

MCLEOD ATTEMPTS TO DISSPELL VACUUM OF IGNORANCE

by Roger A. Harris

On February 26, 1997, at FSU's Shaw Auditorium, during a SGA meeting convened at 3:00 p.m., Chancellor Willis B. McLeod championed students questions concerning last thursday's aggressive intervention by Campus and Fayetteville Police departments of a victory celebration that ended in a dormitory being overran by police officers and the arrests of four students for failure to disperse. Still unanswered is whether students civil and constitutional rights were abridged during the fracas.

McLeod began his opening remarks by commenting on the various claims that were made in the internal in-

vestigations conducted by both FSU and Fayetteville city Police departments. He stated that he hoped to dispell the vacuum of ignorance that surrounded the events that took place last Thursday. In closing, he noted that although he didn't agree with everything that was stated in the reports, that they both were consistant. During the meeting SGA Vice President Daphni Betts instructed that copies of the reports be distributed to the approximately 100 students in attendance.

SGA President Jeremy Hollingsworth followed McLeod's statements with a direct, frank, and impassioned rebuttal. He intoned that what McLeod had just stated amounted to blaming the students for what had happened. "The students may not have been angels in this matter, but neither were the police. Don't blame the students for what happened." He stated that students civil and constitutional rights were abridged and that it wouldn't be condoned or tol-

erated. There was a need for direct answers to student concerns now. He closed by offering that if the student celebration had happened on N.C. State, that we wouldn't be having this meeting on this topic right now.

When the floor was opened to questions, students began pointing out the inconsistencies within both reports. McLeod passionately and sincerely answered most of the inquiries. During this period it was expressly stated that FSU campus police are to be held responsible for any mistakes that may have been made by either police force on the scene of the evening in question.

When FSU Investigator Captain Moore waived in trying to specifically answer if his officers may have made a mistake, McLeod took the floor and stated "No, I am not satisfied with the way things were handled by our campus police and have spoken with [FSU police] Chief Bell on immediate actions that need to

be taken to prevent a future occurrence."

McLeod enjoys an extreme level of loyalty and support from FSU students. Senior computer Science major Linda Barden stated that "students need to be mature and responsible in their actions." While Senior psychology major John Sylvester stated that "students are angry about what happened, not at McLeod."

Yet Slyvester Hunter, who alleges that mace was sprayed under his locked door as he tried to protect himself from being accosted by police stated that "the issue here today isn't whether students were at a different party before we got to our dorm. We were at our home. We were doing no wrong, and had our civil rights abridged. This meeting has totally ignored this issue." It would appear that the victims are being accused of the crime.



Upset students and a frustrated chancellor McLeod try to resolve an issue that never should have happened.

And although McLeod's patience and sincerity eased most students concerns, it still left three very important issues unresolved: (1) since no report by any officer stated that illegal substances were detected (which was the original reason for their being summoned), what provoked their request to have the students disperse, (2) if asked to disperse, why was there a need for police to chase and enter the dormitory that the students fled into and (3), by admitting that FSU police didn't handle the situation properly, does this open the door for future civil law suits?

Reactions to the Events of February 20, 1997 at Bryant Hall

By: Lance M. Snead
111 Bryant Hall
March 3, 1997

To Whom It May Concern:

I must address and question many of the actions of all police personnel at FSU during the altercation that took place at Bryant Hall a few nights ago. First, I will admit that I was not actually present during most of the events. However, I have read one of the official police reports, and I think my questions have serious merit.

1. FSU Police called the Fayetteville Police requesting help. The FSU Police claimed that there were approximately 100 people present. My room is next to the parking lot. There have been nights that I've heard one person shouting. Yet on the night when supposedly 100 people were in the parking lot being rowdy, playing loud music, and engaging in "illegal activity," I heard nothing. If 100 people were truly there, I would at least have heard them breathing.

2. The report stated that when city police arrived, there were

60-150 people in the crowd of "illegal activity." This is an incredibly broad estimate. 10-20, 120-140, 5-7 are plausible sight-only estimates. 60-150? This raises the question of whether these officers have actually seen a true gathering of 100 persons. It would appear the officers are throwing out large numbers to back up their needed presence. By the way, I nor my roommates have not heard a thing outside yet.

3. The report stated that the officers were able to get students to return to the insides of the dormitory for a brief period. Missions accomplished? Yet police officers trekked through the halls of the dorm armed with mace. The report gave no explanation of why this was necessary, especially since the primary objective was to disperse the crowd.

4. The report stated that liquid that "appeared to be urine" was dumped out of the upper levels of Bryant Hall. Later, the report refers to the supposed urine as "urine." If the liquid was urine, why did the report state "appeared to be" first? Why not state that urine was dumped. This raises the question of whether urine was truly dumped or are officials covering their rear?

5. The report concludes that all officers involved did their work correctly. Yes, except read the Constitution of the United States of America. The report states that officials managed to get the crowd out of the parking lot and onto the grassy front lawn. The officers instructed the crowd to disperse. The crowd refused and stated that, as resident students of FSU, they have every right to stay outside. The report confirms that students made this claim. The officers continued their presence and demanded for the crowd to disperse. The report gives no reason explaining the officers' actions. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution gives citizens the right peaceably to assemble. Furthermore, the billing statements for resident students allow us to live here on campus. There is no curfew. Quiet hours do not extend outside the dormitories. If I want to stand outside on the lawn in the middle of the night with a few dozen other residents, there is no reason or rule to stop us. The officers persisted anyway.

6. The report states that the crowd goes were engaging in "illegal behavior." On the grounds of "failing to disperse

on command," four arrests were made. That's to say only 4 out of 60-150 people failed to disperse on command. With so many officers present and so many persons engaging in "illegal activity," there should have been a lot more than four arrests. There wasn't even an arrest for disturbing the peace. Were the officers enforcing the law, flexing their muscles, or backing up their continued presence?

As I stated, I was not actually

there during the entire event. I came outside when the fire alarm went off. Maybe all of the report's claims are true. I do know that I have excellent hearing. Residents live on campus and have First Amendment and Fourth Amendment rights. There is a great difference between a gathering of 60 people and 150 people. When 100 people are guilty of the same crime, don't execute just four. Finally, urine is urine, or it is not urine.



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