

'Insane' Town Approves Open Housing

By BILL AMLONG
Of The DTH Staff

This little town made history again this week, in its own maverick sort of way: it adopted the South's first local open housing law.

Which is more-or-less just the kind of thing you'd expect Chapel Hill to do.

"The rest of the state thinks that Chapel Hill is insane," said Jim Shumaker, editor of the Chapel Hill Weekly and the town's leading gadfly. "This action probably confirmed it in a lot of people's minds."

And surely it must have. But the Board of Aldermen's impending passage of the open housing ordinance—broader in scope, if narrower in jurisdiction than the recent congressional law—is more than simply a manifestation of Chapel Hill's legendary and cliched liberalism.

Rather, it is a blending of the town's admitted predisposition toward liberalism with numerous other forces, timing and sequence of events.

The ordinance is a direct descendant of two things in town government:

A FAIR HOUSING RESOLUTION which the Aldermen passed by a 4-2 vote June 26, 1967, after a similar resolution was adopted by the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Fair Housing Committee, a group composed of ministers, professors and other concerned residents.

A TREND TOWARD progressive administration which has been shown in the 35,000 population by such programs as an active beautification drive, the

construction of a new library and a proposed bond issue, part of which would finance slum education.

It is this sort of town government which confronted the open housing proposal and passed it 3-2 on first reading. Since it lacked a two-thirds majority—because one liberal board member was hospitalized, and the two conservative ones wanted to have more time to take Chapel Hill's pulse on the matter—enactment was put off until a second reading, at which time passage is guaranteed.

Even so, this was the first time that any official of the university has been known to actively push for any such thing within the town government.

That it occurred is not widely known even in Chapel Hill.

Chancellor Sitterson took a strong stand against discriminatory housing practices in the town in the fall of 1965, however, when he announced that no rental properties could be listed with the university housing office unless they adhered to non-discrimination.

There is also, of course, the question

of the number of votes it can control in a municipal election. That number is low—just like the students' power index rating.

In fact, a student-faculty pushing for something like the open housing ordinance might be not only ineffective, but also damaging, said Mayor McClamroch, a four-term veteran at age 43.

A kind of townspeople backlash might occur, he said.

But regardless of the university liberals' lack of strength in terms of bloc vote power, their kind of thinking rather pervades this town and greatly influences its political climate.

Alderman Robert Varley, a 52-year-old clothing merchant who is one of the two "conservatives" on the board, said one of the main reasons for the town's political climate is the cosmopolitan atmosphere that is created by the university's attracting so many different types of people to Chapel Hill.

This just isn't a typical Southern town," said Varley, who voted against the ordinance of first reading—but said he did so only to permit public sentiment to be aired on it at second reading, before it goes into effect.

"Certainly the university has a great impact on the community," said David Ethridge, who at 29 is the youngest of the six aldermen. "The whole tenor of the town is different."

Ethridge, who recalls a sense of frustration during the 1963 civil rights struggle here when he was co-editor of The Daily Tar Heel, introduced the open housing ordinance.

He said he considers Chapel Hill "a good bit more liberal, progressive a town than most any in the state, any in the South."

Ethridge said that there is a good deal more cooperation and less divisiveness between the aldermen today than there was on the 1963 board which voted to table the public accommodations ordinance.

"We have a board now whose members are concerned with open housing, are concerned with equal justice," said R. D. Smith, a 50-year-old auto mechanics teacher at Chapel Hill High School who is the board's only Negro member.

Smith came to Chapel Hill in 1942 and has always lived in predominantly Negro neighborhoods. He said he plans to continue to do so—just as he thinks most Negroes will.

"It's not a matter of an influx of Negroes moving in," he said.

Smith said he didn't think Chapel Hill's ordinance was proposed and passed because of Dr. King's assassination, and the ensuing racial turmoil that swept the nation.

Ethridge agreed, saying that such an ordinance had been discussed amongst some of the aldermen for some time now, and that it would certainly have come up later in the spring or in early summer.

Mayor McClamroch views it differently, though: he feels the open-housing ordinance got its impetus from a combination of the assassination, the ensuing petition and the passage of the congressional civil rights package.

DTH News Analysis

Undoubtedly the most crucial force at play in Chapel Hill—although quite perhaps an overestimated one—is the University of North Carolina, the school whose mere mention connotes southern liberalism.

Although the university's influence on town politics can't be taken for granted, the school did play a major role in the bringing about of the open-housing ordinance.

Support for the proposal came not only from students and faculty in this case, but even from the university's top administrators.

Consolidated University President William C. Friday disclosed later that both he and Chancellor J. Carlyle Sitterson had approached Mayor Sandy McClamroch and at least one alderman to give the proposal their blessings—not as official university spokesmen, but as residents of Chapel Hill.

of how much influence students and faculty members exerted this round.

On the surface it seemed to be little—nil, in comparison with the civil rights demonstrations that occurred here in 1963 when students and faculty were clamoring for a public accommodations ordinance—which they didn't get.

The most direct pressure by these groups took two forms:

A MARCH BY some 1,000 persons from the center of campus to a Negro Baptist church in western Chapel Hill, where a memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was held the Sunday afternoon following his assassination.

A PETITION of vague origins, but certainly with student and faculty support, which asked the aldermen to adopt a local open-housing law "in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King." Some 2,200 persons signed the petition, which was presented to the board by former Alderman Hubert Roberson, the first Negro to be elected to that post.

This petition was perhaps the strongest single force pushing for adoption of the open housing law.

"I don't think you've got that kind of sentiment in other communities," said Mayor McClamroch, explaining why Chapel Hill was the first town to adopt such an ordinance.

But regardless of the petition's endorsement by the liberal faculty members of the university, it would be a mistake to ascribe the open housing ordinance to faculty liberalism: indeed, you have to be careful about ascribing anything but vocalism to the faculty liberals.

There simply aren't that many of them.

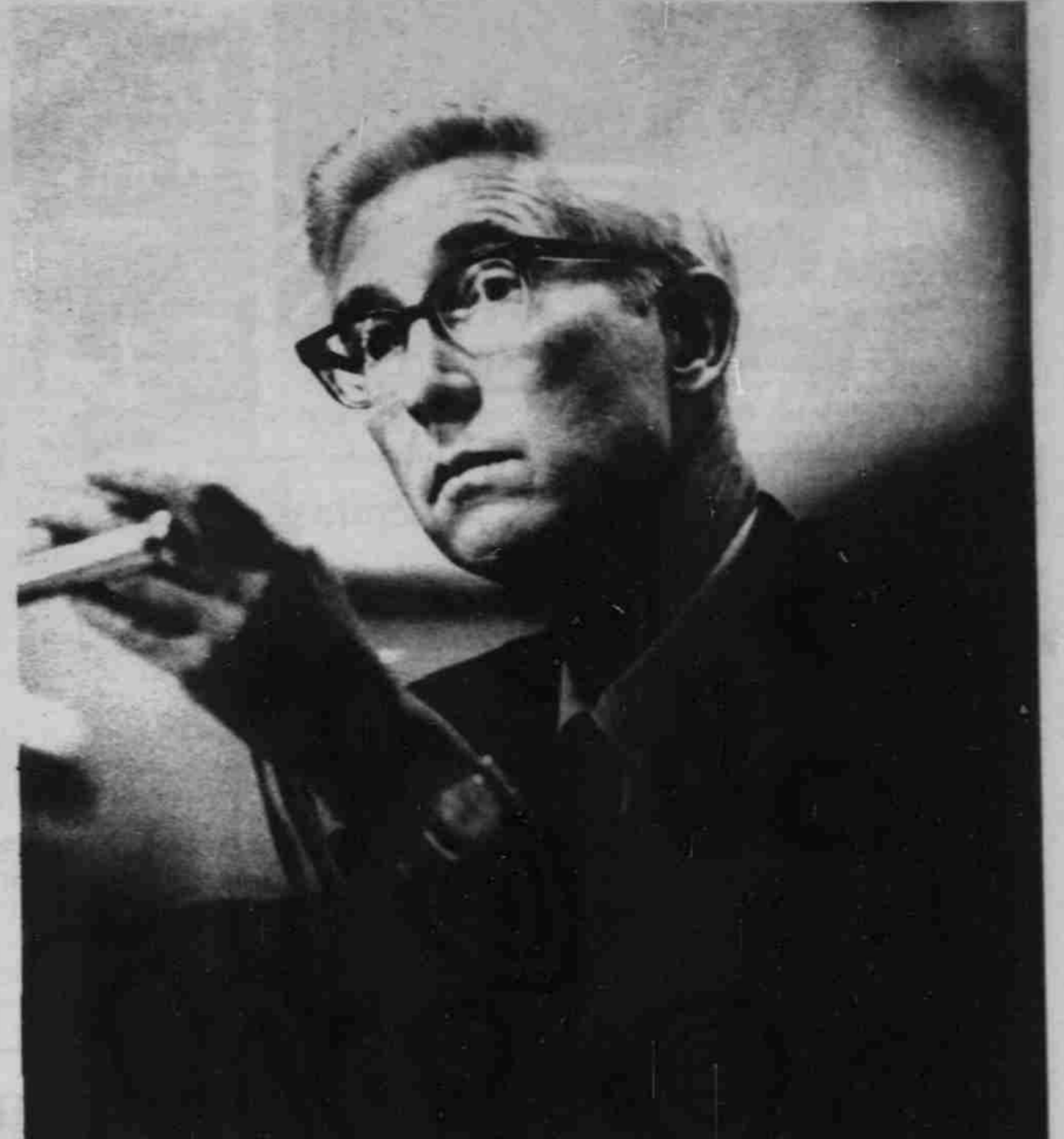
The strength of the politically liberal professors on campus can be gauged somewhat by the small membership of the scrappy, rights-conscious American Association of University Professors.

The AAUP chapter is only about 200-strong on a campus where the professors number about 1,000. The non-members are generally conceded to be politically moderate-to-right.

Further, many of the professors are such full time scholars that they seldom get involved in the least in anything whatsoever outside their academic field.

"A lot of them don't even know where town hall is," Shumaker commented.

As far as the student body goes, its political strength can be measured by



McClamroch

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Indeed, the federal law removed at least one stumbling block from the path of those persons favoring a strict local law—opposition from realtors.

Whereas local realtors might have been counted on to fight the ordinance tooth-and-nail previously, now they are rather glad to see it come since it will prohibit racial discrimination in nearly all housing transactions within Chapel Hill—and not just those handled by realtors, as the federal law does.

But it remains to be seen just how long the local law will protect Negroes from prejudice and real estate brokers from the federal legislation, for there is some doubt as to whether the ordinance is legal under the state constitution.

The problem revolves around whether or not a municipality—a creature of the state legislature—has the power to enact such legislation.

The state attorney general has said it does not.

But Law Prof. Daniel H. Pollitt, an expert in the field of constitutional law,

got together with Town Attorney Emory Denny, and built a case for the ordinance.

Pollitt said he and Denny found precedents for such other college towns as Oberlin, Ohio, and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Although the pair searched maily for college towns—simply for public relations value, Pollitt said—they found a great many municipal open housing laws which had been upheld by state courts.

Only one was turned down, Pollitt said, and that was because of a municipality in Washington whose law exempted so many persons from it that the state Supreme Court considered it arbitrary.

The Board of Aldermen, however, aren't too heavily concerned with the constitutionality of the ordinance right now.

"I'll let the courts worry about that," commented Smith, rather summing up the consensus.

If our ordinance stands up in court, I think other communities will follow."



Denny

Town Attorney Emory Denny said that municipal authority for the ordinance was found in the constitutional clause allowing the Town to enact legislation to "promote the security, good order and general welfare."

Moratorium Discussions Valuable

By FRANK BALLARD

While the turnout at Friday's moratorium talks disappointed some, most of the audience seemed to generally agree with the speeches or were at least interested in the topics.

"I'm against this war and oppose the draft in some respects, although I can't think of an alternative that would be better," said Bill Schenck, a history graduate student from Durham.

"The war, racism and poverty are tied together—if the government would stop spending \$30 billion there, it could pour it into the ghettos and eradicate the causes of poverty," Schenck continued.

Several other listeners agreed with his views.

Ken Wilson, a sophomore psychology major from Chapel Hill, explained that he is "mulling over" the war and draft. "We're not accomplishing a thing being over there. The war definitely affects the anti-poverty program."

A junior history major interviewed was "very much against the war." Kathy Caswell of Cleveland, Ohio said "the draft unfortunately is necessary the way the system is set up now. When the war is over, the agitation now may have a lot to do with changes that will hopefully be made."

Nearly everyone this reporter talked to felt the discussions on war, the draft, racism and poverty were of value, particularly to a university community. One listener who praised the forum atmosphere of the moratorium was C.O. Cathey, Dean of Student Affairs.

"I'm very pleased to see the opportunity given to our students to express themselves on all kinds of issues and to know when they do so that they must do it in a responsible sort of way," Dean Cathey marked.

"We can't any one of us feel that we have full and final truth in our points of view about anything, and when we have a free and open exchange of views I think we can come closer

to truth."

Kathy Dobe, a Durham junior majoring in comparative literature, thought "it's too bad this didn't happen earlier" and hoped the discussions are seen as "the first in a series." She believes the draft is "very unfair" and a "class determined thing" which discriminates against Negroes "because they can't afford to go to college."

Political leaders, especially the candidates for North Carolina's governorship, should pay attention to the moratorium in the opinion of W.H. Withrow, a graduate student in political science from Hollis.

"I'm very much in favor of the goals the speakers are trying to achieve and I think our political leaders realize they are worthwhile goals and should not ignore them as most of them are doing."

A junior coed sociology major from Durham whose parents are both Chinese feels the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war is not a completely unselfish policy. "The United States is concerned about its own security more than about if another people are able to govern themselves," said Meiling Dai.

She "feels very strongly about racism" because she has "experienced a certain amount of racial prejudice myself" in this country. "As applied to the U.S. it's such a shame people are basically ignorant of the cultures of other people," she said, adding that "ignorance, too much pride and human weakness" cause racism.

Many of those interviewed were disappointed at the relatively small number of listeners at the session. Ron Bowks, a freshman chemistry major from Bayboro, summed up the opinion of over half of the persons polled. "On the whole, interest hasn't been what it should be for a university this size."

Bowks, a Negro, thinks racism is a complex issue. He commented that Mrs. Cleveland Sellers' powerful denunciation of the American "racist system" was accurate. "Racism is as wide-spread

as she said. People in general are disrespectful of others opinions."

He stated that "the draft is necessary but the war isn't" and that the draft is a "class thing" influenced by "certain people who carry weight on a local level."

Strong objections to the United States' handling of the war, the draft, poverty and racism were made by a former NC student from Morganton who left school last year. "There's no separation between them," said Scott Simmons, "they're facets of the same monster." The draft is obscene, racism is obscene. "America is obscene. What it needs is gonna' get."

Simmons predicted that "the spiritual awakening of America will come from its suffering."

A need for cool heads and calm spirits in dealing with the issues was suggested by one audience member. Dave G. Hampton, an engineer and overseas manufacturer for R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, explained that he "agrees in principle with what people are trying to do here," but said "I'd like to ask each one of them how they're going to do it."

The Winston-Salem man added that Vietnam is "one place that we possibly have to stop Communism... if we don't stop it there, we'll have to stop it somewhere else." Warning that "we can't be blinded by emotional things,"

he said "give me a better solution and I'm all for stopping the war."

He is similarly in favor of eliminating racism and poverty, "but I want to know how," he repeated.

It should be noted that Hampton was interviewed before the afternoon forums which discussed means of overcoming the social problems.

Thus it went. The reasons for attending the moratorium meetings varied from a student who "Just walked by and knew something was supposed to happen" to a European physics professor who came solely to hear George Vlasits, whom he admired for having the "guts" to turn in his draft card.

Perhaps no listener was more typical of the audience than R.M. Lee, a Greensboro man who works as an anti-poverty training specialist with the Chapel Hill Multipurpose Training Center. Like everyone, he came with his own ideas about the topics and an interest in the opinions of the speakers.

"I'm a retired military officer so you know how I feel about the war and the draft. I work for an anti-poverty program so that explains my feelings about poverty. And I'm a Negro, which takes care of racism."

"I just came over to see how young people felt about poverty and civil rights," Lee continued. Then with an enigmatic smile, he concluded, "all I've got to say is it's VERY interesting."

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