



Take time to see the detail and beauty of flowers.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

Seeing Takes Time

BY BILL FAVER

Sometimes it is interesting to notice how much you see along the roadside when someone else is driving.



FAVER

Your normal concentration on the roadway and traffic is broken and your eye catches all sorts of features and activities that come into view. And it is surely evident in a speeding car that seeing takes time.

When you catch a glimpse of something you would like to see in more depth, you are past and it is gone. This is particularly evident during these hot summer days when birds are usually in cover and flowers are abundant. We see a small bird and wonder what species it could be. We "see" a yellow flower and wonder what it is and how it got there. Few of us take the time to investigate fully and to learn something

about the bird or the flower.

Georgia O'Keefe, the southwestern artist noted for her paintings of flowers, clouds, and desert relics, wrote:

*Still—in a way—nobody sees
A flower really.
It is so small -
we haven't time.
And to see takes time,
Like having a friend takes time.*

When we do take time to see a flower, we are amazed at the detail and color and textures. Our thoughts go back to botany or biology classes in high school and college when we learned about pistils and stamens and stigma and styles and sepals and calyx, most of which we have forgotten. Perhaps we should just look and enjoy and finally see the flower as a thing of beauty brought about by the miracle of plant life in our special place along the shore. Take time to see!

GUEST COLUMN

University Tenure Decisions Affect All North Carolinians

BY PAUL RICH

In terms of North Carolina's economy and the lives of its citizens, university tenure affects far more of the state's families than is usually realized. Yes, tenure. The word comes from a Latin word meaning "to hold," and in some cases, it might be described as the legal equivalent of a perpetual hammock-and-cool-drink.

The tenure issue impacts North Carolina because of its enormous investment in higher education. There are more than 125 colleges and universities in the state, including 53 four-year institutions. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that total faculty at N.C. colleges and universities total 9,675, of which 4,353 are tenured. The overwhelming number of these tenured teachers are among the more than 5,000 full and associate professors.

There are 351,990 students enrolled in N.C. colleges and universities. The combined public and private higher-education budget is nearly \$4 billion; public institutions spend more than \$2.4 billion. So any policy which may, in effect, protect incompetent professors and reward research achievements over teaching has significant economic and public-policy repercussions for N.C. taxpayers.

Tenure is not just an issue in North Carolina. A recent article in the Australian and New Zealand weekly Campus Review bemoans the paralysis created in universities by the "taldads." Taldads, it turns out, are the "tenure, academic, lame-ducks, and dead-wood" in that part of the world.

Taldads enjoy jobs for life—and according to the article, this adversely influences government funding and donations. Donors and legislators confronted by blatant shirkers are skeptical about the incessant requests for ever more money to reduce teacher-student classroom ratios and buy excellence.

The New Zealand professor who makes the complaint asserts that the vacuum caused by the taldads has to be filled by hard-working academic colleagues. The damage, however, remains a shameful secret: "...We do not talk about these matters openly; instead, we just refer to it with a smattering of nods, winks, and euphemisms."

Tenure seems to many people to be an unwarranted piece of job protection. Remember when you were a youngster and a statement of dubious value had to be confirmed by an extra-special pledge? "Cross my heart 10 times and hope to die!" was

one I remember on the playground.

Now imagine if an average employer was asked to take an extra pledge like this: "Do you triple swear to obey the law of the land in employing me?" Or consider elected officials being sworn into office. Should they have to say "I further swear to take extra seriously the oath I've just sworn?"

Tenure rules resemble playground vows. They attempt, usually successfully, to bind universities to promises of fair employment. Of course, in practice this promise of "fair employment" becomes a promise of "life employment," since grounds for dismissal of tenured professors are limited and heavily regulated.

Tenure can paralyze an educational system. In an essay entitled "Democracy in Education," the much-misunderstood philosopher of education John Dewey wrote: "The system which makes no great demands upon originality, upon invention, upon the continuous expression of individuality, works automatically to put and to keep the more incompetent teachers in the school." Dewey goes on to warn that the best brains will not work where they must be preoccupied with conformity.

In practice, the tenure system requires a long period of conformity an servitude by young professionals, whose chances of long-term employment completely depend on pleasing the older faculty. Worse

still, suspicion grows that tenure is cynically being used to balance budgets—junior faculty are allowed to teach for years, at relatively low pay, and then are discharged for lacking tenurable qualities. Their places are then taken by younger, cheaper classroom fodder.

The historian Herman Home, in an essay on George Taylor Winston's presidency of the University of North Carolina in the early 1890s, relates that Winston was at the State Fair one year. Someone chided him about the lack of a university display at the fair. He looked around for a moment, waved his hands toward some passing students, and remarked, "Behold!"

President Winston had his values well ordered. He knew what the purpose of the university was. It's time that, along with the emphasis on faculty privileges and faculty benefits, there was as fervent an emphasis on the students and the quality of instruction.

We are now in the midst of a great national debate about medical treatment. To the medical profession's credit, few doctors have said that this discussion was only for physicians. One would hope professional educators would receive criticism about tenure and teaching in a similarly open fashion.

Rich is an alumnus of Harvard University, a Hoover Institution Visiting Scholar at Stanford University, and an adjunct scholar of the John Locke Foundation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sewer System Could Make Holden Like Jersey Shore

To the editor:

Everyone is aware of, and vitally interested in, the fate of Holden Beach as the overcrowding issue is debated. I have attended a number of meetings of the Holden Beach Property Owners Association and would like to address the issue of septic systems versus building a sewage disposal system. I am a chemist with 30 years' industrial experience. I also spent three months starting up the sewage disposal plant at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.

The real estate brokers at Holden Beach have expressed their support for a sewage disposal system, claiming this will solve the problem of overcrowding and resulting pollution. They would have us believe that all the waste we generate will magically disappear. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The solid waste we generate ends up as a solid waste by-product of the sewage disposal plant. It has to be disposed of, and is not odor-free. A working sewage disposal plant is not odor-free and generates more waste than a septic system. Operating one requires careful control and is an expensive operation. It is what we have to do when we become so overcrowded that our septic systems, which are simple and do a good job, are overloaded to the point where nature is insulted and more capacity is required.

Installing a sewage disposal system will increase all the problems associated with overcrowding. One need only study the problems experienced at the New Jersey shore to see what life will be like at Holden Beach. Overcrowding reduces the quality of life for everyone. The solution is to live within the boundaries set by nature, not try to extend them.

We live in South New Jersey near the shore, and also pass one of Philadelphia's newest sewage disposal plants on the way to the airport. In the summer, the stink is nauseating. In the 21 years we have lived in New Jersey, we have been to the shore less than 15 times. We have seen overcrowding and waste pollute the water, soil the beaches

and reduce the quality of life. Crowding brings out the worst in us. It will happen to Holden Beach if we allow it.

My wife and I purchased a home on Holden Beach as a place for our family. We admire and respect the culture we have discovered in the Brunswick Islands Low Country. It is a good place for people and families. We have made fine Southern friends and hope to become part of this community when we retire. It is our hope and prayer that this place that has been graced in a special way is not destroyed for material gain.

A.E. Schiavone
Indian Mills, N.J.

'Batten Down'

To the editor:

"The real gridlock is not between Democrats and Republicans, nor between the White House and Congress, but between politicians and the people they represent."

—Former Sen. Herman Rudman

Although the final verdict is not in, it is beginning to look more ominous. Obviously, we all want to see more jobs and the deficit decrease, now when our Congress split on President Clinton's economic package 50-50, with Vice President Gore casting the deciding vote. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this bill will

neither create jobs nor lower our national debt.

Batten down the hatches: Co-president Hillary Rodham Clinton has yet to unveil the massive national health bill to be passed by Congress.

We must eventually scrap the 4,000-plus pages that make up the U.S. Tax Code, which is strangling our economy at an ever-increasing pace. The average American should be able to fill out his or her return on a post card; this would mean some sort of a flat tax that, among innumerable benefits, would eliminate double taxation on dividends and the capital gains tax. This would seriously erode the power of politicians, lawyers and tax accountants.

Bob L. Johnson
Ocean Isle Beach

Write Us

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