannot be owned. This line of thought, were it rational, offers no explanation as to why we have patents, copyrights and legal

entities called "intellectual property." Software is intellectual property. A book is intellectual property. A CD is intellectual property.

I had a ludicrous argument once with a guy who was bragging about something he hadn't gotten caught for (an intelligent young man, clearly) — some victimless (or so he thought) crime. He then said, with a grin indicating how impressed the females present must be with his awesome intellectual capacity, "But it's not illegal if you don't get caught." A chorus of female voices pointed out that the reason anyone would try to catch him in the first place is because whatever he'd done was illegal. He tried to explain the fine points of his logic (he was so proud of it) for our blunt senses, which were nonetheless sharper than his argument. (When finally trapped, he then had the gall to claim responsibility for our intellectual activity by saying, "But at least I made you think.")

But the scary part of that is the number of people who think his views are valid. They think it's harmless to hack into someone else's system as long as you don't do anything, even though the owner of the system may have to pay thousands of dollars to make sure you haven't done anything. You're stealing

"Freeware is great, but one person's willingness to share does not mean that our world is suddenly communal."

security. It's the same as breaking and entering a building.

Info-warriors swear, "Information wants to be free," when really, they want information for free. Everyone wants things for free. Information is our most precious commodity, and the Internet, for all the advances it has provided, is in some ways the least advanced area of society. Freedom of information has imprisoned us in a cyber-barbarism in which we must protect our property and privacy or have them taken away from us by someone stronger.

I support the lawsuit against the anti-abortionist Web page. The owner of any information has a right to decide how it should be distributed.

True, some owners don't care. Linux, for example, an operating system based on UNIX, was written for personal use by a Finnish student, and he distributes it freely. (You can buy commercial versions of it, but what you're paying for is more user-friendly developments.) But even freeware pro-

grammers get something for their work. Freeware is usually the result of amateur programmers who just want to see if they can do it and would like some feedback on their work on a large scale. We can hold freeware programmers in high esteem for their selflessness, but we do that as a result of our own selfishness. We have a strong sense of entitlement and a weak one of obligation. Freeware is great, but one person's willingness to share does not mean that our world is suddenly communal. Our society is quite adolescent still.

The easier it is to do something, the easier it is to rationalize it. In France, for example, you don't have a case against a burglar unless you can prove that you had locked your doors and windows. Parasitism is so easy now. Who doesn't have shareware they haven't paid for, or MP3s and Nintendo ROMs for CDs and games they never owned?

As we are reminded constantly, we are on the verge of the millennium. I hope we are on the verge of a coming-of-age, as well.

SUBMISSIONS

Letters to the editor or guest columns are welcome from all members of the Carolina community. Letters should be 250-300 words. Guest columns should be an opinion piece of about 600-700 words. Both must include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. Handwritten submissions must be personally delivered to Russell House room 333. E-mail submissions must include telephone number for confirmation. The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space. Names will never be withheld. Photos are required for guest columnist and can be provided by the submitter. Call 777-7726 for more information.

Budget process needs to change

To the Editor:

We as the past and present Round Table Gaming Society executive members wish to express our vehement disagreement with the past senate budgeting process.

The articles in *The Gamecock* and statements by the senate Finance Committee chairman therein seek to place blame on the Round Table for not know-

ing when and where the budgeting appeals were to be held.

While maybe it is our fault for not being omniscient, SGA failed us through the entire process. While there were several times when the meeting time was supposed to be announced, our representatives were told that the time would be "announced at a later date," either posted by the allocations in the Student Government window, or sent in a letter. Unfortunately, we never received any information.

We also met with the Finance Committee after the budget was passed. Our


representative at that meeting was told that Round Table received less money because we grew.

To the committee, our growth was a sign of stability, and a stable club "didn't need as much help" as a less stable organization. In other words, they were more willing to give a larger amount to a club that doesn't exist than to a club that has been at USC for 10 years.

We sincerely hope that the newly sworn senate will give all organizations adequate notice for the next year's budgeting process.

Put it on the window of SG. Give clubs a week to get ready for the appeal. Put the times and dates of the appeal in a poster on Greene Street. Instead of blaming organizations for your failures, change the process to make it fair. We would like to see responsible organizations rewarded instead of punished.

Matt Polkowski
Brenna Sinclair
Brian Gambrell
Round Table Gaming Society



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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 authors 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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