

Opinion

The Daily Tar Heel

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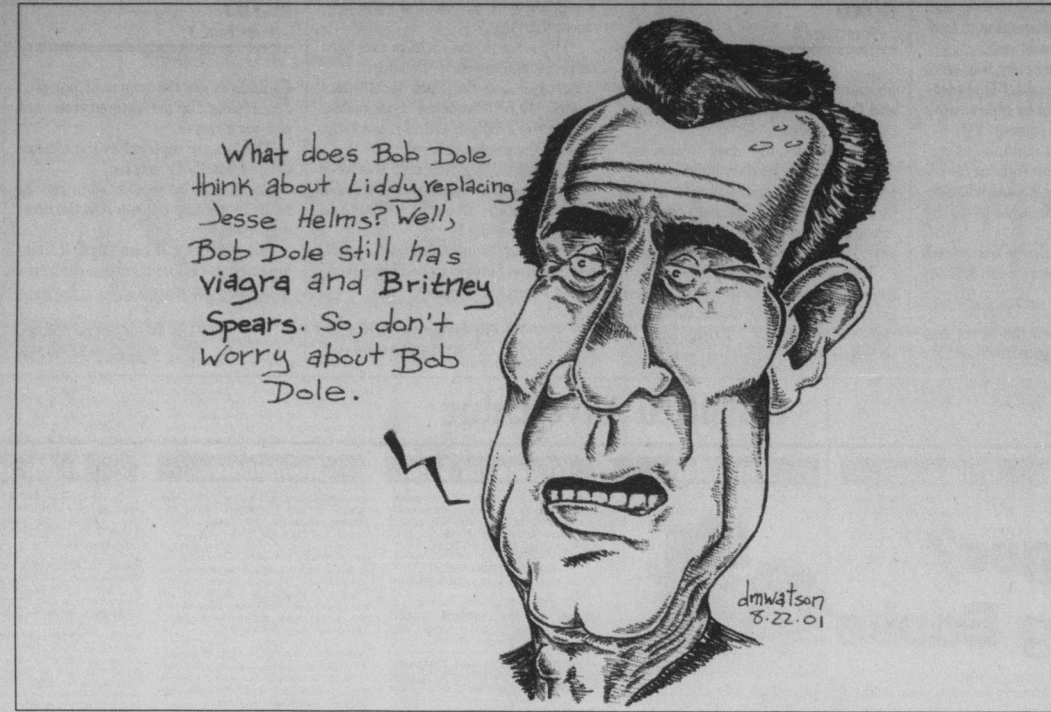
Chapel Hill Resident Critical of UNC-CH's Development Plan

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for Matt Viser's fine reporting (Aug. 23) on the Chapel Hill Planning Board's discussion of UNC's Development Plan. I attended that meeting and sat dumfounded as University officials wasted over an hour of citizen and Planning Board time regurgitating old presentations rather than addressing the specific thorny questions that the board and town staff had raised.

Fortunately, the regulatory authority of the town of Chapel Hill, in this case, is quite real, and with enough citizen encouragement the Town Council can be expected to act to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of UNC's colossal expansion.

Most telling in Viser's article was his reporting of Mr. Dean Bresciani's comment that neighbors "will be surprised" when they see the results of the Development Plan. That is just the problem. South Campus is literally littered with surprises that degrade the surrounding neighborhoods.



Board Editorials

It's Getting Better All the Time

The N.C. House decides to play doctor and give patients a badly needed bill of rights

The N.C. House of Representatives has finally found a Band-Aid for patients ailing from too much red tape.

On Thursday, the House approved a bill designed to protect members of health care plans. Under the "patients' bill of rights," as the law has become known, individuals will be able to sue their insurance companies in state court.

It also establishes an independent program designed to mediate problems between health insurers and their clients.

If the bill passes the final vote, it will be sent to a conference committee to reconcile it with the Senate version and then on to the governor, who is expected to sign it.

The bill is an important and long-overdue measure that prevents insurers from sacrificing quality care for better profits. Too many horror stories have surfaced in recent years about patients whose man-

aged-care plans refused to pay for a visit to a specialist or an important medical procedure. Too many lives have become lost in the faceless bureaucracy entrusted with the responsibility of making these decisions.

However, should this law pass, the effects will be obvious to few. Most of those who are covered by health care plans won't even notice. But to those who are truly in need of the most help — the chronically ill, those with sick children and individuals suffering from rare diseases that require expensive treatment — the bill of rights will provide them with a vital safety net and some much-needed peace of mind.

Some argue that the bill of rights is dangerous, that it might set off a spate of lawsuits that would tie up the courts and drive up costs, only to be passed onto the patients.

These arguments are specious at best.

Lawmakers took great care to collaborate with health insurers whenever possible and listened to their input on the various proposals. The state's largest health insurer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, supported the Senate version of the bill. It seems unlikely that these companies would support the bill if they truly believed it would open a floodgate of litigation.

There is the possibility of a small increase in the fees charged by insurers to their clients, but again, legislators have worked to minimize any rise in costs.

North Carolina is hardly alone in its desire to curb the more egregious abuses of the managed-care health system. Other states have already guaranteed patients the right to sue their insurers or take their grievances to an independent medical review board.

Unfortunately, the House can't do anything about people getting sick. But it can do something about how they're treated.

No Special Attention

The University should not grant preferential treatment to any group on campus

The gay and transgender population at the University often cites the fact that UNC has no institutional framework for handling LGBT issues.

However, UNC may be inching closer to giving the gay community support, especially because Student Body President Justin Young and the Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor support the plan for a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender resource center.

But how much additional help a University supported LGBT center will actually give the gay community is unknown, especially in an already tolerant campus community.

It is doubtful that the gay community really knows how much the straight community is aware of the issues that affect homosexuals.

The issues of the gay community consistently come up in the media with MTV's

commercial spots and special programs.

Supporters of the LGBT center maintain that such a resource center will serve to bring awareness to the campus' gay community.

Sure, the center will point out the hardships of being gay in an otherwise straight world in dealing with discrimination, and the like.

But the concern remains that the gay community will use its center as a soap box to lecture the Christian fundamentalist right for disagreeing with their lifestyle.

Doing so, however, is a lost cause.

The beliefs some have — that a homosexual lifestyle is immoral — are rooted deeply within their own religious creeds.

To deny someone the right to disagree with a particular lifestyle based on religion is simply un-American and reeks of the liberal elitism that unfortunately festers at this University.

There is no problem with calling on peo-

MARK SLAGLE

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

JON HARRIS

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

BAROMETER

Paid in Full?



Looks like UNC students will be facing retroactive tuition costs. Better start selling your blood now.

Party Foul



Duke was ranked 7th in the "Lots of Beer" category by the Princeton Review. Guess you can only fit so many six-packs into Daddy's Beemer.

Ticket Trouble



The Alcohol Law Enforcement has started Operation Back to School. The Department of Public Safety has begun "Operation Ticket and Tow."

Midnight Snack



More options and expanded hours at Mainstreet Lenoir are a welcome change — Subway is even open until midnight. Right on!

TAR HEEL QUOTABLES

"The new plan is about halfway different,"
CAA PRESIDENT REID CHANEY
And will no doubt be half as effective as all the others.

"We're going to have to focus on making provisions for safe pedestrian access. ... We don't want anybody to be hit by a car."

CHAPEL HILL MAYOR ROSEMARY WALDRIF
Taking a bold stand against motorists running over students. Way to go out on a limb, there, Rosemary.

"Now the point is I would be 88 if I ran again in 2002 and was elected and lived to finish a sixth term."

SEN. JESSE HELMS
No, the point is that we've all suffered enough.

"There is nothing wrong with our lot."
GUSTAVE MUELLER
Referring to the parking lot he owns. At least if you like unpaved fields filled with mud.



RACHEL HOCKFIELD
OVER MY HEAD

This week is a turning point in N.C. history. Our esteemed senator, Jesse Helms, has announced his pending retirement in 2002. Together, we must work through our shock and mourning — our state's future depends on it.

Without our right-wing leader, how will we maintain our post-Civil War mentality? Folks, your reputation as an N.C. voter is at stake. Who will preserve our 30-year voting tradition as racist, sexist, uneducated nationalists who tote guns alongside Bibles?

However, we mustn't worry about what the nation thinks of us at times like these. Instead we should celebrate Jesse's fine accomplishments with genuine farcical accolades and kudos.

Sen. Helms will be deeply missed here in Chapel Hill. After all, it was he who once praised UNC students with his overly Southern charm.

When officials searched for the state zoological site, Helms suggested putting a fence around Chapel Hill and charging admission.

That fence would have been a nice addition to our stone walls. Next time you refer to a fellow Tar Heel as a dog, just remember we could've put them on exhibit, even made a little cash.

As a lovely reminder of Chapel Hill's longstanding relationship with Helms, check out Fodor's description of UNC and the town — we're immortalized as a bunch of animals. Damn shame we lost that zoo to Asheboro.

For some, the name Jesse Helms brings one word to mind — sex. Helms has a strong, hard record when it comes to sex.

In 1996 Helms raised hell over International Planned Parenthood Foundation's efforts to teach Haitians about population control (read: condoms). Think he halted the program because of his staunch pro-life views? No, not this time. In a letter to then Secretary of State Madeline Albright, he demanded an end to funding "any group whose programs include producing material intended to be used in a voodoo ceremony."

That's right, voodoo.

See, Planned Parenthood spread its safe sex message at voodoo ceremonies through song-prayers about STDs. Helms called it "witchcraft." Well, all the witches down in Haiti wanted to give a shout out to Sen. Helms: Thanks for syphilis, herpes, and a few illegitimate witches roaming around hexing people.

How else does Helms naturally evoke thoughts of sex? Believe me, it's not his almost 80-year-old hoary looks, topped off with thick bifocals — but his take on AIDS. Actually, his non-take on AIDS.

"We've got to have some common sense about a disease transmitted by people deliberately engaging in unnatural acts," Jesse told the New York Times in 1995. Right, because in Helms' world, AIDS is just a "gay thing." Too bad in the real world, drug users and heterosexuals make up the majority of people living with AIDS. Helms' so-called "common sense" led to limited sex education, but we all know a few condoms in high school can help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Sen. Helms is retiring from a Capitol Hill era riddled with scandal, rule-breaking and law-bending. But he'll leave his own legacy behind. Whistling "Dixie" down the Senate halls makes him seem like a Southern gentleman compared to his past activities.

In 1985, a Helms official attempted to acquire The Pioneer Fund, a controversial research foundation studying "racial betterment." Scientists at the Pioneer Fund were out to prove that blacks were genetically inferior to whites.

More recently, Helms refused to integrate the all-white Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Several black judges from North Carolina were nominated to the court, but none received hearings. So Helms will leave it the way he found it — lily white.

Some argue Helms faded in recent years, but I have to hand it to him — he's still got it. The old man managed to piss off George W. by holding up some nominations in order to gain favorable trade regulations for North Carolina textiles. Apparently he could annoy Republicans and Democrats alike.

With Helms' pending homecoming, he should kick back and do what all retirees do — visit the zoo. The animals will be waiting.

Rachel Hockfield is a junior political science major from Charlotte. Nominate her for the first underage Senator at rachel@email.unc.edu.

Students are the ones who will live longest with the long-term consequences to air quality and quality of life that will result from that kind of thinking. Fortunately, some members of the Planning Board are already asking tough questions of UNC and the Town Council.

I urge readers to encourage the town of Chapel Hill not to shy away from exercising its authority to act to protect air and water quality, preserve neighborhood integrity, and maintain the quality of life for future generations.

Dan Coleman
Chapel Hill

Gov. Easley's Plan Benefits Washington, Not North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR:

Governor Easley has proposed raising the sales tax by \$607 million per year. If sales tax rates are raised in North Carolina, the big winner is the federal government. Since 1986 the sales tax has not been deductible against federal income tax. In a memo

to me dated April 16, 1999, Dave Crofts of the Fiscal Research Division of the N.C. General Assembly quantified this effect at 15 percent:

"I think it would be safe to say that for \$100 million of property taxes the citizens of Wake County will be able to receive at least \$15 million of federal relief through the income tax and \$4 million of state relief."

An efficient tax costs 1 percent or 2 percent at most to collect. Government can't simply look at its own cost of collection but must consider the cost to its citizens of collecting the tax — in this case 15 percent.

If the state collects \$1 from a sales tax that it otherwise could have collected from deductible taxes 15 cents is automatically sent by the taxpayers to Uncle Sam to apply on the federal debt.

Gov. Easley's plan is exactly what the big spenders in Washington would want our General Assembly to do. The \$607 million in sales tax revenue generated yearly would cause a loss to North Carolina taxpayers of \$91 million, which would go to Uncle Sam.

Paul Stam
Apex



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: edit-desk@unc.edu.