

Jones Reaffirms Position

University Need Not Have Food Service

Editor's note: The following is an abridged interview by Tar Heel columnist John Agar with UNC Assistant to the Chancellor Claiborne Jones.

Agar: Dr. Jones, you recently deplored the lack of communication in last Spring's strike. Has communication improved since then?

Jones: Yes, I think so.

Agar: How do you account, then, for the contradictory information which has been emanating from Saga?

Jones: I really don't know anything about this, so I'm afraid I can't help you. This is a

Saga matter.

Agar: One professor has recently said, "It's hard to find out what (O'Brien) is talking about. He's very adept at confusing you." Can we assume that your office and O'Brien have been in communication. (Jones: Yes.) And you know what he's talking about.

Jones: No, I don't say we necessarily know what he's "talking about." We have been in contact with Saga, but have not followed every development that's come up.

Agar: Your letter to Dr. Gaskin stated that the workers'

"contract does not (and of course could not) require Saga to retain its employees for any specified period of time..." Why wasn't this made clear in May?

Jones: I have no idea. I was not in Chapel Hill at the time.

Agar: Well, can you account for the fact that everyone, except your office and O'Brien, seems to believe that the University committed itself to guarantee the workers' jobs?

Jones: No, I cannot. I can only point out that there were no agreements made at the time the strike was settled concerning lay-offs.

Agar: Then how was the strike settled?

Jones: It was settled when Gov. Scott authorized a pay raise to \$1.80/hour retroactive to April 1, in anticipation that the raise would be approved by the Assembly as of July 1. That ended the strike.

Agar: There was no further agreement?

Jones: No.

Agar: J. LeVonne Chambers, the workers' counsel has accused

the University of bad faith regarding layoffs. Chambers should have been in on all dealings—(Jones: Chambers had no part of our negotiations with Saga.)—dealings with the workers. Apparently he thinks there was an agreement concerning job security. Could you account for that?

Jones: I'm sure I can't. Let's be clear about counsel. Mr. Chambers' firm is reputed (Agar: reputed?)—yes—to represent some of the workers. I don't know which ones or how many. Mr. Chambers therefore deals, legally and ethically, with the University's legal representative, the State Attorney General, and not with individual Universities. So we have had no dealings with him.

Agar: Your letter to Dr. Gaskin specified that Saga's contract included its "agreement... to offer employment at the time of change-over" to production workers then on the payroll. Could people have interpreted this provision as meaning no lay-offs?

Jones: I don't know. Anything is possible, surely.

Agar: Usually, when management changes hands, there are two means of reducing a work force: immediate lay-offs or failure to replace natural attrition. Saga, however, retained its workers until the situation cooled, and then started letting them go—

Jones: You're aware, of course, that this is nothing new with Saga. Slack season lay-offs, unfortunately, have long been a University practice.

Agar: Saga was advertising for student help while it was laying-off full-timers. So I don't think this is just a slack season phenomenon. (Jones: Perhaps.)—Is it possible that Saga's conduct in the lay-offs has been intentionally deceptive?

Jones: I wouldn't want to

make a judgment until I had definite proof.

Agar: Well, about the only definite proof of "dishonest intentions" you'd get would be an admission of them, and I don't think you can expect that—(Jones: No, I don't think so.) Well, lacking that, would you be inclined to say that there is at least good reason to suspect Saga of some hanky-panky in this matter?

Jones: I wouldn't want to impugn anyone's honesty without good reason.

Agar: Your letter to Dr. Gaskin says that the University "of course could not" control Saga's employment practices. Yet, the

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