

The Daily Tar Heel

77 Years of Editorial Freedom



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Soul Food: Refusal To Play 'Religion Game'

When I was still pretty small, I used to think that God lived inside the towering church on the corner. Every Sunday, because my parents took me, I'd go "spend an hour with God." The wooden



pews were uncomfortable, and I'd squirm in my seat until I could escape to the secular week all my own. I didn't mind being a Christian, then, even when I grew older. As long as I felt I could leave

God and faith safely behind me in church when I left, I was willing to endure "holiness hour."

It was amazing how long it took me to change that concept of Christianity, to realize that ritual was not faith and attendance and lip-service at a once-a-week meeting was not being a Christian.

And yet, how many of us have that picture of Christianity? We mouth pious platitudes on Sunday morning, but we conveniently leave God at the altar and slip back into the "real world." Somehow, after a while of this self-hypocrisy, even spending an hour in a church becomes repugnant. And if this is all church worship is, perhaps it should be repugnant and rejected.

Fortunately, for many people church is not empty ritual, and they can and do worship honestly in true faith. Many things combine in making a church community a valid form of Christian experience. The quality and nature of the minister's Christian commitment, the same quality of individual church member's faith, the congregation's corporate understanding of their place as a Christian people all make or break the depth and reality of the church institution as a means of worship and "fellowship."

The biggest objection I have is the way we compartmentalize our faith, leaving God behind as we go about our daily lives. My gorge rises as I see some sweet choir member on Sunday cheat his neighbor on Monday. I resent watching and playing "the religion game" one day a week while the world suffers from a lack of Christian concern and shallowness of true Christian commitment to God and, then, to man. I am afraid, also, of the hypocrisy within me. I've left God in church, too.

What I think we need is a new understanding of Christian service. It has never been enough for Christians to nurture themselves on Sunday. The last thing Jesus Christ did was to send his disciples into the world to not only preach the Gospel message, but to put it into practice.

But what is Christian service? Today, in the minds of many people, it refers to

the program of church worship. At best, service is recognized as an action and way of living, but still confined to church work. This thinking reflects itself in the commonly used label, "full time Christian service."

Definitely, there is a need within the Church for people to minister, preach, administrate, teach, fold papers and run mimeograph machines. I don't mean to belittle the many fine people who serve "full-time." What bugs me is that Christians often leave Christian service to "professionals" involved in church activities, and forget about living their faith and putting their beliefs in practice in everyday life.

A friend was attending a particularly pious meeting a little while ago, and he happened to talk to a couple of people who spoke of nothing but an insular and isolated program scheduled for the semester. After listening for a while, he broke out, "Hey man, there's a world outside."

Christian service, if Christians are to mean anything in this world, must be more than Sunday worship. "Christians," a noted black evangelist said, "are being asked to put up or shut up." Christians, especially evangelical Christians, must earn the right to be heard by a world that is confused, suffering, and despairing.

A man once slipped into a Quaker gathering, a friend recounted, and asked a

man, "What time does the service begin?" The Quaker, smiling, replied, "The service begins as soon as the meeting is over."

Is this service, this putting the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, and concern for man into practice, too much to ask?

The apostle James speaks of this same type of service very clearly. Noting that faith is only valid when it is being expressed through consistent action, James writes, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

"If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food," he continues a little later, "and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

In the light of such Biblical statements, how does a Christian enter a truly faithful "full-time Christian Service?" Two things come immediately to my mind.

First, we must recognize that Christians are "followers of Christ" wherever they are and whatever they do. The integrity in which I write a routine news story as a journalist, the faithfulness in which I study, the care and concern I show for classmates and room-mates, the

way I seek to involve myself and enlighten myself in what is happening in the world—all are aspects of living Christ in the world just as important as regular Bible study, church attendance, and prayer meeting.

If I neglect any one aspect of serving Christ, I am failing to serve Him full-time and, tragically, I may be failing somebody else who may need me.

Another aspect of Christian service is realizing the simple compassion and concern I owe to my fellow man in the name of Christ. In this, I am asked to reach into the heart of the Gospel and express that strong love in concrete action.

Colin Morris, President of the United Church of Zambia and former missionary, passionately urges Christians to paint or get off the ladder, and he also reveals the power and wonder of the Christian message in action—that the love of God can be expressed in the world today.

"To talk of the simplicity of the Gospel," he writes, "is not to reduce it to a moronic Jesus-jingle. It's simplicity is its total lack of ambiguity, dead-ends, irrelevances. From whatever point in time or social class you come within range of the Gospel, if you consent to open your ears to hear, you will be carried along irresistibly to a moment of truth that evokes from you the question of the rich young ruler 'What, then, must I do?'"

Sitterson Better Get Moving

James Gaskin, who has directed the University's efforts to relocate the workers laid-off by virtue of the union-SAGA contract, has in effect been a major positive force in the ever-downward spiral of the food service crisis.

As of today, when the University's subsidization of the laid-off workers ceases, Gaskin has found jobs for not only the original list of workers to be laid-off and replaced, but also for workers dropped by SAGA after the original agreement Dec. 9.

Those jobs have included positions both in and outside the University, and here even introduced two training programs to provide workers with the opportunity to hold grade 52 jobs, higher paid positions than they have ever had.

Gaskin's efforts have been supported actively by the town, the union, and even SAGA. But all of these factors combined do not help to stabilize the growing crisis.

First of all, SAGA has played an extremely questionable role. On Jan. 30 they announced that after May 27 they would withdraw from the food service. But even with that decision made, they continue to lay off workers.

Ted Young, the director of the local SAGA franchise, has been saying since SAGA took over operation of the food service last spring, that they have been losing money. But despite what Young sees as a downward trend in patronage and an upward trend in labor costs, his work force during the fall strike was higher than it had ever been.

Between the start of fall classes, and the beginning of the strike in November, SAGA hired 75 workers, putting the total work force at 150. That force is now below 70.

In addition, SAGA claimed during the strike that the desirable personnel level was 95.

The reason for the substantial level of hiring between September and early November is beyond the realm of rational probing. SAGA was hiring workers right up to the time of the strike. Therein, perhaps, lies the basis of SAGA's business policies. SAGA, however, has not, and probably will not, reveal the crux of those policies.

One of the further moves of SAGA was to add a number of names to the original payroll list, which was the basis, with the seniority list, for the names which Gaskin was to replace.

Compounding the almost irrational policies of SAGA (which also included lower food quality, higher prices, and diminished serving time) is the role which the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union (AFSCME) has played in the whole situation.

Gaskin's efforts to relocate the laid-off worker were not helped by the fact that because many of the job opportunities he presented to the workers were non-University positions, they were beyond the range of any AFSCME benefits. To take such jobs, the workers would have had to leave the union. And as Gaskin pointed out, many of the workers passed up those opportunities.

Further complicating Gaskin's efforts was a general unwillingness on the part of the workers to help themselves get jobs. Gaskin said

many workers simply failed to show up for interviews, and thus lost their opportunities.

The total relocation effort has been handled flawlessly by such parties as Gaskin, with the aid of the town, and some individuals representing both the union and SAGA. But the poor turnout of the workers, due to whatever pressures, has not made an ever-diminishing situation any better.

At this point the future of the food service is uncertain. Chancellor Sitterson has not been very positive about what he plans to do about formulating a proposal for the future operation of the dining halls. In addition, more and more of the workers have been dropped by SAGA, leaving a large pool of unemployed for whom the University has no explicit responsibility.

Sitterson is going to have to come up with a plan for alleviating both situations. The University has a responsibility to the workers, (a moral one, if you will) to guarantee they are not left jobless. In addition, the University has the same kind of responsibility to the students to provide them with a place to eat. But the determination to form of such a place cannot be made by the University alone, which has thus far demonstrated a total inability to come up with a successful plan.

The workers, the students, and the faculty are all going to have to be involved in the process through which the ultimate form of the food service will be decided upon. Sitterson cannot hope to solve this question by relying on the old ways of doing things, in which administrative finesse was assumed but not demonstrable.

In view of the failure of the University, some outside influence must be incorporated.

Finally, the University must do something about the workers who have been laid off subsequent to the Dec. 8 agreement. Because the Gaskin assignment ends today, all laid-off workers are going to have to get new University jobs through the Personnel Office. But there are no longer going to be any special privileges for these individuals. The University, thus, is going to have to create such special privileges, since the University is the responsible party, in the long run.

SAGA has announced that it will pull out completely in May. The hinted law suits by the union do not begin to touch the measures which must be taken to resolve this crisis. It is the University, which in the first and last analyses is going to have to change its own diapers. And it is Sitterson who is going to have to undergo some loss to his pride and do what is best for all involved.

He has an entire University and a great many unemployed workers on his hands. If he is to present himself as a man doing his job the right way, he is going to have to pay attention to both those parties.

The University's history of serving its own needs before it serves the needs of the core of its existence—the students and the workers—is going to have to take a wholly new turn if the University is to remain as a positive force in this society.

Sitterson had better get moving.

Ben Singletary

End Deferments Now—For All

I saw in the paper the other day where Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird has announced plans to abolish occupational, student and parental deferments.

Well, I just want to go on record as all for the proposal. My theory is that if a kid is old enough to carry a rifle, his place is in the army.

I mean, why send a guy through four years of college, then draft him and have him killed with a year. That's a waste of the tax money of the Good People of North Carolina. Go ahead and bump him off when he graduates from high school.

But I think Ole Mel stopped much too soon in announcing who is going to get the privilege of representing the United States in Southeast Asia. I favor the elimination of deferred status for several other groups also.

Like women. Now women are, by tradition, supposed to stay home and take care of the nation while the men all march off to fight somebody. Yet, I fail to see where they have proved themselves so indispensable in performing this simple task.

While our men were slugging it out with the Germans (twice), the Italians, the Japanese, the Koreans, and the Vietnamese, the women have managed to bungle things up so badly at home that we have had to fight our way through a depression, several race riots, numerous fires and automobile wrecks, pollution, and lung cancer. So the women haven't exactly done a bang-up job on holding down the fort. Draft 'em. Ship 'em off to Vietnam to play house for awhile.

Of course, this leads to the problem of who's going to mind the store, so to speak, while the young men and women are out. Some people say the little kids and old men could perhaps get the job done. I disagree. Draft them too.

Mr. Laird says that the current random-selection system is the fairest and most equitable draft method and that no one should be excluded because he is able to get into college. Right on, brother.

But let's take this one step further. Is it fair that some guys should escape the draft merely because they were born 20 years too early or too late?

I mean, if we really want to be fair about this thing and if we really believe in

all this equality and stuff, then everybody should have a chance to get in on the act, I'd hate for my kid to have to sit out the war 'cause he was only ten and miss all the fun.

So, let's total up all the fighting that has to be done, divide it by the number of people in the country, and then let everybody go and kill his share. That way nobody get slighted—well, almost nobody. 'Cause...

There's still that old problem that keeps popping up saying "who's going to take care of the country?" The

government certainly can't do it, since they, too, will be in the army. I mean, who needs a government when there is nobody around to govern? That's sort of like turning up your furnace on a cold day and then going south for the winter.

So, after considerable soul-searching and self-admittance that there's no other solution to the dilemma, I have decided to sacrifice my part in "The Good Fight" and stay home. Naturally, I realize that this decision will prevent my getting a few slant eyes for the sake of Old Glory, but, really, it's the least I can do. So kill a few for me.

Letters to the Editor

Housing Policy Creates New Student Burden

To the Editor:

The new University housing policy announced a week ago requiring sophomores and transfer students to live on campus may well cause more problems for the University than it solves while only inflicting a greater burden on students. The move by the administration also provides us with a clear and unmistakable revelation of the administration's thinking, or lack of it, and priorities.

The University's financial situation is certainly a regrettable thing but why should students be forced to pay for the University's errors? The issue is simply one of economics. Rising dormitory rents together with the general lack of amenities of dorm living have made it relatively more attraction to live off campus. Indeed, students often endure considerable hardship in order to escape the cheerless vertical ghettos on south campus to find a more civilized way of life elsewhere. Characteristically the University has dealt not with the causes of the problem but only with the symptoms of that problem.

Such arbitrary restrictions can only breed more frustration and dissatisfaction

among students at a time when the University should be seeking to relax such restrictions and give students more control over their lives.

The new policy manifests exactly the priorities of the administration—finances first, students second. This short-sighted policy fails to consider any relationship between the quality of life at UNC and the serious drop in enrollment figures. Just as dormitories must compete with off-campus housing, UNC must compete with other universities. While the quality

of life is not the only variable relevant to the problem, it is important. The embarrassing failure to meet enrollment projections speaks for itself. This has caused further financial problems for the University. The new housing policy, therefore, makes little sense. Rather it resembles an effort to fight a fire by dousing it with gasoline.

Dan Moss, Jr.
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Wants Fewer 'Prattle' Letters

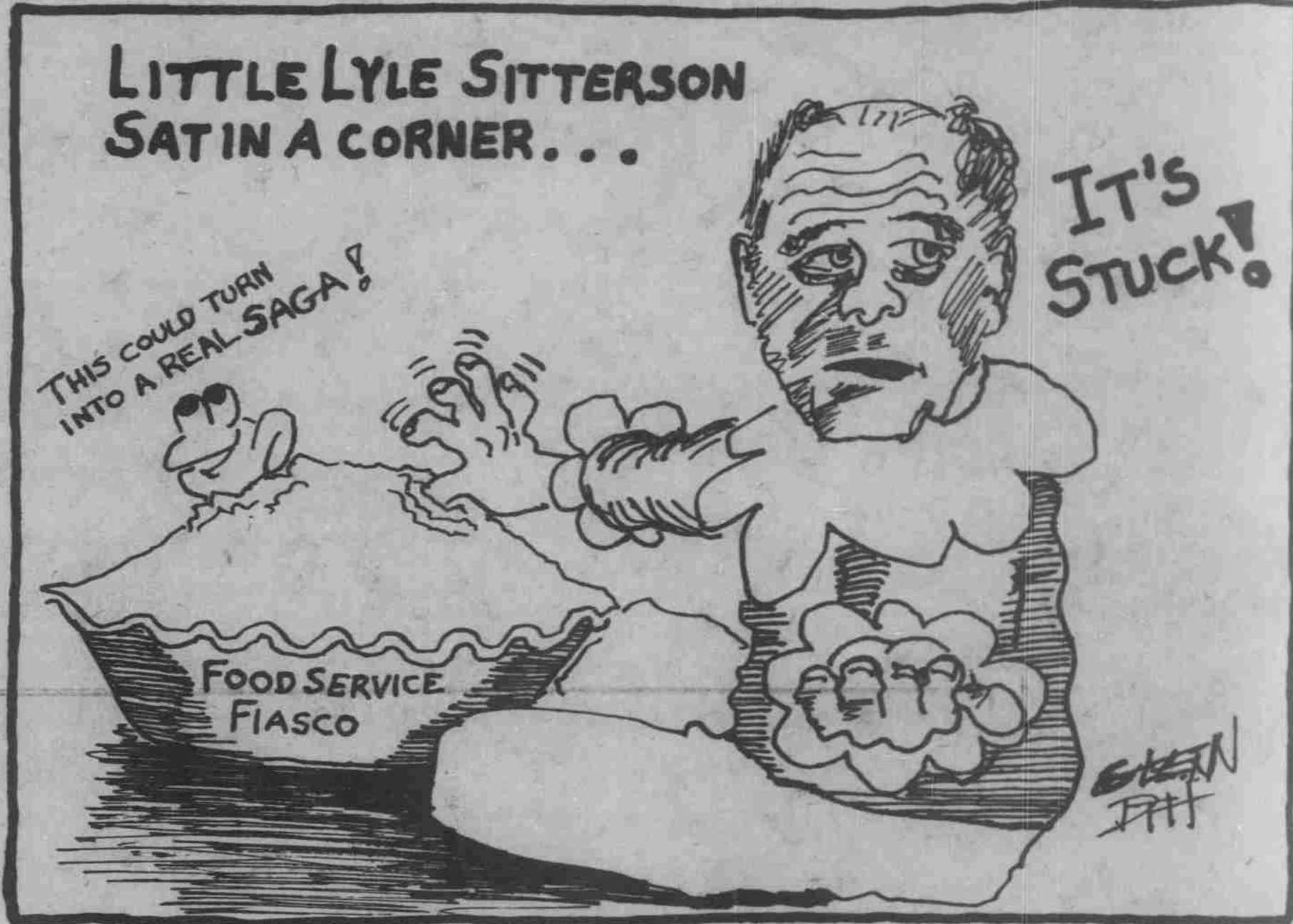
To the editor:

In a letter published February 12, Mr. Kent Gardner complains that the DTH erred in referring to an act as "allegedly" having been committed even after a court of law found that the act had indeed occurred. It was wrong, he says, for the DTH to cast doubt on the decision.

I disagree with Mr. Gardner's conclusion, but I am at a loss to reply to an argument in support of his belief

because he gives none. I hope that in future the editor will exercise more discretion in publishing letters that contain mere groundless assertions of belief. Arguments, preferably controversial, are an essential attribute of public discourse, if it is not to degenerate into prattle.

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The Daily Tar Heel is published by the University of North Carolina Student Publication's Board, daily except Monday, examination periods and vacations and during summer periods.

Offices are at the Student Union Bldg., Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. Telephone numbers: editorial, sports, news—933-1011; business, circulation, advertising—933-1163. Address: Box 1080, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

Subscription rates: \$10 per year, \$5 per semester. We regret that we can accept only prepaid subscriptions.

Second class postage paid at U.S. Post Office in Chapel Hill, N.C.