

Perspectives

Inside the battle for BSM funds



BSM Special Projects Chairman Buddy Ray keeps morale up among protestors during demonstration in front of South Building. (Photo courtesy The Daily Tar Heel)

Spectators react

by Fay Mitchell
Features Editor

"I don't really know the entire situation," a student said.

"I don't think many people do," another said.

Two white UNC students commented candidly as they observed the Black Student Movement demonstration at South Building on Sept. 19.

The freezing of funds in July earmarked for the BSM when former Student Body Treasurer Mike O'Neal created considerable controversy among UNC's Black students.

"I can understand that, one student said. I kinda admire ya for trying to get out and get your funds back and taking some action against it (CGC)," "The only thing

that I think is everybody ought to get their funds."

All of the white students interviewed who knew anything about the freeze at all, knew only the limited information that funds had been frozen. None knew the reasons for the freeze, while some thought that only the Gospel Choir's funds had been frozen.

"When this money was taken away, wasn't it because the president of the Black Student Movement went to Florida?" another unidentified white male asked. "I heard that he bought a

"I'm with 'em all the way"

bunch of watermelons and took them back up to New York and sold them," he added sarcastically.

He admitted that he hadn't "the faintest idea" of what the reasons were for the freeze, nor was he aware of any other things the BSM had done prior to the demonstration.

"I've been reading about it in the *Tar Heel*," said the student next to him. "The picture I got was that the BSM was in violation of the treasury laws because of some funding of the choir, but I don't know the whole story."

These and other students were witnesses of the demonstration and were interviewed during the protest. Prior to the event, most admitted that they were unconcerned or unaware of the situation of the BSM.

"I was really taken aback when they were up there singing songs and demanding that the Student Government loosen up all their money," one student added.

"I'm with 'em all the way," commented another. "They ought to be screamin' and hollerin'."

Choir funds still held

continued from page 1

and even some on the Campus Governing Council felt that student government was determined to incapacitate itself through the power plays of individuals.

Diggs felt that the continuous freezing of BSM funds was CGC's way of stifling the organization, he said. Charges were made toward the choir and not the general organization, he added.

The funds were finally unfrozen again Tues., Sept. 23, by CGC. However, the choir's funds remained frozen pending a review of past records. Black CGC member Sheri Parks and Wallace will investigate the records and submit a report to CGC this month.

Perspectives

Though the funds have been released, the BSM will be kept under probation by the student body treasurer for the entire year.

In the aftermath of the battle with CGC, BSM members are dissatisfied with probation or continued freezing of the choir's funds.

"To say the least, I'm disappointed," Diggs said. "The decision to put the entire organization on probation for a period of one year essentially means that the student body treasurer will handle all financial transactions for the organization."

Diggs said he intends to recommend that the Central Committee petition CGC for a repeal of the probation.

BSM Treasurer Pearl Burris is a sophomore biology pre-med major.

"I personally feel that I don't have a position," she said.

Burris hopes to see O'Neal removed from office if Bates does have dismissal power.

Three Blacks served on CGC and among them are two BSM members: Sheri Parks and Greg Reid. The third Black, Humphrey Cummings is a graduate student. Diggs feels that they were instrumental in getting the BSM heard by CGC.

"If there were no Black members to help present the BSM case, and if also all of the white members on the Campus Governing Council were anti-BSM," Diggs said, "then we would have had no way to even have our own budget situation considered." There were two or three white CGC members who were also sympathetic, he added. "These same people, perhaps, were simply fed up with the tactics that the CGC was employing, as I see it, to strangle the

Black Student Movement," he said.

Parks, also on the finance committee, feels that she was more instrumental on the finance committee.

"The initial work (in CGC) is done in committees," she said, "and a lot of times things don't get changed once they come out, so it's important to get things the way you want them or the best way in the committee."

Parks felt that it may have been wise that the BSM chose to go along with a year's probation, she said. "I think that if the BSM hadn't decided to go along with probation, the bill wouldn't have passed CGC," she said.

At first BSM didn't want to put the choir on the stake, she said, but after sympathetic CGC members explained to them that it might be a case of the choir and BSM both staying frozen, they decided to compromise a little bit, she said.

Diggs said he thinks "that the choir members felt as if we were supporting them in every way possible to get funds, not just for the BSM, but for the choir also."

Some Central Committee members had felt that if only general funds were released, the BSM would be selling out the choir.

Sharon Ezell, president of the BSM Gospel Choir, feels that the choir has been wronged by CGC, she said, because the money that was kept in the local bank account was earned by their own efforts.

"Our purpose has never been to raise money," she said. All money is donated and churches pay for gas and meals. The 55-60 member choir has been very active since the semester began, and they are almost completely booked through October.

"It's not stopping us from singing," she added.

Choir: a spiritual outlet

by Deborah Craig
Asst. Layout Editor

The audience files into the auditorium. Massive chatter can be heard. Someone announces, "Ladies and gentlemen I present to you the Black Student Movement Gospel Choir!" The pianist strikes up a rocking march song. The choir files in one by one. Each member falls into place and prepares to sing.

At this point the audience is ready for what promises to be a soul-stirring performance. Suddenly the director raises his hand and voices blend to produce a rousing, harmonious sound. Smiles appear on the faces of both the audience and the choir members as the performance begins.

The BSM Gospel Choir has earned respect and recognition throughout the state. In 1974 the choir won the first intercollegiate gospel choir competition and a prize of \$500. Most recently, that prize has been the subject of controversy between the Campus Governing Council and the BSM.

The choir was formed in 1971 because Black students desired an outlet to

express their gospel music talents. The choir receives invitations from churches and organizations throughout the state.

The choir has performed to countless audiences for many years but the audiences rarely realize what goes into a performance.

Rehearsals are held twice a week for about two hours each session. Sometimes the practices go well. Everyone is serious and sincerely interested in mastering the dynamics of a song. Other times rehearsals are quite frustrating. The tenors always seem to be the last one to learn their parts; often the altos take the tenor parts; the sopranos argue over who will sing first and second; and basses wait until everyone else has learned the song before adding the bottom.

After much frustration by the pianist and the director the song is finally learned. Words make a song good, but dynamics must be learned. The director decides where to swell, hold, when to cut off and when to add vibrato.

Finally the repertoire is mastered. Everyone feels a sense of personal pride and accomplishment as new songs have

been molded to perfection.

Everyone is anxious while waiting in the wings. The performance will soon begin. Some get that last smoke. Some get the words again. Still others pop a throat lozenge or spray their throats numb. Everyone scurries into place as they hear the opening chord.

The choir appears to be a poised, experienced group of performers. The soloists grip the audience with their soul-stirring songs. The harmony is flawless. The pianists are dynamic. The audience has a need to be entertained and the choir more than fulfills the need.

The performance ends. The choir is well received and happy the performance has gone perfectly. Well almost... nobody really noticed that Rose forgot the words and did the verse twice. No one noticed the altos sang the tenor part. Or even when the pianist hit the five wrong notes. Everyone was so "full up" with the "Spirit" until the "mistakes" obvious to the choir went unnoticed by the audience.

Nevertheless everyone is happy as they file out of the auditorium. The audience is fulfilled and the choir is fulfilled.