

# THE TAR HEEL

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

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THE FIRST SIGNS of an approaching crisis may already be seen by the recent action of the University Council. They had on trial recently men whom they almost knew to be guilty of gambling and blacking. Yet they could not get any testimony. The men would not testify against themselves. No witness summoned would give testimony. As a final resort the council threatened to turn over to the faculty every student who refused to testify. It worked like a charm. Testimony was straightway forthcoming—plenty of it. The suspects were convicted and have severed connections with the university.

But in securing this testimony the council were forced to play their last card. They now stand at the end of their rope. The next step can only be that the faculty take the whole matter of administering government over the student body into their own hands.

The whole matter briefly stated is this. The University Council has been elected to see that the laws of students self-government are carried out. To do this they must have the power to punish those who disobey these laws. These men to be punished must first be apprehended. To be apprehended it is necessary that the proper testimony be obtainable. Then the council has been elected to no purpose if it may not have the power to secure testimony from the witnesses it examines. It will be a farce and utterly useless.

Indeed they have found a means of forcing the desired testimony. And are the students satisfied that this has been done? Is it right? If not right then the University Council, the executive of the honor system, should not do it; the student body must not put up with their doing it. If the Council does not force witnesses to testify, then, as we have already pointed out, return to rule by proctors is necessary and will be immediate. If it is right to force this testimony by the power of threatening then why does not the student body give the Council the right to command it without having to use the power of the faculty for its effectiveness? We must put into the hands of the men who have been chosen to administer student self-government sufficient power to carry on this administration. Now, right now, if ever, does the situation demand that we take immediate action.

WE are publishing in this issue of the Tar Heel an inquiry into the condition of student self-government at the Uni-

versity. The writer asks the question, "Is the Honor System going into bankruptcy?" but he does not favor us with a definite answer, yes or no. We take the liberty of answering for him and saying that instead of losing ground, student government is steadily gaining a firmer foundation in the life of the college.

Government is a growth. It is not to be expected that any body of people can at once bring forth a full-blown system of self-government. Any one conversant with conditions here four or five years back must admit that student government has made a wonderful advance since that time. So far, at least, then this form of government has undergone no backsliding. At the present moment however we stand at a crisis. We must go forward or we shall go backward. There is no such thing as standing still. So far we have spent our time in thought about the theory of our honor system. At present we have pretty well perfected this theory. Almost any student can give a good outline of the principles of self-government. We are all familiar with the theory. But we must have something more than a mere theory, however good that theory may be. We must now turn our attention to the machinery which is to operate this government.

The ideal form of administration would be by the students, literally speaking, but it is utterly out of the question as being too clumsy and slow a method. The administration of the honor system has very properly been placed in the hands of a representative council. Each member of this council, excepting one only is chosen by the direct vote of the student body. Also at any time during the year the student body has the power to take any or all of these men off the council. Truly then these men are only the tools the students use in the administration of their government.

Representing the student body entirely as they do the University Council should be given the entire administrative power of the student body. At present the Council may call any student to a trial and if they have sufficient evidence against him they may expel him from the University. The Council makes use of no system of espionage to gain its evidence but depends entirely upon the student consciousness to report any ungentlemanly behavior to it. The Council has the power to try any student and force the attendance of any student as a witness but it has not the power to force any witness to testify.

What does it accomplish to bring a student to trial and bring the witnesses to the trial and then not have the power of getting testimony? The testimony alone is what convicts a man. As long as no adverse testimony is forthcoming the culprit may carry on his misdemeanor with as much safety as the innocent man may walk the campus. If student self-government is to live at the University the University Council must have the power to administer that government. If the Council is to have the power to administer that government it must have the power to mete out punishment to the guilty and this necessitates the power to force testimony from any witness. The students and they alone, have the power to save the situation. The Council must be given this power and the students only have a right to give them it. The student body must act and act at once.

Thus it stands then. The success or failure of student self-government in the University practically wholly depends upon whether the students shall give the Council the power to gather testimony. If the students

refuse to grant this power then there only remains for us a gradual return to the days of faculty rule and proctors. If the power is granted then shall the government of the students be placed on firmer ground and the greatest progress toward clean civic life be assured.

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