

Popularity of gas guzzlers demonstrates disregard for environment

The Dean Rusk Program's Conference on International Conservation strikes an interesting contrast to current national politics: The Davidson community has the opportunity to discuss the fate of the global environment, while the presidential candidates and the national media seem to be ignoring the issue almost entirely.

Which is not to say Mr. Bush and Mr. Gore do not find plenty to talk about. President Clinton's recent decision to tap the nation's oil reserves in an effort to ease fuel prices gave both candidates occasion for comment.

Mr. Gore supported the decision, which just happened to correspond to a suggestion he himself made, and implied that his opponent's ties to big oil might desensitize him to the plight of consumers.

Gore also called for increased use of alternative, renewable energy sources as a way to decrease US dependence on petroleum imports.

Mr. Bush criticized the move and those behind it, suggesting that the Clinton administration's lack of an energy policy has backed the country into a corner. Furthermore, Bush defended himself and pointed out that Gore's family owns a sizeable share in Occidental Petroleum. He recommended pushing the OPEC leaders to increase production in order to reduce gas prices.

Needless to say, the real issue here is purely

political. Presidential candidates know who their constituents are. The American middle and lower classes and their automobiles are feeling the pinch, and politicians have two main responses.

1. Find a culprit, and if possible, implicate the opposition.

2. Propose a solution that sounds reasonable.

The pressures of the election necessitate these reactions, but one wonders if either

Mr. Bush or Mr. Gore have seriously assessed the problem of spiraling fuel prices.

In the first place, economists, or at least those with any influence on policy, generally agree that the high cost of a barrel of crude oil does not pose any serious threat to the post-industrial world. Seen broadly, dependence on petroleum is not what it once was, as, for example, during the price shocks of the 1970's. In addition, the US economy is booming, and

projections seem to indicate continued growth.

In the second place, the two proposed scapegoats, multinational oil companies and oil-producing nations, are not ultimately at fault for the sudden rise in prices. Of course, they have their own interests, and they certainly tamper with the market. However, global demand for oil plays a role in determining prices at least as large if not larger than that of production quotas.

That same consumer-driven growth that the US continues to experience drives up and sustains the high price of gasoline. If the US wants to force the prices back down, it must address its unsustainable, and yes, unreasonable levels of consumption.

This is simply an example, but consider the fuel economy ratings of a few popular automobiles. The 2000 Dodge Durango scores an average of 14 miles per gallon (mpg). Moving up the ladder, the 2000 Ford Expedition gets an average of 16 mpg. Luxury models fare no better, with the 2000 Lexus LX 470 sitting at

14.5 mpg, while the Mercedes-Benz M155 runs a meager 15.5 mpg. At the high end of the list is the 2000 Jeep Grand Cherokee with an average rating of 18.5 mpg.

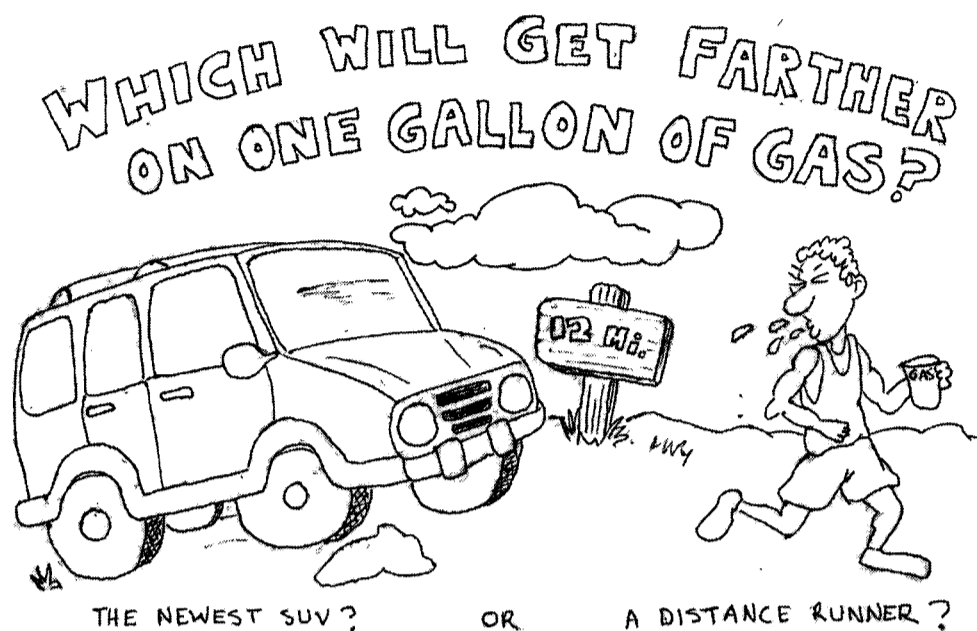
Might we add that one editor's inherited 1990 Caprice Classic, generally considered a gas guzzler, rates better than all of those mentioned above?

The United States has no cause to complain. Not only does our excessive consumption drive up prices for consumers all over the world, but our gas prices are also lower than in any other industrialized country. Moreover, we continue to produce the bulk of so-called "greenhouse gases," which know no national boundaries. In short, we use the most, spend the least, and make life harder on everyone else.

If policy makers are serious about addressing this problem, they could begin by curtailing the use of nonrenewable energy sources, for example, through higher energy taxes or through disincentives for those who produce and purchase low-efficiency automobiles.

Unfortunately, until the oil reserves run dry, consumers will continue to determine the rate of consumption. Irresponsible choices will continue to produce disastrous results, reinforcing the old adage - You get what you pay for.

Richard Vinson and Aaron Houck,
Editors-in-chief



The minority point of view

Some thoughts from an atheist, feminist, non-white, non-American who is pro-choice and pro-gay rights (which probably encompasses the majority of minority populations in Davidson). They are not meant to offend, and if I inadvertently step on anyone's toes, apologies in advance.

My grasp on theology is shaky at best, but my understanding of the basic concept of "sin" is an act which causes harm to others. I fail to see how homosexuality can be sinful, for there is nothing about it which harms the individual (unless you're talking about the soul, in which case you first have to establish that it is a sin) or society. It is probably not the strongest proponent of procreation, but if that were our definition of sinful, then we would have to designate as sinful all those who choose not to have children.

One common theme I have noticed in the articles is the exhortation for us (probably meaning Christians) to love our neighbor. I detect a strong note of patronization here - we recognize that you have sexual preferences that are different, but we'll love you anyway because Jesus loved all, including sinners. That's tantamount to saying, well you're fat/thin/ugly/pretty/tall/short/blond/brunette, but I'll try to like you regardless, because that's what the Bible teaches us to do.

That sounds like something straight out of a kindergarten classroom. Furthermore, what gives you the right to judge others and deem

them "fitting" for your mercy and compassion? I find this indiscriminate blanket love for all to be as discomfiting as condemning all homosexuals just because they are gay. Of course, loving everybody causes less immediate injury and violence, but patronizing acceptance does little to change opinions towards a marginalized group. It is a solution that changes the symptoms of a problem while failing to address the problem itself.

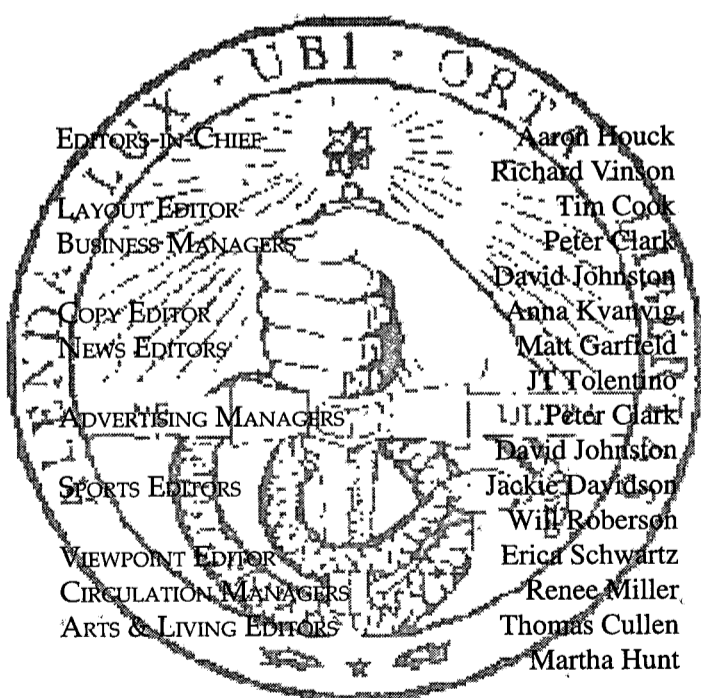
What I have observed of certain Christians is that they put a lot of store in what the Bible says when deciding what is moral, what is sinful, what is right, what is wrong. The Bible says a lot of things, some of it, as I understand, contradictory, and quoting from it to support your stand is pointless without the injection of some common sense.

Tax-collectors were once considered sinful, but you won't be seeing much denunciation of tax-collectors; it all seems to be reserved for the lawyers now. Over time, societal norms change, and blindly embracing what is in the Bible is foolish and puerile. The Bible states that there is only one true God, and all pagans are sinners. Is it time to mount another Crusade against the heathen lands? Or perhaps we should start closer to home with the conversion of the few (well-hidden) Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, and atheists on campus to the True Faith.

Cecilia Kwok '03

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Category I Election Results

Junior Honor Council Members

Erin Bailey, Michael Clifton,
Tara Davidson, and Bjorn Wickstrom

Sophomore Honor Council Members

Jaclyn Beaghan, Kate Fiedler, Rebecca Rigel, and Ian Willoughby

Freshman SGA Senators

Owen Barrow, Adam Chalker, Tiffany Hollis, Justin Porter, Bernard van der Lande, and Charles Washington
Charles Washington is Class President