

THE OBSERVER

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The Observer is the independent newspaper published by the students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac and Saint Mary's College. It does not necessarily reflect the policies of the administration of either institution. The news is reported as accurately and objectively as possible. Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the majority of the Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, News Editor, Viewpoint Editor, Accent Editor, Photo Editor, Sports Editor, and Saint Mary's Editor. Commentaries, letters and Inside Columns present the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of The Observer. Viewpoint space is available to all members of the Notre Dame/Saint Mary's community and to all readers. The free expression of varying opinions through letters is encouraged.

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■ AND IN THIS CORNER...

Fear and loathing in South Bend, Indiana

It has been remarked to me that I do not respect the "Catholic character" of Notre Dame. This is not entirely true. I do not respect Notre Dame's definition of Catholic character. This is particularly evident in the administration's homophobic treatment of the GLND/SMC controversy.

Although this is my first semester here, and I therefore wasn't here when the controversy "erupted" (to abuse a phrase), it is already obvious to me that the majority of students and faculty at Notre Dame support the official recognition of GLND/SMC as a student organization on campus. From what I gather, Notre Dame's refusal to allow GLND/SMC stems from a concern for the campus's aforementioned character.

Lest Notre Dame forget the nature of the student-university relationship, the following will hopefully serve as a humble reminder. As it is the duty of the student to study, to learn and to grow in personal character, and to support their fellow students, so is it the duty of the university to encourage, to protect and to support its students, to provide a healthy learning environment in which each community member can respect and learn from one another.

At Notre Dame there currently exists a number of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who have formed an organization for emotional support for their fellow students, to reach out to the community, heterosexual or homosexual, on issues concerning human sexuality and the dangers of HIV and AIDS, and to teach and to learn about their hopes and their fears, your hopes and fears. And the administration denies them.

Students wonder why I write that the Notre Dame community lives within an intolerant and claustrophobic environ-

ment, and yet a freshman at Notre Dame is so terrified of even a roommate let alone the entire "dorm family" discovering his or her sexual orientation that he or she is too scared and intimidated to sign a letter to the Observer. There is a need on this campus, a need which the University persists in ignoring, the need for freedom from fear and prejudice in a religious and academic community of one's peers. Notre Dame turns a blind eye and ignores its own students' needs.

After the SRO screening of the celebrated film Roy Cohn/Jack Smith (this writer in attendance), I expected some sort of response—any sort of response—from the administration. The only apparent reaction to the film and a subsequent high-profile visit by Olympic star Greg

Louganis was an ad in the Observer urging homosexual students to attend meetings of Campus Ministry (whom I usually equate with Storm-troopers of Jehovah's Witnesses, though they're not as fanatical as Opus Dei's Imperial Guards). Presumably, Notre Dame seeks to offer heart-felt assistance to combat its illogical view of the "psychological disease" of homosexuality.

Notre Dame's problem is that it pays too much attention to the Pontiff's pontifications and not nearly enough to student concerns. The administration has overlooked the fact that it is the students who define the character of a university and not the other way around. Notre Dame remains willfully ignorant that its students of the Nineties are a far cry from its students of the Fifties.

The VP of Student Affairs, Patricia O'Hara, made this obvious in the Observer when she claimed that post-Vatican II children receive less moral guidance than their parents (in other

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words, her own generation) did from theirs. This basically translates into something like this: "Your parents didn't raise you properly, but Notre Dame will fix you up right." O'Hara proceeded to blame criticism of the University on the Observer. Very supportive. Very understanding.

Other Catholic universities have gay and lesbian students organizations on campus, so evidently the Catholic Church does not have any qualms about clubs such as GLND/SMC.

Why, then, does Notre Dame refuse to recognize GLND/SMC on the grounds that it somehow contradicts the Catholic character of Notre Dame—could it be the University of Notre Dame, because it is Notre Dame, believes that its interpretation of Catholic doctrine is more "traditional" and more informed than that of other Catholic universities?

Could it be that Notre Dame believes that to allow GLND/SMC on campus would somehow set a moral precedent which would undermine the Catholic tradition of Notre Dame and therefore of the Catholic religion?

Could it be true that the University of Notre Dame has so much hubris, so

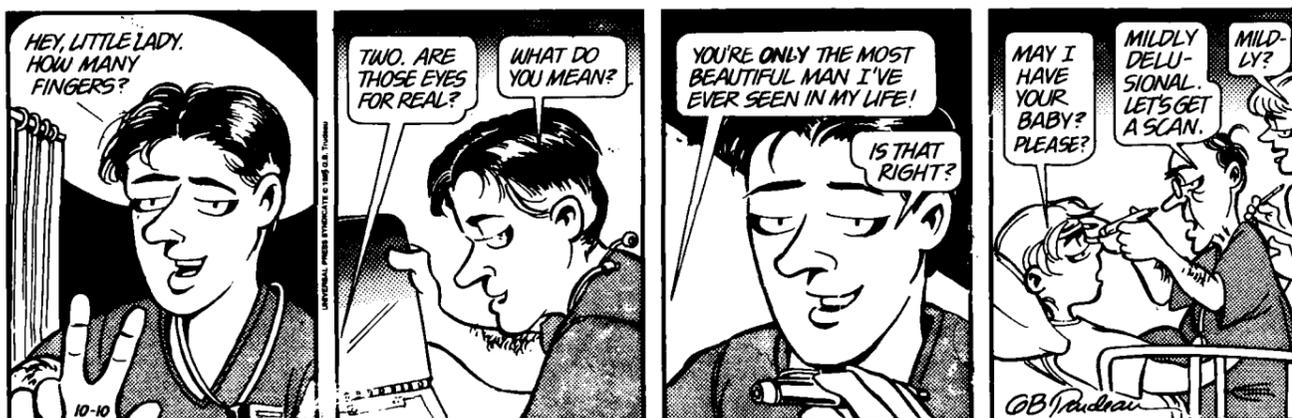
much prideful vanity that it believes itself to be the sole academic representative of the Vatican which sets the moral standards by which all other universities abide?

When it comes down to it, the Catholic character of Notre Dame rests, as it always has rested, in the hands and pens of its students. Notre Dame may believe it knows what the students need, but only the students themselves actually know what they need. Notre Dame should be a guiding force, not a governing force.

The majority of Notre Dame students appear to support GLND/SMC; make it more than apparent and voice your support. And if you fear that you cannot be a catholic and be homosexual or respect a homosexual as a human being, remember these important words of Christ: "Love thy Neighbor," and "Do not be Afraid."

Matthew Apple is a creative writing graduate student at Notre Dame. He respects people who wear pastels even if he refuses to wear them himself, and can be contacted at matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu.

■ DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU

■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Learn by other's mistakes because you do not live long enough to make them all yourself."

—Anonymous