

Hobbs Explains

About forty students met last Thursday afternoon with Guilford President Grimsley Hobbs to further discuss the decision not to renew the contract of Bill Burton, director of the Fellows Program. Also at the meeting, which lasted well over an hour, were Assistant to the President Bruce Stewart and Academic Dean Cyril Harvey.

Hobbs opened the meeting with a reiteration of the Administration position that Burton was not rehired solely because the position for which he had been hired had been abolished. Hobbs stated that he had not received "a single negative phone call" about Burton but that Burton had come to Guilford "strictly on trial" with "no thought of continuing unless the program was continued and nothing happened this year to make me think the program should be continued."

Hobbs responded to student descriptions of Burton's contribution to their intellectual growth by saying, "He's admittedly a good teacher, I suppose." But he went on to say that Burton's talents were not in question, in the eyes of the administration, and "We have many other stimulating professors."

Harvey clarified his earlier statement on the influence Burton's activism had on the decision, by saying that he had meant that it would be impossible to slice off one factor as "unrelated and unconsidered" - that Burton had to be evaluated as a whole person.

Hobbs spoke to the activism question by stating that as a Quaker school, Guilford welcomes activists and has many activists in its faculty. He gave as an example Ann Deagon who has spent many hours in front of the downtown post office in a Quaker Vigil for Peace. Further, students here are also involved in the community. "One girl is teaching the deaf, and that is quite proper," he said.

Hobbs mentioned that the administration is "always monitoring student opinion." When questioned as to which students were involved in the Burton decision, Hobbs responded "none". Later in the meeting a comment by Hobbs that "We welcome student input on this" drew a muttered response from a student, "We only wish you'd welcomed it before the decision was made."

Dean Harvey pointed out that at Earlham there are two Promotion and Tenure Committees - one composed of

students and one of faculty. When they significantly disagree, the two committees meet together to iron out differences. Harvey said he was "rather enchanted with the procedure used at Earlham" and suggested that Guilford might like to adopt such a system. This suggestion was endorsed by both Hobbs and Stewart. Speaking of recent criticism of the system of tenure Hobbs said, "Tenure is a fact of life that I have to live with." Not to accept that would mean that "Guilford College would go right down the drain...and fast."

Hobbs reiterated Harvey's position that "if we found the right position for him" Burton might be rehired, but left little doubt in his listener's minds that he felt that such an occurrence would be extremely unlikely. He said, however, "I don't think I've ever made a decision that I feel is beyond review," and that "if more evidence comes in, I and others here will be happy to reconsider it. He said that ultimately the decision rested with the Board of Trustees, and some students raised the possibility of sending representative to the Board to voice student concern over the Burton issue.

As the meeting drew to a close Hobbs was asked what effect it had on his thinking. "I think that you've showed me you're concerned" he said. Sophomore Beth Zulick pursued the question, asking, "But does our concern matter?", to which Cyril Harvey responded, "It's fair to say that you can't be ignored."

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Keesee Discusses Anti-Spanking Bill Here

At a luncheon meeting at Ragsdale House Monday, Republican State Representative Margaret Keesee discussed several of issues, among them, her bill concerning the regulation of corporal punishment in the public schools.

The bill, which has roused a great deal of public controversy among teachers, principals, counselors, and parents, states that force may not be used against a student except in certain extreme cases: to quell a disturbance, remove weapons, protect persons or property, or in cases of the teacher's self-defense.

Rep. Keesee would like to see every case of corporal punishment recorded in the school principal's office, though not on the student's permanent record. Once her bill leaves committee and reaches the floor of the house, Keesee plans to amend it to read that parents who don't use, or don't want others to use, physical punishment with their children, may write a note to the school and have it honored. As things stand now, she emphasized, parents can write such a note with

Poetry Reading

There will be a poetry reading, sponsored by the Women's Center, on Wednesday, March 6, at 1 pm in Shore lounge. Bring original poetry or poems written by others.

absolutely no guarantee that it will be honored, and if they bring suit against a teacher who violates their wishes, they will lose.

"Apparently," Ms. Keesee said, "we'll have to really have someone get hurt before anything will be done." The teacher is only liable if it can be proved that (s)he deliberately damaged the child physically - for example, the intentional blinding of a student.

Rep. Keesee said that she has received over 300 contacts, in the form of letters, calls, and petitions, in favor of her bill; these have come mostly from parents and guidance counselors, although "there have been some educators." Approximately 260 individuals have expressed disfavor with her bill (with varying degrees of hostility), and both the Principal's Association and the North Carolina Association of Education have lobbied against her. Says Keesee, "I had no idea when I introduced the bill that everyone would go bananas."

One of the ex-elementary teacher's major concerns is that in schools where children are frequently or unfairly punished, middle-class parents can get their children away from the situation by putting their children in private schools. Lower-income suspension. "Parents have so much trouble being heard,"

parents, however, have no such recourse, and their children become subject to the choice of spanking or Rep. Keesee commented, "They try to go through channels and get nowhere." A member of the audience pointed out that many parents also feel that to draw attention to their children in that way may merit the teacher's retaliation.

"A good teacher who is humanistic in his or her approach doesn't need the crutch of paddling," Keesee stated. "Rules in the classroom aren't for the benefit of the child but for the benefit of the teacher - so her routine won't be upset." In her classroom of first and second graders, Ms. Keesee encourages her students to be responsible and use self-control; in that way she feels that confrontations - in which the teacher may be tempted to resort to the paddle - can be avoided.

Keesee suggested that one way to go about getting better teachers, who will rely more on imagination than discipline, is to improve teacher education programs at the college level, making them more interesting and varied, and giving student teachers more actual classroom experience earlier. Louise Smith, wife of State Senator MacNeill Smith, also suggested that if retirement benefits for teachers were provided earlier, the bad teachers might be more easily gotten rid of; many poor-to-mediocre teachers might be more willing to retire or even want to retire - if they could afford to do so.

A student in the audience pointed out that while North Carolina ranks third in the U.S. in the quality of its highways, it ranks 47th in education. Rep. Keesee said she considers that indicative of the priorities of the N.C. Legislature, and is particularly the fault of those legislators who have been in "forever" and run unopposed in every election, and therefore "never have to deal with the real issues."

Rep. Keesee has filed for re-election, though she expects to have trouble in this campaign, as she expects that all incumbents - particularly Republican - will.



Representative Margaret Keesee [second from left] discusses her bill limiting corporal punishment.