

Rebel Flag Placement Under Hot S.C. Debate

By ALICIA GADDY
Staff Writer

The Confederate flag could soon descend from South Carolina's State House dome.

But officials can't seem to agree on where it will go from there.

If Democratic Gov. Jim Hodges has his way, the flag will be moved to adorn the Wade Hampton Statue in the rear of the S.C. House of Representatives.

At a Monday press conference in the shadow of the statue of the Confederate soldier, Hodge said his plan would remove the flag from a position of sovereignty.

He claimed the proposal had bipartisan support and therefore had the potential to pass through the legislature.

"South Carolinians can come together to do the right thing," Hodges said.

Hodges' plan also included the removal of Confederate flags from the House and Senate chambers and the revival of historical monuments.

But many S.C. legislators, both Republican and Democrat, said they would not condone this proposal.

And as a telling example of just how divisive the issue has become, most couldn't even agree on why they opposed the plan.

S.C. Sen. Robert Ford, D-Charleston, who introduced the Senate's first bill in 1993 to remove the flag, said he opted for a more racially equal plan. "I've been fighting to remove the flag since 1967," he said. Ford said S.C. legislators had numerous ideas of what should be done about the Confederate flag. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, he said there were 10 concrete proposals currently on the drawing boards.

But he said the Governor's proposal

wouldn't be the one that finally passed. "The Governor's proposed bill ain't got a snowball's chance in hell," he said.

On the other hand, S.C. Sen. Arthur Ravenel, R-Horry, said he could not support Hodge's plan because it took too much attention away from the flag.

"The only place I'll vote to move the flag is to the Soldier's Monument," Ravenel said. "I don't see anything else getting enough votes to do it."

Among Hodge's main opponents was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which enacted economic sanctions against South Carolina on Jan. 1 as a protest against the flag.

Morris Shearin, NAACP's Washington branch spokesman, said his organization believed the flag would be more appropriately placed in a museum rather than continuing to fly on S.C. House grounds.

"We applaud the decision that it come down," Shearin said. "But we understand that the statue he's going to place it by is just as questionable."

But Shearin said the NAACP would not be satisfied until definite action was taken, placing the flag in a historical rather than sovereign position.

"(Economic sanctions) will continue until the situation is resolved," he said.

S.C. senators said they hoped that resolution would come quickly.

Sen. Maggie Glover, D-Florence, said she did not fully support Hodge's proposal, but she could be willing to compromise if the plan was supported by the Senate's Black Caucus.

"I am not interested in continuing year after year to argue this issue."

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N.C. College Systems Team Up for Funding

By KRISTINA CASTO
Staff Writer

For the first time, the UNC and N.C. community college systems will team up to take their funding requests to the N.C. General Assembly in May.

Urged by the N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry to combine forces, both systems are working together to reach an agreement on a total finance or bond/finance package.

Officials are hopeful that the unified financial plan and the increased support of the business community will convince legislators to back the multibillion-dollar effort.

NCCBI operates as the state's chamber of commerce and lobbies the legislature on behalf of N.C. business interests. Officials say they recognize the important role a strong educational system plays in bolstering the business community.

They plan to step up their efforts on behalf of the educational community in the upcoming legislative session.

Phil Kirk, president of NCCBI, said the group strongly supported last year's \$6.9 billion bond request. He said NCCBI was very disappointed when the legislature adjourned without taking action on the proposal. "The university (system) and community colleges did a good job educating the legislature about

the tremendous and growing needs of both systems," Kirk said. "The business community also worked fairly hard last time, but we can be more effective if we have more time and a unified plan to get it through."

The need for additional financing is becoming increasingly urgent as both UNC-system schools and N.C. community colleges face a surge of new enrollment over the next decade.

The two systems face repair and renovation costs in expectation of a projected enrollment increase of 50,500 UNC-system students, while the 58 state community colleges are anticipating 43,000 new students by 2010.

Kevin MacNaughton, finance and university property officer for UNC-system General Administration, said the two groups recognized the benefits of creating a holistic financial package from the past legislative session.

The Joint Select Committee on Higher Educational Facility Needs, created last legislative session, will meet Feb. 28 to discuss funding options. The UNC system, NCCBI and NCCCS will participate in the committee hearings.

Rep. George Miller, D-Durham, said both systems would benefit from working together. He said he was optimistic that a comprehensive higher education funding package would assist the legislature in the upcoming session.

"We all have an awareness that funding by the General Assembly at this time is questionable, due to the lack of available revenue," Miller said.

"We will be looking for alternative sources for the immediate need and longer range needs, such as new construction."

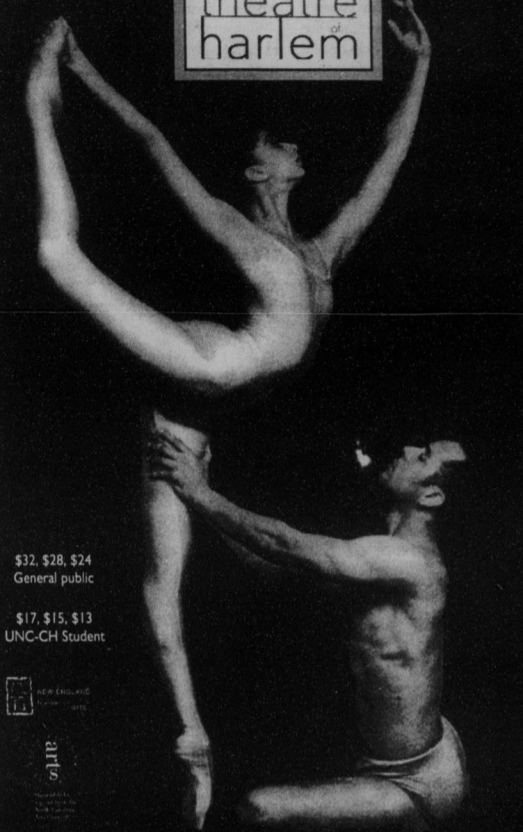
Kirk said he hoped the lobbying efforts of the NCCBI would convince the General Assembly to find available revenue for students. "We think it would be unconscionable if nothing happens."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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