

# The Decree

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## Panelists say ignorance mars U.S. policy

By MARION BLACKBURN

In their Symposium discussion last week, "What You Don't Know About the World Can Hurt You," Allen Johnson, Richard Watson, and Ken Finney demonstrated how ignorance in high places has carried this country into messy foreign policies, wasted tax dollars, and perhaps invited the current war with Iraq.

"The history of our dealing with other cultures is littered with the corpses of policies based on a lack of understanding," Johnson said.

Because people of other countries and cultures, such as the American Indians, the Vietnamese, or the Iraqis, aren't predictable by American standards, Americans come to the conclusion that "the only good one is a

dead one," he said.

"We got into the present mess... by not understanding and by pursuing policies not fitting to the region," he said. Iraq's Saddam Hussein probably thought America would be neutral if he disciplined Kuwait for pumping oil out of a well the two countries shared, he noted.

"We didn't have a policy on Arab disputes over Arab bound-

aries. He got the idea we wouldn't interfere," Johnson said.

Turning the discussion to El Salvador, Finney pointed out that "what you don't know will hurt you."

U.S. involvement in that Central American country was based on the idea that sending it money would weaken the guerilla movement gaining support in the countryside.

America's rationale? "If we didn't prop up their military, the guerillas would win. If we financed them, we could civilize them," he said. "Yet we have not understood the structure of the Salvadoran military."

Because of strong fraternal bonds between various soldiers' groups, "there is no system for

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DAISY THORP USES ART TO DEMONSTRATE CHANGING VALUES OF SOCIETY

## Symposium session examines boundaries of 'acceptable' art

By MARION BLACKBURN

In a powerful examination of "acceptable" and "obscene" art, instructor Daisy Thorp last week effectively captured the theme of this year's Symposium, "Changing Times and Changing Lives."

Her benchmark piece, Edouard Manet's "Dejeuner sur l'herbe," demonstrated how a work of art once viewed as scandalous was actually a perceptive signal of changing values.

"Art had to be about distinguished things, about gods and goddesses," Thorp said. "It should not be about everyday, ordinary people. It was supposed to be the

preserve of the elite."

Manet's work is a milestone, she said, because it showed three well-known Parisians sitting in a park, and the central figure is nude.

Not that nudes in art were considered obscene, she pointed out, referring to a Roman orgy scene which was hanging in the Louvre in Paris at the time. Manet's work was scandalous because the nude female was looking right at the audience, absolutely unashamed of her nakedness.

"What was really disconcerting was looking at present-day Paris. You were compelled to

look at it," she said.

And the central figure was not only an unashamed nude, but she was also a recognizable prostitute, Thorp said. That Manet dared consider a courtesan worthy of painting — and that she seemed to show no embarrassment at her nakedness — was a real challenge to society. Manet was uncovering a subject better left behind closed doors, Thorp said.

Why was a Roman orgy scene acceptable and Manet's work not?

"Because audiences had the pleasure of disapproving, and (Continued on Back Page)

## Etheridge says good education critical to state

By MARION BLACKBURN

With the legislature safely recessed in Raleigh, state Superintendent Bob Etheridge traveled to Rocky Mount last week, where he urged persistent attention to school reform despite this year's uncertain budget picture.

"If we give up on education reform, the U.S. has said that we give up on the 21st century, we give up on our standard of living, we give up on our role as a world leader," Etheridge said. "If we give up on education reform, we will be giving up on the liberty and democracy that makes the United States unique in the world."

Appearing on the campus of N.C. Wesleyan College as part of its Spring symposium, Etheridge told students, faculty, and area public school teachers that "we can't turn back now."

"We're playing in a fierce game of catch-up, but we must move up. We have no choice," he said.

When asked about Gov. James G. Martin's plan to eliminate new funding for the Basic Education Plan this year, Etheridge replied, "It would be a lot easier if the

governor was out leading the charge. We are in a severe economic crunch, and some want to turn back on education reform."

Last year the legislature dedicated 46 percent of the state's budget to education, with much of that going to the BEP. The state has a multimillion-dollar commitment to the program and to its sister reform, Senate Bill 2. SB 2 gives each school control over organization and course structure, but requires proof that it's meeting higher standards.

If the state reneges on these commitments, it will pay somewhere else down the road, Etheridge said. "Education is expensive — you can't deny that. But corrections spending has more than doubled since 1985. You can spend on the front side, or you can spend on the back side."

Not only will better education keep young adults out of prisons, but will also keep them from repeating grades. Each time a child repeats a grade, the state loses money.

In the last five years, the BEP has saved the state \$500 million, Etheridge estimates, through its (Continued on Back Page)