

# Dangerous changes for Senate

—by pat miller

Recent developments concerning the University Senate may well be spelling out "crisis" for that two-year-old organization, an advisory body of the university governance system. The recent defeat of an elections amendment to the rules of the Senate plus the withdrawal of three of the body's most influential members from elections this week may mean serious trouble for the Senate in the future.

It was on February 15 that the proposed amendment to Article V of the University Constitution was defeated. The amendment to the Senate article would have changed Senate representation and election procedures. The biggest changes would have come in streamlining of the electoral process, lengthening of Senators' terms from one to two years, and in modification of representation that would have added more "service and supply" personnel to the Senate. Faculty vote defeated the amendment.

According to Dr. Loy Witherspoon, current chairman pro-tem of the Senate, the defeat of the amendment arose not from its content but rather its design. The authors of the amendment felt that it should "hang together", Witherspoon said, and thus designed it so that it had to be passed or defeated as a whole. Its separate parts could not be voted on singularly.

It was evidently the all-or-nothing nature of the amendment that caused its defeat. In hearings held last week to discover the dissatisfaction with the amendment, Witherspoon learned that many faculty members attributed their no vote on the amendment to their dislike of particular changes it would have made, and not dislike of the entire document. Apparently different colleges voted against representation changes by voting down the entire amendment.

In a letter to all the college deans announcing the open hearings on the amendment, Witherspoon wrote that initiating the new approach to university governance represented by the Senate requires "patience, understanding, and a willingness to work" in order that the Senate achieve its objective of representative negotiation. Advising that those working in and about the Senate must seek a workable compromise concerning their desires, Witherspoon then added this statement:

"As I reflect on our past failures I am mindful that we all, deans, senators, and faculty members of the respective colleges alike, have not been sufficiently mindful of our responsibilities toward making the Senate function as it was intended."

At this time the information and opinions received from the open hearings is being evaluated to aid in the initiation of a third try at amendment to the Senate constitution article, a try that Witherspoon says will be made this year. The old and cumbersome election procedures are still in effect for this year, but getting a new amendment this spring will save the time and effort the Senate would have to make in beginning the work again next year. Witherspoon feels that the change will be easier to make this year while the defeated amendment is still remembered.

The other big change concerning the present Senate also involves Loy Witherspoon, plus two other very influential faculty members of the Senate. The other two are Dr. Doug Orr, chairman of the Senate's Long-Range Planning Committee, and Dr. Nish Jamgotch, a member of the Executive Committee. All three of these men have decided not to run for re-election to the Senate.

According to Drs. Orr and Witherspoon the three decisions not to run again were all made independently, with no prior consultation by the three Senators. Orr said that he was dropping out partially because of a time factor, because of the several "different total commitments" that he must fulfill. He also remarked that he felt his two years on the Senate was enough, and that his withdrawal would allow for rotation of Senators through different administrative posts.

Witherspoon seconded most of Orr's feelings about withdrawal, and said that he, Orr and Jamgotch had found their reasons for withdrawal very similar in a discussion after their separate decisions. Witherspoon feels that serving on the Senate should be shared by other faculty members and students, remarking that the Senate needs both "continuity and turnover" in its representation.

Orr and Witherspoon were both reluctant to blame frustration with the Senate as a reason for withdrawal. Orr admitted "some frustration", but with the realization that the present is a "difficult time" for the Senate. Witherspoon was more explicit about the difficulties and frustration, saying that those who work in the Senate receive "absolutely no recognition.... no consideration" and no understanding about the job they are trying to do.

This lack of understanding is evidently most serious among students. In the recent amendment vote only 51 student votes were recorded, displaying an obvious lack of student concern with the Senate. Yet the creation of the Senate arose partially in response to the student unrest of the sixties, as an attempt to provide a representative voice for all those who take part in the university. The Senate is an experiment in university governance, and there is not an equal to it in many modern colleges.

There are two ways to govern a university, according to Dr. Witherspoon. One is by the action of various pressure blocks against the administration, which is a rather conflicting means of governance. The University Senate represents the other way, which attempts to de-emphasize pressure blocks while allowing for the negotiation of mutual concerns. That is the purpose of UNCC's Senate, which directly



advises the administration on issues that are put forward by its representatives.

Is the Senate in dire straits? Both Drs. Orr and Witherspoon say no. Both admit that their withdrawal along with Dr. Jamgotch may leave a temporary vacuum of power and activity, but they acknowledge the existence of many competent people who can replace them. The president pro-tem of the Senate feels that he has been "too involved in too many things" and "in the forefront for too long". Orr feels that the Senate can still play a "great role" in University operation, but that it is also his time to leave.

At this point it is difficult to envision the future of the University Senate. The withdrawals of Jamgotch, Orr and Witherspoon will definitely have a slowing effect on that advisory body, and it will take much concern and activity by any replacing Senators to fill their spaces. But perhaps the most critical problem facing the Senate is the "lack of understanding" problem cited by Witherspoon.

If students and other university citizens do not come to learn of the purpose of the Senate organization, it may soon fail completely. Such a failure would also be the death of the conscientious attempt to improve the representation of all University citizens in their own governance. A Senate failure could mean reversion to the painful process of educational change by disruption and conflict — if anyone is still interested in that definite need for change.

## Honor Society

—by nick maheras

On March 23 at 1:30 in room 231-2 of the University Center, an open hearing will be held to discuss the feasibility and desirability of organizing an honor society at UNCC. Dr. Zelime Amen Ward is the chairman of the committee that is conducting the open hearing.

It was Dr. Ward's idea that a questionnaire be circulated around campus to measure student reaction and opinion. There are students on the committee and according to James Darner, student opinion should play an important part in the decision-making process.

There has been some faculty response to this proposition and their response has leaned toward the establishment of a scholastic honorary society. However, there is also the possibility that the honor society will measure and reward service to the university community.

The question also arises as to whether to model our honorary group after those of other prominent North Carolina universities if it does become a reality. The questionnaire suggests the Red Friars at Duke or The Order of the Golden Fleece at Chapel Hill as possible guidelines.

How selective should an honorary society be? This is an issue which could bear some

examination. Must it be very selective in order to be a truly "honorary" organization? Evidently, some type of restriction should be placed upon the size and selectivity of such a group. This is an area in which student judgement should play an important role.

Should only Juniors and Seniors be eligible for induction, or should any specifications at all be made as to class rank? What about the achievements and distinctions of Freshmen and Sophomores?

There is also the situation concerning commuters and the acceptability of a ratio governing the commuter acceptances by the number of campus residents that would be accepted. If one is a student at UNCC and has attained some service or academic excellence, is there any need for some arbitrarily arrived at ratio?

In summation, it is necessary to ask whether the establishment of an honor society is a purposeful venture; or whether it is merely a useless decoration? This is among the questions that lie before the students of this campus. Suggestions, criticism and/or comments are invited.

Send them to the Journal or directly to Dr. Amen.