

GRYPHON EDITORIALS

Our Problem In Communications

During Black History Week no assembly program was presented. Several students were offended feeling that this action (or lack of action) was a denouncement of Black History Week. These students had been informed by other students that the expected program had been rejected by the administration. In reality, the Human Relations Committee, which planned Black History Week activities, had not asked for an assembly. Students then planned not to attend the upcoming Brotherhood Week Assembly in protest of rejection of the Black History Assembly. Eventually, the entire school was tense and unsettled. Some spoke of boycotts; others whispered of riots.

The entire incident could have been avoided. The situation was simply an example of something very common at Rocky Mount Senior High School — lack of communication.

In late December approximately forty interested students met to form the Black Heritage Committee. Their purpose — to assure the recognition of Black heritage at Rocky Mount Senior High. Guidance Counselor Mrs. Deythe Tweedy informed the committee that they had no acting power because: 1) The objectives they proposed were appointed duties of the Human Relations Committee. 2) The Committee had not been created by the Student Representative Assembly. Mrs. Tweedy advised the committee to work on the Human Relations Committee in order to achieve their goal. Some of the students felt that this action was taken to discourage Black students from initiating activities. They saw the denial of a Black Heritage Committee as enforcement of that policy. Others were op-

posed to working with the Human Relations Committee if they could not be designated as the Black Heritage Committee.

Many students feel that their needs cannot be met by approaching Mr. Elton Newbern. Mrs. Edythe Tweedy, or even elected homeroom representatives. Therefore, their gripes are expressed to their peers. There is obviously a gap in communication.

Evidently members of the school faculty and student body recognize this problem in communication. Miss Kate P. Kitchen is frequently heard at class meetings advising students to talk to SRA representatives, class, and homeroom officers about questions or gripes. But, can they fill the gap? If they are used effectively, yes.

But now is the time to realize that though the streams of communication are available, a great number of students are not using them. The reaction to the assembly program should have emphasized that point. As in the previously mentioned case the so-called Black Heritage Committee was aware of a second channel to accomplish its goal. Yet its members refused.

Simply drumming the makeup of the Student Representative Assembly into the minds of the students is not a solution. Instead everyone should first realize that available channels of communication are not being used. Second, everyone should react by forming other communication methods and working committees to meet student needs.

Whatever the reaction, considering lack of communication a problem and good communication a necessity, someone must act.

False Complaints On Lunchroom

Everyone knows the food in the cafeteria is awful. Most of the food students receive is cold. In fact before our cafeteria ever existed there was a problem with insects, (such as flies), lunch being too high, long lunch lines, and no space in the lunchroom. This is prejudice, handed down to every child as soon as he learns the meaning of the word "school."

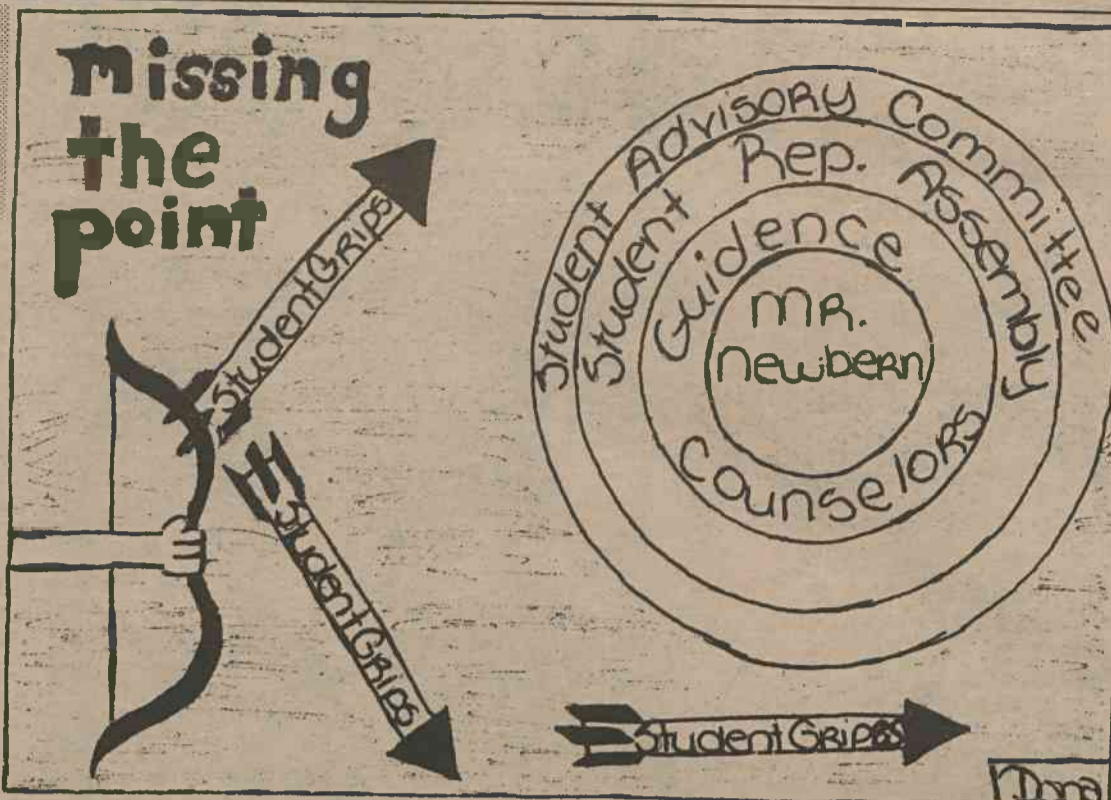
Is everybody taking the word of some unquestioning person? Is there any honest person willing to test the cafeteria food before making the daily statement, "I don't see how anyone can eat this awful food, without being sick!" And additionally, will anyone directly

admit that the mess created is by students themselves?

Do students consider cafeteria employees' labor to fix nutritious and good meals every day? Without the aid of state and federal government, prices would increase, and a lot of students would go without eating.

So before they talk about how bad the lunchroom is, students should try tasting the "cuisine" with an optimistic point of view.

However, it does seem that the cafeteria is too small to serve over 1500 students. And also students feel that the lunch period is not adequate. Students need time to expend energy that is stored up for eight hours a day.



Ruling Doesn't Affect RMSH Policy

The latest Supreme Court Ruling stating that students cannot be suspended from school without a hearing and notice of charges has set many students stirring about their rights. Students believe this ruling will affect RMSH. However, this procedure has been in effect officially in the Rocky Mount City School System since 1971. A mimeographed edition of this 1971 established policy can be obtained by the principal if a student wishes to read more.

The students have many

rights concerning suspensions and expulsions. Since expulsion involves the student's statutory right to attend school, many procedures have been set up so that a student is treated fairly. According to the Rocky Mount School Policy, the principal must investigate any report of alleged misconduct and hear all accounts of the incident. Students, in turn have the right to defend themselves on any charge brought against them. Disciplinary action can be postponed if evidence cannot be presented at that time.

The most serious action a principal may take without conferring to a higher source or administrator is to give a ten day suspension. The principal must send a statement to the student's parents and to the Superintendent describing the student's conduct and the reason behind the principal's actions. He must make "every effort" to hold a conference with the parents and to file all relevant information received.

The Supreme Court ruling focuses mainly on the due process of students concerning long-term suspensions or expulsions. The policies set up in the Rocky Mount School System give the students many rights concerning this. The principal must notify the student's parents if a long-term suspension or expulsion is being considered. The student must be given a hearing within 3-5 days after notification of misconduct. The person appointed by the Superintendent to preside over the hearing is the Convener. The rest of the board would consist of three teachers and two parents appointed by the Superintendent.

The hearing would be closed to outsiders and the student could have his parents present, and if desired, the student's representative. The student would also have the right to (Continued on page three)

Students Speak Up

Dear Editor:

My name is Gloria Dunn. I am a Senior SRA Representative. I am writing not only to express my feelings but the feelings of many other black students. Yes, I am a black student. I and others feel that the latest issue of the GRYPHON newspaper dated February, 1975, should not have been printed as it was. I have two reasons that were brought up.

Number one is the issue of the Outstanding Seniors. I question some of the choices, but I am not mainly concerned with that since I know that these were chosen by the Senior class. I do not know whether you are directly involved with the final choosing of the seniors. I hope you will relay this to the group who chose the seniors. Last year there were ten blacks and ten whites, which was agreeable to all of the students. This year there are only eight blacks and twelve whites which we feel is not fair. Most of the students that I have asked feel that it should have been done as it was last year. This is how I thought they would be chosen. We feel rather than take out two of the white students, choose four more of the elected blacks. Then in future selections let it be five white boys, five black boys, five white girls, and five black girls. We feel this will save a lot of confusion and tension.

Secondly is the matter of the Mardi Gras pictures printed in the paper. As it stands it seems as if there were no blacks that

went to the Mardi Gras. There are as many black students in the band as well as white. There could have been more variation in the pictures. There were blacks that went and enjoyed the celebration as well.


These are just two of the many matters that some of the black students feel are unfair and they can be corrected.

I would appreciate it if you and whomever it concerns would consider this letter and the corrections that could be made. Thank you.

A Fellow Student,
Gloria S. Dunn

Please turn to page ten for a continuation of this column.

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