

commentary and analysis

The Tar Heel

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A new, clean beginning

In the clearing dust, flying around the University since recent announcement of a reorganization of the Office of Student Affairs, a somewhat clearer image of Chancellor Christopher Fordham can be seen.

The image is a positive one.

Fordham announced last week the creation of a new vice chancellor's office, designed to assist "in enhancing the presence and experience of minorities at this institution." The new "vice chancellor for university affairs," as it has been referred to, will have responsibility for coordinating financial aid, records and registration, plus undergraduate admissions and other areas of student concern at UNC.

The description of responsibilities is important, for it matches the recommendation of the Daye Committee report which called for just such an office to help minority students on the Carolina campus. It also matches the description many black leaders on campus gave to a suggested Office of Minority Affairs.

Whatever the name of the new office, it is the function it serves that is important, and its described function indicates Fordham is concerned enough with the status of minority students to take administration action on their behalf. What remains to be described is the person who will fill the job.

The Daye Committee report suggested that the position be filled by a black, tenured member of the UNC faculty. The key word there is "black," the operative word "tenured."

Whether a faculty member or not, the new vice chancellor should be a person possessed of enough self-security to be able to act assertively on behalf of the students. Fordham's search committee no doubt agrees.

To say that only blacks are capable of handling this office is inherently racist, but to say they can't is just as racist.

In this case, finding a black to fill the post is the prudent, politic and fair thing to do.

See the light

It's almost time to think up another prefix for presidential candidate Ronald Reagan. As he pulls away from President Carter in the various polls, it becomes more and more appropriate to honor him with some presidential appellation—perhaps "Pre-President Reagan" or "Incumbent-to-be Reagan" or something along that line.

Premature? you ask. But the *New York Times*-CBS News Poll recently put Reagan 10 points ahead of Carter.

The Carter allies, however, are not *too* worried. They feel that they have history, at least, on their side: for the last Democratic incumbent to lose an election was Grover Cleveland in 1888.

Looking to more recent history, the Carter team hopes that Reagan is in the same position that Sen. Edward Kennedy was in at the beginning of the primaries—too far out in front to be able to maintain that position.

Finally, there is Carter's almost mystical ability to rebound from disaster. Despite the fact that he has been taking a beating recently in the Gallup polls, and now registers 32 percent, there is confidence that he will rebound and peak just in time for the national elections.

However, the main reason for optimism in the president's camp is Reagan himself. As one Carter loyalist put it, "Carter may not be able to win this election, but Reagan sure can lose it." It is interesting to note that Reagan decided to forego a European trip this summer, perhaps afraid that it afforded too great an opportunity for gaffes and vagueness.

Carter's main problem, it seems, will be to convince the voters that he is a better candidate than Reagan, and that every vote counts.

As Steven Schlossberg, a top political strategist for the United Auto Workers, put it: "A lot of people just don't believe that old Dutch Reagan, the guy who rode into the sunset for truth and justice, is going to screw you."

Let's hope people soon begin to see the light.



Technological advances dazzling in Modern Age

By William Durham

The Modern Age is without a doubt the most fascinating of all ages of history. How can the paltry mechanical and technical confusion accomplished prior to the 20th century compare with such wonders as electric typewriters, color television and that most glorious of achievements, the computer?

Yes, indeed, the computer must rank close to the top of any list compiled by a wandering sociologist in an attempt to catalog Man's Most Marvelous Machinations.

For what else is saving us so much labor, is doing in 12 minutes what it took our great-grandparents seven years to accomplish and is allowing us to develop the technology to create even more exotic and spine-tinglingly far-fetched bits of brushed chrome and matte plastic?

And what could be more soothing than the complacent hum of one those massive multi-talented hulks, purring lovingly in the back room?

Not everybody, unfortunately, is as sanguine as this when commenting on the noble beasts. There is a poorly informed school of thought, populated by sadly misguided malcontents and various dissidents, who think that a little less dependency on computers would be to humanity's advantage. These mewling toadstools think that, given the opportunity to do things for ourselves, we will learn to fill our time instead of feverishly wasting time trying to think up ways to save it.

Which is, of course, ridiculous. Speaking seriously, would you rather spend several hours admiring a beautiful picture or using a probe and spatula to take samples and discover just what the chemical makeup of the pigment is, allowing you to exactly duplicate the hues in a startlingly life-like reproduction? The answer is obvious.

How can a daffodil or a butterfly compare with a series of sine curves stretching out forever into the intense inane? The answer is that it cannot.

Not that I'm not a fan of trees and rocks and birds and things. I derive as much aesthetic pleasure as the next person from looking at mountains and sculptures. I like

literature, too. But give me the muted snick of oiled switches and the tactile tantalization of readout paper any day.

Sometimes I'm just exasperated by the vociferous rantings of the nature advocates. These are the people who write letters to the editor deploring our meddling intellects and bemoaning the fact that our calculations have conquered all mystery by rule and line.

I just say nonsense. After all, truth is beauty, and the truth of the spectrum is more lasting than the beauty of the rainbow it creates. Science may clip an angel's wings, but it also builds subway stations and Toyotas.

I'm perfectly willing to grant that computers occasionally do suffer brief lapses of performance. In fact, just last month a small computer breakdown almost invited a nuclear showdown. Wouldn't that have been hysterical? Armageddon taking place because of a mistake caused by a dime-sized component.

But minor faults like this are more than compensated for by such dazzling accomplishments as Space Invaders and pocket calculators (which are, I feel, the greatest thing since calendar watches).

A point that really bugs me is that whenever we try to probe the mysteries of life in the name of science, these nature types get up in arms and wail and screech. I don't understand why, because dissection is almost as much fun as threading tape reels. And by slicing open animals and peering and probing among their entrails, we open the way for more knowledge.

It's now just a matter of time before "Baby in a Test Tube" replaces "Janitor in a Drum." And instead of bothering yourself about finding good help, you will be able to pick a happy, grinning clone of Aunt Bea or even a lobotomized, drooling Robert Redford.

Let's hear no more about the scientific mind destroying the beautiful forms of things. I say, and I'm sure that those of you who seek the crystal clarity of truth will agree, damn the spurious pleasures of literature and art! Damn misplaced sentiment! Full speed ahead into the glories of our technological future!

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