

THE SALEMITE

Free Press

Is Responsibility

To the Editors:

In my box this morning there was a handwritten note (unsigned) saying "Obviously there is no 'freedom of the Press' at Salem." Although I would like to speak with the writer to be sure I understand the message, I can assume the reference is to coverage -- or lack of coverage -- of the April 18 reading of the petition to Dr. Chandler.

I would like to take this opportunity to suggest some of the facts about newspaper publicity. Of course, anyone can call a reporter and invite him or her to campus. However, when the reporter is here there is no way to control what appears in the newspaper. We can offer information, facts and figures, and suggest leads for various points of view. What is written is strictly the reporter's business. A reporter is a professional who uses his own judgement on what and when to write. That is freedom of the press.

Case in point: Charles McEwen of the SENTINEL was not called by this office. As far as I know there had been no decision suitable for release. How changes on campus are arrived at is an internal affair and is rarely of general public interest. This was the finding by Mr. McEwen. In his judgement there had not been sufficient action taken or general agreement arrived at to warrant a story. While he was here he was asked by some students not to write a story, and by others to use only their ideas. Another reporter might have considered the "meeting" and "demand" funny, and might have written a spoof on "Susie Salem Strikes Again." Often the loudest yells for freedom are actually equally insistent on control.

It is the old saw about freedom carrying responsibility which is impossible to duck. When I call a reporter I am responsible to see that he gets all possible information. The same obligation holds when I am called by a reporter.

Obviously the business of a newspaper is to carry news -- not to carry torches for special groups or factions. So used, or tried to use, the publicity often does harm to the promoters, and to others perhaps not considered in the zeal of being heard.

The purpose of a News Bureau is to release the news of public interest to the public. Perhaps the office can be of more assistance to students who have news of interest to the general public.

Student Grill Fails

Students may be wondering what has happened to the Student Grill since its rather hesitant start of two months ago. According to Mr. Place, it has for all practical purposes, folded. Student organization in setting it up has been rickety; and interest died soon after it opened. The idea was a good one; and it was one that met no obstacles from the school in getting its start. The beer license that we wanted for it is available. The costs of running such a snack bar would be low; only the cost of the food and the student help would be included. The snack bar, if it were re-established, would give valuable work time to scholarship students and others who want to make extra money on campus. With all these pros, why did the students let the idea go?

Obviously, it is too late for anyone to get to work on re-starting the snack bar for this academic year. However, someone should take the initiative for next year to get it going again. (Individuals could plan it, or the student government could designate the organizing of it next year.) It would give students an extra lift to be able to relax on campus -- and who knows? Gas may be so high in September that we won't be able to afford all those mile-or-so treks to the Trophy Room or Tavern. At any rate, the snack bar should become a reality next year instead of an abandoned idea.

-- Clark Kitchin

editorial

In Student Government meeting on April 17th, Dr. Chandler announced the change in policy which would occur concerning inter-visitation on Salem campus. The crux of this announcement was printed on page 1 of *The Salemite*, April 23rd issue. In his statement, Chandler outlined a plan for visitation allowing for six campus wide weekends in which dorms would be open to male visitors as well as one additional weekend for visitation to be determined by individual dorms.

His announcement was met with little enthusiasm and even less approval by the student body. Indications of this student discontent became public with the posting of signs on campus urging all students interested in a revision of Dr. Chandler's proposal to attend an important meeting the following day. Approximately 150 students came to the meeting in which confusion reigned. Only a handful of those present understood the purpose for the meeting and the facts which lay behind this student irritation. Much uncertainty existed concerning the statement of the original petition composed by students last fall, the final recommendation of Faculty Advisory Board, and the evaluation of the committee of students, faculty, and Trustees meeting in January. Thus, a majority of the students' comprehension of the facts was severely limited. It was determined however to walk in an orderly fashion to Dr. Chandler's office where a formal statement of student dislike for the proposal was read. Dr. Chandler expressed his desire to study the statement more carefully and the crowd dispersed. But, the discontent remains, and can be overheard in student conversation at the dinner table, while ambling to the post office, and while sitting in a dorm room.

Most students feel the proposal read by Dr. Chandler was entirely different from the request of the original petition. They particularly disliked the concept of pre-planned weekends, arguing that this type of arrangement fosters an "open house" atmosphere as opposed to the more "natural" atmosphere of a regular weekly visitation policy. The desired informal environment cannot exist when visitation is connected with social functions on Salem campus.

Students were further irritated by the fact that the administrative proposal does not truly alter the status quo. Since at present, Salem College students have the right to petition for open house on certain designated weekends, i.e. social weekends. Moreover, they disliked the idea of not being allowed to determine the hours of visitation themselves.

Fault was also found with the proposal being subject to review in January, 1974. Many students consider it as thwarting all efforts to modify the proposal before this time, consequently adding a greater time lapse to the already slow process -- a process stretching out over a two year period.

It was these factors which provided the stimulus for the impromptu meeting at the Lily Pond and the resultant reading of the student petition. However, even at this student meeting the facts were greatly obscured. Although both students and administration probably inadvertently and unconsciously obscured the facts, nevertheless many students remained confused. Confusion was specifically noted in the issues concerning who was responsible for the proposal read in SGA meeting, why it appeared in such an altered form, and what process is necessary to effect any change in policy on Salem campus. There existed a need to get the facts straight and out into the open. The administration has a responsibility to present the facts to the students, and the students have an equal responsibility of being aware of the facts so that well-planned action can be taken. In this issue is presented an evolvement of the petition into its present form in hopes that a greater understanding of the situation will occur.

College Continues Grades

Canton, N.Y. -- (I.P.) -- The following is a brief review of an important grading policy study carried out at St. Lawrence University. Submitted by Assistant to the Dean Paul R. Johnson, "It has become the basis of faculty discussion or subject as part of a general curricular review. "Because of its rather useful and realistic treatment of an issue being examined on many campuses, I felt it might be beneficial to others to have the highlights of this study given wider circulation."

Noting that "any grading system can be effective based on the integrity of its application," the French Grading Report observes that while "within the St. Lawrence community we might well choose any one of a number of options and be reasonably happy with that choice . . . the uncompromising fact will still remain that grading policies and grades have a broader utility" than institutional honors and regulations.

Evidence was cited of difficulty in placement in graduate schools and professions by students with a significant proportion of non-traditional grading in their record. The report concluded this introduction to its study by saying,

"The conclusion that emerges from this commentary is that grades are important primarily after he leaves St. Lawrence. To arbitrarily institute a revised system that may jeopardize the student's future opportunities is thus unreasonable and unfair.

"The task is to retain a system guarantee that evaluation carried out in each course is as meaningful as it may possibly be within the limitations of the various symbolic systems available."

The report goes on to review the arguments for and against

several of the most common symbolic and non-symbolic grading systems, both traditional and non-traditional. Finally, a summary of committee opinion and recommendations is drawn. Highlights include the following:

1. The committee favored an ABCD/No Credit or ABC/No Credit overall grading format. It should be noted that the committee preferred the No Credit option for courses failed rather than the traditional "F" grade or the non-entry of failed courses. The failed course would not be computed in the cumulative grade point average.

2. The committee favored continuing the current four course Pass/Fail option over either reducing or extending the number of such options.

3. The committee favored the concept of the "X" grade as a grade for "work in progress." This is intended to be used for courses in which necessary work could not be completed within the designated semester. This grade is not to be confused with the "Incomplete" grade assigned to students who simply fail, for legitimate reasons, to complete the course work within the semester.

4. The committee strongly favored the use of a proposed written evaluation form. Intended as a means of more complete "feedback" to students on course achievement, this evaluation form would be used in cases of pass/fail grading and when students receive the No Credit or failing grade in regularly graded courses. The form could also be used for courses taken in a student's major and become part of his departmental file. In addition, it may be used in other special cases at the request of a student or at faculty initiative.

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NOTICE

CCSL program will have the artist Robert Gwathmey speaking to the group on Friday, May 11th. He is a Southern artist. CCSL is also sponsoring an open house for all students and faculty on Tuesday afternoon May 8th in the Club Dining Room. There will be many exhibits on display with all students in the program present to discuss their individual projects. Refreshments will be served and it is hoped everyone will attend to discover what the CCSL group has been accomplishing this past semester.

Leg. Board Meets Discusses Issues

- I. The meeting was called to order by Averell Pharr.
- II. A petition concernign the furnishings of the library reading room was read. It proposes that this room remain furnished in the same traditional manner. Before approving the petition, Leg. Board decided to ask Mr. Place to report on the plans for the library.
- III. There will be required SGA meetings on April 25 at 12:30 and on April 26 at 12:00.
- IV. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Cindy-Louis