

# Guest Editorial

by *steve giddings*  
sports editor

**Editor's Note:** Last week the CSUN senate voted to place the entire staff of the *Yellin' Rebel* on probation. An hour later, after a reconsideration of the vote, it voted against the probation.

Of all the words, emotions, and rhetoric spewed by both sides in last week's publicized battle between the CSUN government and the staff of the *Yellin' Rebel*, the remembrance of one person's comments and the response to them still evokes a sort of sick-empty feeling in the pit of my stomach.

CSUN Senator Jennifer McGinty's sarcastic statement, during last Thursday's senate meeting, on how "dear" the first amendment seems to be to the *Yellin' Rebel* staff, and the chuckles that followed from the majority of her fellow senators, absolutely shocked me.

Gee, I thought, I was under the impression that the first amendment was one of the most important and "dear" laws to all Americans.

I thought a law which guarantees, not only a free press, but freedom of speech, the freedom to choose your preference of religious worship, the freedom for people to petition their government, was important not only to groups of journalists across the country, who are constantly being bombarded with attempts at censorship by politicians, special interest groups, and such, but also to every last red-blooded, wholesome American who doesn't belong to the American Communist Party.

However, judging by the actions and statements in some circles of the CSUN hierarchy, I was obviously wrong.

Over and over again

during last week's Publication Board and Senate meetings, the CSUN officials who were critical of the *Yellin' Rebel* kept stating that the reason that they wanted to punish editor Kurt Hildebrand and put him on a one month probation, was because they thought the overall quality of the paper was poor, including such mistakes as grammatical and spelling errors, misquotes, sensationalist headlines, and not getting the facts straight.

Some of these arguments are valid, the *Yellin' Rebel* does have spelling and grammatical mistakes in it and on occasion does not get the facts entirely straight, but then so does the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Yes, we do make more mistakes than those fine publications, but as Dr. Maxson and Dr. Ackerman will tell you, the *Yellin' Rebel*, along with the CSUN student government are learning laboratories, and both CSUN and the *Yellin' Rebel* are expected to make mistakes.

But some of the arguments are not valid, such as the sensational headlines issue. It is a paper's prerogative to print whatever headlines it deems necessary. To illustrate the point, look at the front page of the *New York Post* or the *Las Vegas Sun*. Our headlines are quite gentle compared to their's.

Also, it was made quite clear by some CSUN officials' comments, like senators Tristram Harrington and Greg Smith, that the quality of the paper wasn't the only issue. Some of the CSUN people thought the paper should become more of a cheerleader for CSUN and not concentrate on what they thought was just negative coverage.

Especially Harrington,

who kept stating again and again that he was bringing the action against Hildebrand because he just wanted the paper to curb it's mistakes, but then turned around and said things that made it quite clear that he thought the paper should do more positive stories on CSUN since CSUN underwrites 40-50 percent of the *Yellin' Rebel's* costs.

And what about Smith, who after finding out that the *Yellin' Rebel* staff felt the same way Hildebrand did, committed the irresponsible act of making a "friendly" ammendment to Harrington's motion that not only should the editor be put on probation but the entire staff.

I'll bet Ronald Reagan would love to be able to put the editor of the *Washington Post* on probation every time he felt the paper was being too negative of his administration.

The critics kept saying they were looking out for the student's interest.

They said the situation was so bad that students were actually tracking the CSUN people down and complaining about the paper to them.

Exactly how many students, whether it was a handful of the CSUN official's friends, 20, or they were lining up outside the CSUN office, never was clear.

But, I do hope it was in

the thousands, so I would know that at least students care enough to read the school paper and are concerned with the quality of it, because I know the student population cares little about CSUN, as is evident from the last CSUN senate election, in which every senator who won, ran unopposed and that there were not even enough students who filed to fill all the seats.

At a school with a student population hovering around 14,000, Senator McGinty was the highest vote-getter with 31.

No, the issue at hand here is not whether the *Yellin' Rebel* makes mistakes. Just like CSUN, we do, but the question is whether this is enough to put the whole staff on probation or even if they have the right to perform such an act.

The answer is no. Starting with Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes majority opinion in the 1931 landmark case of *Near vs. Minnesota* which stated for all to see, that there can be no prior restraint whatsoever of the press by the government, except in extenuating cases such as troop movements in times of war and incitement to acts of violence, the press has been protected from such governmental "shenanigans."

If the CSUN senate would have followed

through with its original intentions and put the entire staff of the *Yellin' Rebel* on probation, especially an undefined probation, with the threat that the staff would be fired if the paper didn't print what the senate found to be proper newspaper material, they would have committed an incredibly blatant act of prior restraint.

What should we print? Who should we quote? It's hard to properly report the news when big brother is watching.

If it is the CSUN government's job to watch over the school paper for the sake of the students, then whose job is it to watch over the CSUN government which controls \$500,000 out of the student's fees.

The Students? Well, we've already seen how much they care about CSUN. No, it's the job of the institution that has become known as the government's "watchdog," the press.

We have a student senate which ran unopposed in the last election in charge of distributing \$500,000 in students fees anyway they see fit and the only organization that has the ability to make sure they're doing the job properly could be put on probation at any time because they misspelled some words.

However, not without one hell of a fight!

## Yellin' Rebel Staff Box

**Editor**  
Kurt Hildebrand

**Managing Editor**  
Mish Tell  
Gary Beaudry

**News Editor**  
Steven Kapellas

**Sports Editor**  
Karen Hall  
Steve Giddings

**Photo Editor**  
Jon Ansok

**Advertising Manager**  
Connie Scordato

**Production Manager**  
David Zanotti

**Faculty Advisor**  
Dr. Barbara Cloud

**News Staff**  
Seamus Brennan  
Scott Dickensheets  
Jason Flatt  
Robert Hill  
Steve Hong  
David Opan  
Lisa Oram  
Karen Splawn  
Roy Theiss  
Mary Whalen  
Michael White  
Paige White

**Entertainment Staff**  
Babs Goldberg  
Jaq Greenspon  
Mike Horvath  
Tasha Mayers

**Sports Staff**  
Ralph C. Brown  
Bill Stout

**Photographers**  
Bruce Clever  
Jeff Crawford  
Mike Keller  
Alan Lagerwall  
Tracy Mervetta

The *Yellin' Rebel* is a product of CSUN publications. The opinions reflected in the *Yellin' Rebel* are not those of CSUN or UNLV.  
The *Yellin' Rebel* is printed by the Review Journal.  
News.....739-3478  
Advertising.....739-3889

