

The Daily Tar Heel

96th year of editorial freedom

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Close out this proposal

Roddy Jones, chairman of the UNC-system Board of Governors, isn't advocating outright violations of North Carolina's open meetings law. But he's coming awfully close.

Jones has decided to start scheduling closed meetings at the ends of all board meetings, "just in case" board members have something they want to discuss in private. He also has said those meetings could sometimes exclude UNC-system President C.D. Spangler, as well as members of the press.

Jones doesn't seem to think this new practice is worth worrying about. "I've done this in other boards I've been on," he said. "I thought it would be a good idea to reserve the opportunity. It probably won't amount to much."

This proposed policy could amount to a great deal — that is, a great deal of problems. The North Carolina open meetings law allows public bodies to meet in private only to discuss personnel matters, acquisition of property and matters of litigation. This narrowly defined list is designed to ensure that the citizens of this state know what their public officials are doing.

By deciding to have private sessions at the end of all Board of Governors

meetings, Jones could make it easy to postpone touchy matters until those private sessions, regardless of whether the topics of discussion fall under the short list of exceptions to the open meetings law. Instead of viewing closed meetings as a necessary evil or at least an unusual event, the board could begin to use them as a convenient forum for controversial discussions.

Granted, the board, with its task of administering to 16 state institutions of higher education, deals with sensitive subjects often.

But public governing boards are supposed to be just that — public. The board serving North Carolina's institutions of higher education should be held to the same, if not higher, standard of openness as other public bodies.

The practice of having regularly scheduled private sessions at the conclusion of Board of Governors meetings is unprecedented in the University system, according to UNC officials. There's a reason for that. It's a bad idea. Jones should rethink his decision and announce that he's changed his mind — in an open meeting. — *Jean Lutes*

A neglected responsibility

When the five student organizations missed this year's deadline to apply for student fees, students no doubt noted the value of the groups involved. On this basis, perhaps the groups expected the Student Congress appeals committee to allow their funding requests to be considered, but the committee was right in its decision not to do so. Budgeting student fees is a complicated process which requires strong guidelines to ensure its efficiency, and allowing exemptions makes the rules meaningless.

Instead, the value of these groups turns their failure from a regrettable accident into an inexcusable mistake. The Black Student Movement and SAFE Escort, especially, perform important functions that cannot be ignored, yet both will not receive funding until next fall at the earliest. This is a direct abdication of responsibility on the part of these two groups' leaderships; getting the necessary funds to operate should be their first concern.

The timing of SAFE Escort's loss of funds comes as bitter irony, given the emphasis upon the program in the just-completed student elections. Nearly all of the candidates advocated

an expanded, more widely used escort service, but these plans might have to wait until next year if the student government's Executive Branch doesn't supply the group with some funding, or some other way around the process isn't found. Considering the recent rapes on Duke University's campus, delivering such money might not be a bad idea.

The BSM, however, has missed the deadline for the second time in three years, at a time when the University is finally beginning to take steps toward addressing minority concerns. Minority support programs and other services performed by the BSM are certainly good for the University, yet exempting the group from the budget process rules makes the wrong statement. If the BSM is going to be a focal point of black unity on this campus and an attraction for prospective black students, the group must have enough direction to file its budget request on time.

The victims in this affair, students whom the BSM and SAFE Escort will not be able to serve, can only wonder what these groups were thinking. As for campus groups, be warned: time and bureaucracy wait for no one. — *David Starnes*

Don't call me anymore

Weird people feed on editorial writers.

If there's anything I've learned from writing editorials this year, it's that signing editorials is inviting lunatics, radicals and even other staff members to harass you. It's not always dangerous, but it is often exciting. Before I resign from this delectable job, there are a few things I'd like to say.

One of my first editorials last fall was about the Ku Klux Klan marching in Hillsborough. I made one person mad enough to write a letter, and I was ecstatic. But my roommates were horrified. If our apartment was burned to the ground, they said, the loss of all our worldly belongings would be on your shoulders. Well, the building is still there, and they've finally gained confidence that I won't get us all killed.

When I wrote about the swastika painted in the Pit (during Human Rights Week and Kristalnacht), the man who painted it called me. He wanted me to know why he painted it; it was his way of saying farewell to Bill of Rights as George Bush takes office. I pointed out I'm no mother confessor and suggested he write a letter to the editor, but he was afraid somebody might try to kill him. I could understand that.

And more recently, I wrote about a man who had some cars towed, and he was kind enough to give me a call. He told me in no uncertain terms that I had no right to write about him without talking to him first, that he resented "so-called journalists" hiding behind the excuse they had a deadline to meet and that I probably have no future as a journalist.

Finally, it seems editorial writers are buzzard's meat for other staff members and even for other edit writers. Staff members tell me the only reason I do this is so I can complain legitimately in print twice a week.

All of you people are wrong. Editorial writers are really nice people who just happen to be eloquent at complaining, slamming and agreeing with just about everything under the sun. When the next editorial board takes office, have mercy on them. They have a tough job, coming up with gripes, cheers and jeers twice a week, and they get a lot of grief.

And for you who write letters to the editor about how stupid we are just to make us mad: keep 'em coming for the sake of our successors. We edit types live for that stuff. — *Sandy Dimsdale*

Postponing Real Life as long as possible

Well, everyone else gets to write all these neat Last Editorials and Last Columns and Last Police Roundups and stuff, and I was kinda feelin' left out, so I'm going to write something pompous and magnanimous even though I'll be back sooner than anyone would like me to be. God knows if I had a dime for every time someone told me I was a verbal psychotic, I'd have about \$3.70 in loose change, so I might as well spew what I want or it would be a little like getting grounded for something I didn't enjoy doing.

If everyone's not careful, this can be a tremendously dreary and depressing part of the year. After all, what is there to do? Being as old as we are, we don't get anything neat for Christmas anymore, and spring break isn't until next month. February, the short month of pink hearts and presidents, is also The Month When Nothing Really Ever Happens, so you can find yourself either striking up conversations about toe cheese with your suicidally boring roommate or contemplating death-by-Ding-Dongs whilst traddling through the gray Carolina slush.

By now, however, you freshmen should pretty much know what's going on; you've come to realize that your OC is now just a bad dream you pass by on the way to the lounge, you realize that you can skip two weeks of classes and nobody will notice and you understand that your "adviser" cares as much about your academic well-being as the janitor who picks up your Nutty Buddy wrapper in the Pit. Unfortunately, the stereotype of the freshman at Carolina is a loud dork with his fly open and both straps of his backpack roped around his shoulders, asking where "Day Hall" is. The truth is that it is *much* more comfortable to "double-strap" it, the pronunciation of Dey Hall is *stupid* and

Ian Williams Wednesday's Child

illogical, and I leave my fly open all the time, and I'm a very happy person thank you very much.

If you ask me, the trip to Magic Dorkdom lies in the region of the sophomores at this school, folks who have been here long enough to make friends and give crap to freshmen but still have years and years before they graduate. This best-of-all-possible-worlds syndrome makes them the giddiest boneheads around. If you see someone barfing off the seventh floor of Granville onto a police car, it's probably a sophomore. If someone has peed all over the toilet seat in your favorite bar, if someone has created a fellatio still-life study with shaving cream on the dorm bathroom mirror, if someone farts real loud during a test in econ class, it's probably a sophomore. The not to say that most sophomores don't have a functioning cerebrum. It just means they have the least to worry about.

When the junior year comes along, the honeymoon seems to be over. By now, you're deathly sick of all those people you've had "hello-how-was-your-break" acquaintances with, and the bar scene seems vacuous and futile. You spend the first half of the year wishing you were 21, and the second half depressed because you're so damn old. The cure? Go away, escape, off to the Alps of Italy or France, away to England for the year. Either that, or do what I did and take nothing but electives for your entire junior year. That way you can go abroad and stay in Chapel Hill at the same time! Sounded good to me . . .

And then comes the senior year, the schizophrenic combination year of apathetic spontaneity and spontaneous apathy. You desperately want to get out of the house, but lack the youthful impetus to get off your butt and socialize with others of your phylum — yet, when you're already out, you feel your shelf-life begin to dwindle around 12:30. The result is that we go through a second childhood where we want to play a lot, but never want to pick up our toys. This is the year when we are faced with so many things of horrendous import that nothing, not even the future, seems to matter — seniors don't care about the weather, personal hygiene, class attendance . . . and they sure as hell couldn't care less about damn student elections. Unfortunately, seniors spend most of their time thinking about how much more fun they had years ago rather than creating new stories to tell their grandchildren. The solution? That's right, do like me and stay another year!

What we are left with is the strange realization that the freshmen are the ones with the most clue that have the most fun. So what does college teach us? To grow down? Do we come here delightfully innocent and bursting with ideas to inflict on the world and leave here writing jaded Last Editorials and Last Columns and Last Police Roundups?

No, no, no — don't let February trick you into false depression. Soon spring will be here, and later Real Life will be here, and if we're all not careful, both will blossom into whatever the hell we want!

Ian Williams is a music and psychology major from Los Angeles who is taking the next month off to rekindle his creative bunsen burner.

Readers' Forum

Lessons from Blue Devils

To the editor:

No stranger a proponent for UNC student basketball seating could be found than myself. As an undergraduate at Duke, I grew to relish my times in Cameron Indoor Stadium. Even the worst undergraduate seats were good, better than any other "Iron Dukes" seats; we sat together courtside acting as a force for any opposing team to envy and fear. Basketball became the student body's common ground — our rallying point. There is no doubt in my mind that our efforts hailed the Blue Devils onto some amazing victories, such as the Duke defeat of UNC in 1981. But as I look back on that time, it is not simply the individual victories that made those times so special, but more the chance to bridge gaps in the academic community — whether social or intellectual. No matter who we were, men/women, black/white; what we did in the classroom, poli sci/chemistry; or what we did outside the classroom, independent/Greek, our time in Cameron was a time for us to act as a community.

Today my husband and I are lucky enough to have season tickets for Duke games. We sit on the very top row and we would not have it any other way. We look down to where we once sat/stood and eagerly await the next student cheer or burst of energy that can rally a losing team. Duke is still "our" team, but these games are the bonding experiences of the current Duke undergraduates; it is their time to form a community. And so I would hope it could be for the students at my new school.

A school with as rich a basketball tradition as UNC should be eager to create and draw on the strength of concentrated student participation. An institution like UNC with the diversity of people and academic pursuits should be charged with creating both intellectual and recreational opportunities to create com-



munity. Providing more quality seating for students addresses only one of the concerns, but one that is important.

ANNE WHITE
Graduate
RTVMP

Move seal farther south

To the editor:

The senior gift of the granite University seal is very nice, but instead of being placed in the middle of the circle of paths leading to many buildings, it is placed squarely on the path leading to South Building.

Disregarding this aesthetic oversight, the placement is inappropriate. South Building has not been the focus of my educational experience at UNC-CH. In fact, the administration's slow action on numerous issues (divestment immediately comes to mind), has been questionable at the least.

Yet maybe the placement is a correct statement on the power of South Building. Maybe its path is more important than the paths leading to other buildings, such as the

Campus Y. I should hope not.

I do not mean to belittle the great effort put forth by the 1989 class organizers, and I do not know why the site was chosen. However, I do know I would feel much more comfortable if the gift were moved a little further south, where it would be more of a unifier and less of a shrine to our administrators.

Then again, maybe South Building really is that strong. Dale McKinley might find the placement appropriate.

DAVID BECK
Senior
History/political science

Adopt a squirrel today

To the editor:

The News and Observer reported on Jan. 27 that the "president has turned loose Millie, his springer spaniel, on the White House squirrels . . . the squirrels . . . would soon be 'history' . . . and reporters . . . had 'missed one of the great news stories' — 'Millie almost got a squirrel yesterday' he said gleefully."

Now some of those cute little

fuzzy squirrels might be related to the Eastern Gray Squirrel, North Carolina's official mammal. Some might have even lived on our campus, being little "Tar Heels" so to speak.

Maybe the N.C. elephants in office can't take the chance of expressing outrage, but I think we can. Write a letter to President Bush, send him some doggie toys. I'm going to Washington in April and will take all the doggie treats I receive by then.

ED TOSTANSKI
Staff
Health Sciences Library

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters to the editor, please follow these guidelines:

■ All letters must be typed and double-spaced, for ease of editing.

■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.

U.S. refugee policy denies human rights

After hearing Dr. Patricia Fagen's Great Decisions lecture on United Nations refugee policy, we were humiliated by the narrow definition of refugee status adopted by most MDCs (more developed countries), especially the United States. Despite the fact that the U.S. has accepted more immigrants than any other nation since World War II, our per capita level of permitted immigration remains one of the lowest, and the policy itself remains one of the most bureaucratic and discriminatory in the world.

Fagen's position as public information officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees prevented her from openly criticizing U.S. policy. As politically conscious students, we feel frightened by America's increasingly narrow, protectionist view which favors economic prosperity over international, humanitarian goals. One such goal is the search for durable solutions to the plight of refugees. Though the country's immediate economic interests must be con-

Chaney/Naik Guest Writers

dered, the long-term implications of a global refugee crisis pose the greater threat to U.S. national interests. To be sure, if the U.S. continues a protectionist immigration policy, it will have to deal with a foreboding crisis in the near future.

As it stands, U.S. refugee policy fails in several ways, all of which Fagen enumerated but declined to criticize. For example, U.S. policy toward Central American refugees inconsistently favors Nicaraguan refugees over Guatemalans, and more to the point, favors MDC refugees over LDC (less developed countries) refugees. Furthermore, myopic U.S. policy favors refugee repatriation yet lacks crucial follow-up programs to ensure their safety. Perhaps the crux of our policy problem lies in our very definition of

refugee status. The U.S. subscribes to one of the narrowest definitions of refugee status of any MDC, defining a refugee as a person outside of his/her country of origin who has a well-founded fear of political persecution. In this context, the legitimacy of an individual's claim may be judged by officials who have a bias towards the candidate's political background or ethnic origin. This policy has forced many groups to file class-action suits against the U.S. government.

In conclusion, U.S. refugee policy disregards fundamental human rights. Indeed, a fair refugee policy begins by narrowing the gap between First and Third World countries. Yet, as it stands, the refugee crisis will not disappear, all nations must assume a global perspective to alleviate the plight of displaced peoples.

Bethany Chaney is a junior interdisciplinary studies major from Chapel Hill and Rupal Naik is a junior history major from Charlotte.