

The greening of a campus

by michael mcculley

It has all the makings of an Alfred Hitchcock thriller, except that the Director would kill off the good guy in the first reel and expect you to sit through the rest of the film anyway.

The greening has begun; it started quietly, almost unnoticed, molded in conference rooms and over coffee in the University Center. The characters themselves are not sure what role they're playing.

Behind the scenes are many diverse factors—private ambitions, personalities in conflict, jobs filled with a faithfulness to the Peter Principle. How do you understand the complex struggle of forces now existing at UNCC? It is not easy, but patient questioning often provides a frame for clarity.

You can begin anywhere and end up the same place, with the same feeling of manipulation. Charlie Sutton is a case in point. Through his story, and related events, you begin to see the beginning of Consciousness I, a real "Loss of Reality."

Rumors and misinformation have run amuck on-campus all summer concerning our Student Body President, Charlie Sutton. Charlie was elected by the Student Body in May, when he was a graduate student. He had been the President of the Student Body at Western Carolina during his undergraduate days and compiled an impressive record of student-oriented programs under his administration.

After a year in Washington, working with the National Association of Student Governments, Charlie enrolled in a Graduate Business Program at UNCC; inevitably, his interest in student government led him into active politics on-campus, culminating in his election as UNCC's first graduate president.

Charlie had met the man he succeeded in office, Alan Hickok, along with Chancellor Colvard, in Washington the year before. Charlie and Alan were similar in many aspects: their desire to see student government increase its role in serving the student was identical.

Together, these two spent long hours preparing a new Student Constitution, placing within it much their leadership experience had taught them was important and necessary for students. First rumblings from the Administration came at this time. When hearings were held on the Constitution, only a few students showed up to question its provisions. The Administration, primarily Vice Chancellor Cone, contended this proved the document did not represent the desires of the students.

Quite the contrary, however, came up when the document passed overwhelmingly in the spring elections. Apparently, the students did not need to attend hearings: they agreed with the diligent work of their two leaders.

After the document was passed, the Student Government asserted its individuality in not submitting it to the Administration for their review. Charlie indicated that "a student constitution needs no approval from anyone but students."

Vice Chancellor Cone disagreed, in effect, saying the Constitution had no validity until reviewed by the Administration. They wished to check it against their "Bible," the University Code as established by the Trustees. It was at this stalemate in positions that Charlie Sutton found himself checkmated.

In his only published statement on the matter, Charlie prepared a **Report To The Students**, printed below in entirety:

"The work that Stan (Vice President-then, Stan Patterson) and I have been doing this summer session has been primarily in these areas:

1. Getting the Student Government Office and files in order and beginning work on making appointments.

2. A letter has been sent to Dr. Cone expressing the student interest in completing the social Rathskeller area in the dorm cafeteria basement. We plan to have this facility ready by Fall for student use next year. We are awaiting a response from the administration.

3. We have requested of Mr. Vaughn's office (Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs) an accounting of all monies in the University, particularly with regard to student money; activity, academic, and non-academic. In addition to an accounting of all revenue-producing sources

and a list of contributors to the University. We are also awaiting a response to that request."

"With regard to my academic standing, I realize that a good many rumors have been circulating. I was carrying three semester graduate courses this past spring semester. Due to some personal and family problems, I was able to withdraw from one of my courses, but not from the other two thus receiving two 'no credit.'

"Since I am over 21 and a N.C. resident, I plan to register as a Special Student. However, it seems now that the Administration wishes to make an issue over whether or not I can be Student Body President. I have asked that this question be on the agenda of the next Student Legislature meeting. This question is of concern only to students and it is not the business of the Administration. It is not for the Dean of Students, Chancellor, or 'University' court to say who shall choose to be the Student Body President.

"I ran in good faith and made promises accordingly. I believe that I have a commitment to fulfill to the students. I believe that a Student Body President is responsible to those people who elected him—students, not Administration."

Charlie Sutton

Charlie found himself in a tenuous position because of his academic performance. He reported to the writer at a later date: "The transition to graduate school would have been no problem alone. It was my efforts with Alan—the Constitution, the campaigning for President—along with some private family problems that disrupted my graduate work."

The word of his academic status came to Charlie in a letter, dated June 10, 1971, from Dr. Daymond Turner, Director of Graduate Business Studies. Charlie proceeded to examine his avenues of appeal and options.

Compounding his problems, the UNCC **Goldigger** was scheduled for printing by the Observer Printing House, due in time for orientation in the fall. Eddie Bernson, **Goldigger** Editor, made final plans with Charlie and was prepared to approve the printing.

The Observer Printing House was notified by an undisclosed Administrative official, presumably the Dean of Students Dennis Rash, to accept no further instructions from Charlie Sutton on the **Goldigger**. This occurred in late June, 1971. To date, the **Goldigger** has not been printed.

The **Journal** learned of the status of Charlie Sutton and prepared to print a summer issue explaining the details surrounding his academic standing. However, after much debate, the **Journal** realized two factors in the matter: a) most of the regular student body were absent from campus and could not be advised of what was happening; b) the incident was still swelling up, with very little decided officially.

Apparently the Administration, after receiving notice of Charlie's academic status from the Graduate Office, felt compelled to bring up the issue of the Presidency. Charlie had not resigned his position and the Student Legislature had not removed him from office. On June 28, 1971, a UNCC News Release, prepared by Ken Sanford, Director of Information, was dispatched to the local media. It read as follows:

"Stanley F. Patterson of 3752 the Plaza has assumed the presidency of the Student Government Association at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"A junior sociology major, Patterson was elected vice president of the student body in last spring's campus elections.

"As vice president he replaces Charles Sutton, a former graduate student who is no longer enrolled at UNCC and therefore is automatically succeeded by Patterson under the student constitution.

"As the new president, Patterson becomes a member of the University of North Carolina Board of Trustees."

The press release was made "because the University has a concern in student affairs," according to Sanford. The reaction to the release was immediate and vehement.

Stan Patterson delivered to the **Journal** a statement on the presidency on June 29, 1971. Below in his statement of that date:

"The move by the Administration to remove



"School is indeed a good thing because it teaches the student to be a person because it instills the essential values for fear of failure, envy of success, and...
— Radical School Reform

Charlie Sutton as President of the Student Body has jeopardized two basic rights of the students. The first action by the Administration was to declare Charlie unqualified according to the Body Constitution. This supposedly legitimate action by the Administration undermines one of the basic rights of all students. The right to elect leaders and write a constitution are freedoms that all students must enjoy."

"Along with this right of election there must be the right to judge the President by his peers, according to the Student Constitution. We do not want nor need Administrative intervention in the internal affairs of the SGA, namely interpreting a student-written and ratified Constitution."

"The second action by the Administration is the policy stand of the Chancellor. The Chancellor's attitude is that even if the Student Legislature interpret Charlie's 'special student status' as constitutional, the Chancellor himself will not allow a special student to be Student Body President. If the Chancellor can begin choosing who shall be President and who cannot, then why should we elect a President in the first place? We cannot allow an Administrative opinion to dictate who our student leaders shall be."

"The only body that is authorized to interpret the student Constitution is the Student Legislature. Whatever the Legislature decides, both Charlie and I will honor, but it must be a student decision, not an administrative one."

Sincerely,
Stan Patterson
Student Body Vice President

Stan was angry at this point; he refused to acknowledge himself as President. Charlie continued to pursue his appeals, finding out if or how he could re-enter the University as an undergraduate or as a special student. Charlie made decisions on bills, but Stan signed them since Charlie's signature on checks was no longer accepted.

A summer Student Legislature meeting was forthcoming and Charlie and Stan prepared to present their case. Another case was being prepared, this one by the Dean of Students, Dennis Rash. As Administrative spokesman, he appeared at the Legislature meeting of July 7, 1971 and gave to the Legislators present his statement which is reprinted in entirety below:

"July 5, 1971—To All Student Legislators:

"In his **Report to the Student Legislators**, Charlie Sutton has stated that 'the Administration wishes to make an issue over whether or not I can be Student Body President.' Charlie further states that 'This question is of concern only to students and is not the business of the administration. Quite obviously, the Dean of Students is concerned with any question that affects students and, for that reason, I believe it appropriate to clarify a few points about which 'a good many rumors have been circulating.'

"The first area in which these rumors have been circulating, as indicated by Charlie's report, involves his academic standing. Charlie's report unfortunately does not completely explain the situation. And since this matter has become an issue, candor compels me to provide some background information.