

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

ERNEST H. PITT Publisher/Co-Founder
NDUBISI EGEMONYE Co-Founder
ELAINE PITT Business Manager
FANNIE HENDERSON Advertising Manager



Free tuition plan makes sense

Lieutenant Governor Dennis Wicker recently proposed free tuition for North Carolina students who enroll full-time in the state's community colleges upon high school graduation. This would usher in a new education standard, extending free public education from 12 years to 14. Today's standard of K through 12 is obsolete, Wicker explained.

His plan responds to employers' changing demands and rapid technological advancements. The proposal also echoes the Clinton administration's Goals 2000, an educational initiative to ensure that every 8-year old can read, every 12-year old can access the Internet, every 18-year old can go on to college, and every adult can keep on learning for a lifetime. "We have to make the first two years of college as universal as a high school education is today," said President Clinton. "Two years of college alone means a 20-percent increase in learning and a quarter of a million dollars more in earnings over a lifetime."

The North Carolina legislature has yet to consider Wicker's proposal, but it deserves bipartisan support. The plan will not only motivate and enable more students to attend college; it will give the state an edge in the global marketplace by preparing students for the jobs of the future. These jobs will require more than just basic skills. Workers will need advanced technical skills and the ability to solve problems, think creatively, communicate clearly and learn new information. Only 15 percent of the jobs in the United States will require a four-year college degree, but more than half the jobs will require post-secondary education and training. To compete in the year 2000, workers will need at least two years education or training beyond high school.

Given these trends, the North Carolina State Board of Education and the Community College Board in 1993 jointly established the Tech Prep program. Across the state, this workforce preparedness program is linking public schools, community colleges and businesses. Tech Prep spans a student's four-year high-school course of study plus two years at the community college level or two years in a registered apprenticeship program. Both the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County and Guilford County school districts offer Tech Prep programs in partnership with community colleges and local industry.

Making community college free to high-school graduates will carry this initiative one step further. Passage of legislation based on Wicker's plan will also underscore the state's commitment to equal educational opportunity.

Already a bargain, community colleges will gain more appeal among low-income students who may have thought college was beyond their reach.

Most importantly, Wicker's plan will give students who don't go to four-year colleges a smooth transition from school to work. It will help them land a good job with a growing income and empower them to realize the American dream of upward mobility.

The Information Age and a robust economy present opportunities, but not guarantees. Tuition-free community college education will position more young people to seize future opportunities. It doesn't take a college degree to realize Wicker's proposal makes sense.



The Chronicle welcomes letters as well as guest columns from its readers. Letters should be as concise as possible and should be typed or legibly printed. To ensure the authenticity of the letter, you must include the name, address and telephone number of the writer. Columns must follow the same guidelines and will be published if they are of interest to our general readership. The Chronicle will not publish any letters or columns that arrive without this information. We reserve the right to edit letters and columns for brevity and clarity. Submit letters and columns to: Chronicle Mailbox, P.O. Box 1636, Winston-Salem, NC 27102. E-mail address: wschron@netunlimited.net

Minorities do have a stake in global warming debate

To the Editor:

Over the years I've fought for protection of the environment. I've stood up to environmental injustice where major polluting companies try to single out rural or poorer neighborhoods for environmental racism.

But now comes along an issue wrapped in the misleading cloak of environmental protection that could hit hard on the jobs and household budgets of minority and rural communities in North Carolina.

The issue is the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty. The United Nations treaty is based on the premise that human activities are causing temperatures to rise. Those human activities primarily include putting non-toxic carbon dioxides and methane into the air through farming, industrial and automobile emissions.

Scientific proponents of the treaty say those human activities and animal-emitted gases are holding the heat in. Many other scientists believe those emissions have nothing to do with global temperatures. Simply put, the earth has heated and cooled for millions of years before humans came along.

Last fall, the U.S. Senate voted 95-0 to oppose the treaty. Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, environmentalists and industrialists were unanimous in their beliefs about the Treaty's unfairness. Despite this clear message, there is a concerted effort for the president to sign the Treaty and the Senate to ratify it.

I usually find myself on the same side as President Clinton. But when he's wrong, I am obliged to take positions that are best for the constituents who elected me to represent them. And based on the existing evidence, the Senate should continue to oppose the treaty.

The reasons are simple. First, the treaty would require the United States to spend billions of dollars to reduce carbon dioxide and methane emissions, but would exempt 132 countries from any controls at all. That's fundamentally unfair.

Each and every American family would share in the costs of reducing those emissions. The costs of farming would increase, resulting in higher grocery prices. Even President Clinton's own economists



admit that gasoline prices would go up a minimum of 26 cents a gallon. Many experts say it would go up much more. Electric power prices would increase by 20% to 30% or more. These are important items in the budgets of low and moderate-income families, and especially farmers.

There would be hundreds of thousands of job losses, including up to 50,000 in North Carolina, according to one study. Where would the jobs go? They would be moved overseas to those countries that are exempted from the treaty. We have already seen too many good paying jobs in this country — many of them in rural areas move overseas.

Even progressive Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts said, "No one in their right mind is going to sit in the Senate and say that it's okay for the United States to make these significant efforts while our competitors are going free."

The Kyoto Treaty also is flawed because there's no real evidence that if we followed the terms of the treaty, it would make much difference. Last fall at a global warming conference, President Clinton — departing from his script — asked assembled scientists how much the temperature of the globe would go down if the United States complied with the treaty. There was dead silence in the room. They quickly moved on to another topic.

More than 15,000 scientists,

including 300 from North Carolina, recently signed a petition that said there is no credible scientific evidence that there is a link between human activity and global temperatures. In fact, there is a whole body of scientists saying that increased carbon emissions are helpful and benefit plant growth.

This is too big of a decision for our country to be rushed into by countries that don't have to pay the same price that our North Carolina citizens will pay. China, which will become the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxides early in the next century, all of South America, Mexico and the Middle East, are all exempted. Because of a major loophole, most of Eastern Europe is exempted.

Instead, we must insist on a more balanced approach. By insisting that other countries do their part, we can reduce the migration of jobs overseas and reduce our economic costs in this country.

There's nothing I hold dearer than protection of our air and water. But much more evidence is needed about the environmental benefits of the Kyoto Treaty before we risk the human costs of lost jobs, higher grocery, gasoline and electricity prices that are so important to the household budgets of rural and minority communities in North Carolina.

Rep. Howard Hunter represents Bertie, Gates, Hertford and Northhampton counties and

is a past chairman of NC Legislative Black Caucus.

Let's stop pining and play ball!

To the Editor:

Baseball is not dead, but rather, it is alive and well in Winston-Salem. Even though the recent referendum regarding a prepared foods tax to build a Major League Baseball stadium was defeated, we need to find some sort of victory in that defeat. It is my hope that all the enthusiasm and excitement derived from the venture isn't wasted but is channeled towards the existing Minor League franchise at Ernie Shore Field... the Winston-Salem Warhogs. Let's take what we've got and make it the best it can possibly be. For over 50 years, generations of children and adults, both black and white, have enjoyed Carolina League Baseball at the local ballpark. Heroes and memories have spanned the years and have helped to bridge gaps between the sexes, races and generations. I can guarantee that at Ernie Shore Field you will still find an affordable family-oriented evening of great baseball along with a friendly hometown smile here and there. Fifty years of memories have been harvested. Let's make sure we have another 50 years. Play ball!

Peter J. Fisch, General Manager Winston-Salem Warhogs

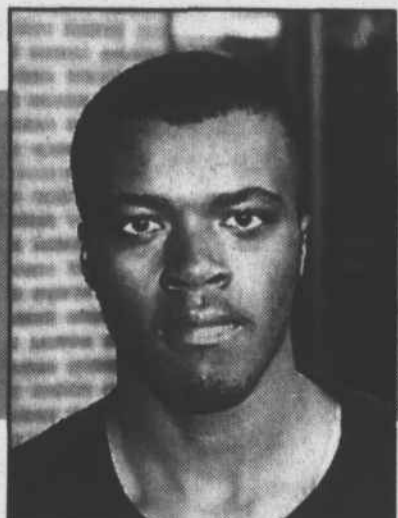
Voices from the community...

Freaknik: a huge, no-holds barred, unabashed springfest party traditionally held in Atlanta that draws thousands of African-American college students from around the U.S. each spring. Atlanta officials say they are tired of the event taking place in their city, so we asked college students what they thought about Freaknik festivities like concerts and stepshows moving to Daytona, Florida.



Chikita Dickens

"I would make the transition if it's a permanent stay."



Dekevias Atkinson

"No matter where they move it, they are not going to stop people from coming to Atlanta. Everybody is used to it having been in Atlanta for the past 16 years."



LaToya Barber

"I believe moving Freaknik from Atlanta to Daytona Beach is a bad idea because there is not as much security in Daytona (and) I heard about a couple of guys getting killed there. With them moving it down there, similar things are bound to happen."



Michael Cox

"It still might be as perverted as it is (now), but it may get worse because Daytona Beach is a larger area than Atlanta."



Tynea Smith

"It's has been in Georgia all these years and I don't think they should change that. I've heard that there's been some problems in the past when blacks went down to Daytona."