

## Fair sentencing no cure

"I am alarmed at this drastic increase in serious crime. We in law enforcement need more help from the public, local government agencies, and especially the General Assembly."

—Rufus Edmisten, N.C. attorney general  
May 30, 1979

"Unlike many of those other great social problems we face today, I believe this is one where the states and their governors can and should have a significant impact."

—Jim Hunt, N.C. governor  
May 30, 1979

Rufus Edmisten has often been cited as a fun-loving sort of fellow. Some people say his exploits as a student at Carolina are legend.

Perhaps he was giving Jim Hunt a playful poke in the ribs May 30 when he released the First Quarter Report of Crime in North Carolina. While Hunt was encouraging his fellow governors to "take the lead in developing an all-out, comprehensive program to reduce crime," Edmisten was reporting that serious crime in N.C. cities rose by 18.3 percent.

Hunt denied Edmisten was having a joke at the governor's expense. In fact, neither of the two is laughing.

Rape increased 6.3 percent. Aggravated assault rose 17.9 percent. Robbery was up by 24.1 percent over the same period last year.

The only encouraging note was that murder decreased by 3.5 percent. That translates as one less murder than in the same period last year, a drop from 28 to 27. At that rate, it doesn't seem likely they'll be hurting for business on death row in Central Prison.

What is even more discouraging is that arrests in four of the seven categories are down this year from last, even though total arrests increased from 3,386 to 3,423.

Should UNC students feel it's not their problem, it should be remembered that crimes on campus, especially those concerning property, like theft and burglary, are also on the upswing.



### Letters to the editor

## Pay increase supported

To the Editor:

As a resident of the town of Chapel Hill I have followed with great interest the struggle for a reasonable cost-of-living adjustment by Chapel Hill town employees.

Chapel Hill prides itself on being a progressive "Southern Bit of Heaven." To the 50 percent of its employees who don't even earn enough to "enjoy" a lower-level standard of living as defined by the Department of Labor that image must seem very ludicrous.

Both Durham and Raleigh, of which many Chapel Hillians speak derisively, have done more to help their employees meet the rapidly rising cost of living. It is time for the residents of Chapel Hill who are among the wealthiest in the state to demand their town do something for its employees.

The 10 percent cost-of-living request by the employees is essential for them and

certainly well justified. I urge the Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen to grant it.

Linda M. Fortney  
106-A Kenan St.

To the Editor:

The application deadline for the Summer Undergraduate Honor Court has been extended until Monday, June 11. Applications are now available in Suite C of the Carolina Union.

The Honor Court adjudicates all alleged Honor Code violations, which are investigated and presented to the court by the attorney general. Court members will be required to attend one afternoon hearing per week during the second session of summer school.

I would encourage anyone interested in the UNC Honor System to apply for a position on the Court.

Will Chapman  
Undergraduate Court Chairman

So what is a state to do? As Edmisten is inclined to point out, "as attorney general, I don't make the laws; I enforce them." Edmisten is also aware that the state legislature can't just resolve to decrease crime. No simple, sweeping panacea is on the horizon.

Hunt thinks a reorganization of law enforcement operations, centralizing them with the courts and prison systems will help. He has already reorganized the bulky Crime Control and Public Safety Department, attempting to make it the central agency in fighting crime in the state.

The General Assembly has recently produced its contribution to the cause by approving a Hunt proposal for a "fair sentence" system. Under the system, judges will hand down pre-set sentences to convicted criminals, varying from an allowable maximum to a "presumed" sentence, which is two-fifths the maximum. Different sentences are pre-set for different crimes.

What effect this will have on crime is unclear at this time, and only by carefully studying the results in years hence will we be able to arrive at a conclusion. But we can imagine some difficulties.

Hamilton Hobgood, the judge who presided during the Joan Little murder trial, suggested last summer that such a system would not work entirely to the good of the state. He noted juries are often loath to convict a defendant when they know a stiff penalty is possible. Other jurists have suggested that felons escape justice when the jury knows the death penalty might be invoked, as in rape or murder cases.

The "fair sentencing" system will do little to lessen the overall severity of sentencing in North Carolina, beyond ensuring that inmates will get one day cut from their incarceration for each day of good behavior. North Carolina's prisons are already bulging, and it doesn't seem probable that adding to the inmate population will slow the crime rate. It has become almost cliché to say prisons turn first offenders into hardened criminals.

Still, the system will prevent disparities in sentencing. The General Assembly and governor should move to make sure that if sentences are to be just, they must be just to society as well as the offender. Unless a way is found to return inmates to society as productive citizens, it appears unlikely that the crime rate will decrease.

### Legal advice

## Bank card liability limited

(Editor's note: This advice is prepared by Student Legal Services, which maintains an office in Suite A of the Carolina Union. UNC students have prepaid for this service and may obtain advice at no additional charge.)

Twenty-four hour teller machines have become convenient devices to obtain money from a bank account. Up to now, the user of such machines has not been protected from unauthorized transfers.

For example, if your credit card was stolen, the most you were responsible for was \$50. If, however, someone got your 24-hour card and secret number, they could deplete your account and liability for the loss was unclear. The law has now been changed to limit your liability and to require banks to provide you with information about your account.

The new law, effective since February 1979, limits the liability to \$50 for the unauthorized use of a 24-hour card. This protection, however, is only available if you notify the bank that the card and number have been lost or stolen.

The law speaks "to provide the financial institution with the pertinent information...." To be safe, notify the bank immediately after you learn your card and number are missing.

The new law also regulates the terms and conditions that must be disclosed to the consumer at the time he signs up for the 24 hour service. The bank must disclose the limitation of liability discussed above, as well as information



about any service charges, right to receive documentation, disclosure of information to third parties and other information.

### ADVICE OF THE DAY:

- 1.) Guard your 24-hour card and secret number carefully. Do not keep them together.
- 2.) If your card and number are stolen, notify the bank immediately. Protection only attaches if you give a reasonable notice to the bank.
- 3.) The bank may not be liable if you do not give that proper notice.