

The Daily Tar Heel

78 Years of Editorial Freedom



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The 'Free Press Committee'—The Empty Chair

Now and again, an issue heats up, and—since both sides have been rather vocal—a challenge to debate goes out, a forum is provided, and then, mysteriously, there's silence.

Nothing happens. One party to the controversy refuses to debate—or even neglects to reply at all to the invitation. The debate goes on, but one chair is empty.

Such is the case of the Committee for a Free Press. A week ago, the Tar Heel printed what it called the "too-long-unstated sentiment of this paper towards" the Free Pressers, and offered the Committee equal space to reply. As this article is being written, neither the Committee nor any representatives of it have acknowledged the challenge.

Still, however awkward it is, there must be debate, if only to goad the Free Press into the open. The survival of the Tar Heel as an independent, responsible news medium on campus, and not merely a political sheet along the lines of "Renaissance" or the "Radish," is of paramount importance to this student body. Even if it were not, as some people may already have decided, it is important to understand the issues on which the Tar Heel will stand or fall, and not be duped by spurious, illogical, emotion-laden propositions.

The question which comes first to mind, then, is, *Why hasn't the Free Press answered?*

On all other occasions, they've availed

themselves of the Tar Heel's Letters to the Editor column. My article of last Thursday was a long one and must have been crammed with the kind of fallacies the Free Press Committee loves to explode. Why the silence?

Here one can only conjecture and piece together what little evidence there is.

What becomes apparent is this: The Committee for a Free Press, what with all its high-sounding rhetoric about freedom and personal rights in an open society—the Committee seems to prefer working in the semi-darkness of ambiguity, anonymity, and irresponsibility.

Even the name, "Committee,"—not to mention "Free Press"—has an air of shabby deceit about it. Granted that nine students last year signed a petition against the Tar Heel—yet how are they a committee?—appointed or elected by whom?—for what purpose, beyond putting their name to the petition?

Indeed, is there a "committee," in any real sense of the word, at all? Let Miss Trent Oliver, in some of her most recent letters to the Tar Heel, testify.

Miss Oliver concludes a letter published Feb. 14 with the injunction: "The Committee for a Free Press suggests..."

Does Miss Oliver speak for the Committee? Apparently not, or perhaps only in alternate paragraphs, for on Feb. 19 she complains: "First, there is the large bold-face headline... 'Free Press'

Says 'Name-Caller' Agar is... "What do you do? Write another letter to refute a headline? All right. The fact is, the 'Free Press' said nothing of the sort. I said..."

The fact is that Miss Oliver wrote, "we must insist upon a retraction."

Well, this is nifty. So it is. Worthy of concern is the motive behind Miss Oliver's nitpicking and the Committee's silence. My own thoughts are as follows—the Committee may refute me if it likes: nothing would delight me more.

"Committee" is a fine word: it implies an official capacity and trust. The name, "Student Committee for a Free Press," suggests, too, that the effort to undermine the Tar Heel is more advanced, popular, and organized than perhaps it is—or was when the "committee" decreed itself.

Indeed, "committee" is a grand word to lead the student body by the nose with. With the above qualities it combines a disinterestedness, an impersonality which might attract students where a suspicion that the "committee" was merely a selfish endeavor would repel.

The word provides a quasi-official medium for expression. It's a rather more impressive letter-head, so to speak, than just the nine names on the Tar Heel petition.

But most important, the "Committee" is vague. It relieves its members of individual responsibility. It is, at one moment, the embodiment of a principle, at the next, a straw man.

The benefits of such an arrangement

are obvious. In the beginning of the campaign, the Committee could slam the Tar Heel with complaints that it was distorting the Committee's position, "playing up issues which were only incidental to our primary objection."

Since no one took the trouble to answer, the "committee" made much of its principles and drove along merrily, alternating trumpeting its phony issues and bewailing its persecution.

Now, however, when an answer is forthcoming, and when an open discussion of principles might not be most advantageous, there apparently is one to speak in an official capacity.

Miss Oliver thought she had something to say, said it, and then scampered back to add that she was speaking for herself. This was minor—Miss Oliver's complaint that the Tar Heel wrongfully assumed that she was representing the Committee: it's the kind of point which is supposed to turn your opponent red with embarrassment—such a little, elementary correction.

Unfortunately for our "committee," however, the time may have come for the students to open their eyes. Miss Oliver and her friends may be sure that the debate, however they will have it, will continue next Thursday.

We'll see then, and perhaps for some time after, how long the Committee wishes to abstain from fruitful discussion—how long the student body whose principles it has appealed to so fervently will abide silence.

The Greek Way At UNC

The University, as usual, has some fancy explaining to do. An announcement was made this month that incoming freshmen students will be required to live on campus for two academic years, and transfer students will be required to do so for one year.

Recently, administrative officials have revealed that fraternities and sororities are considered on-campus housing. What this means is that the majority of incoming students will have to spend two years in dorms, while a small minority will be able to move into the fraternities and sororities.

What this really means is that some students, because they do not meet the standards of the 30 or 40 people their own age who may make up a fraternity or sorority, will be confined to University housing.

And what this means is that if a student happens to be black, or poor, or any other thing which doesn't conform to the strict criteria for Greek membership, then he will have to spend his term in those sterile, oppressive dorms.

The University set the new housing requirement because it was losing money in the dorms but had an indebtedness to its bondholders.

Dean of Student Affairs C.O. Cathey claims that the Greek system is considered University housing because "historically" and "traditionally" the fraternities and

sororities have been used to soak up the spill-over from the highly populated dorms. In other words, the dorms used to have people living in them.

Now, however, the dorms are emptying. That is why the University set the new requirement. But that still doesn't explain why the discrimination in favor of the Greeks exists.

Cathey claims that to deny the Greeks this right of theirs would be to destroy the great Greek way.

What about the all those people who are going to have to live out in those South Campus factories? Would benevolent Mr. Cathey, the friend of the Greek system, like to live out in one of those cages for two years?

We guess not. Cathey doesn't deny the possibility that students who want to live off campus could do so by claiming they comprised a fraternity or sorority. But to be officially designated a member of the Greek system, one has to be approved by the Interfraternity Council, the Faculty Committee on Fraternities and Sororities, and the administration.

Cathey is opposed in general to the idea of these unorthodox fraternities springing up. And we don't have to guess hard about how the IFC would take to the idea.

As usual, the University has some fancy explaining to do about its rather questionable position.

American Guillotines

The system of "Roman law courts"—which used to prevail in England as late as the mid-Seventeenth Century—enabled officers of the king to hang people on the spot without a trial.

Now, Mississippi Sen. John Stennis has in effect suggested that "Roman law" justice be revived for certain people the government may deem too dangerous to the American way.

Stennis wants a "constitutional amendment, to say that under certain facts a person would forfeit their right to a trial."

He referred specifically to the recently concluded trial of the "Chicago Seven" in which five Leftist leaders were found guilty of crossing state lines to incite a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Only last week, the Delta State Democrat had been portrayed as something approaching a paragon of justice when he offered his amendment for uniform school desegregation in the North and the South.

It did not take very long for the Senator's reactionary character to resurface.

We do not doubt that some higher government officials agree with Stennis that people so obviously subversive as the "Chicago Seven" should be jailed without question.

The trial itself has unnecessarily caused a credibility gap between a large segment of the population and the judicial system. It has also been an embarrassment to the Justice Department—although it may have revealed the true nature of Atty. Gen. John Mitchell's brand of justice.

Stennis claims the disruptions in Judge Julius Hoffman's courtroom were "willful and deliberate, just a

continuation of their street riots."

The protestors at Chicago applied for a parade permit months before the convention and were refused—as were their repeated requests after that. The demonstrators complied with the basic law for petition to governmental authority.

The American Revolutionary War resulted largely because the repeated petitions of American colonists were ignored by the government then ruling—England.

Not only were the demonstrators refused permission to march or parade, but they were not allowed to walk on the sidewalks—they were even ordered out of the city parks altogether at first. And it was in Lincoln Park on Aug. 28 that the first assault by the police took place.

The demonstrators had no weapons or any defense against the clubs swung against them. Should they be blamed if they later armed themselves for their own protection?

Now Judge Hoffman, acting for the state in putting away the seven "conspirators" for as long as possible, has resorted to the old English practice of imprisonment for debt. The judge has ordered the demonstrators held beyond the five-year prison term as hostages for the court costs estimated at \$60,000.

Debtor's prisons supposedly died out in this country in the Nineteenth Century.

But medieval justice continues to be the rule in "certain cases," determined by the ruling oligarchy. Now John Stennis wants abolition of the right of trial for "certain people."

The next thing we'll probably see is stocks and pillories... and guillotines.

Bobby Nowell

Life Without The DTH: A Look Into The Future

Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, he walked out of his room and onto the balcony of his dormitory. From here he could see the workers dismantling Ehringhaus Dorm, which had been unoccupied for some time and was about to give way to another "A-1 and F" parking lot.



He shuffled along the balcony, rattling an empty Coke can against the railing, and boarded the elevator for the first floor. When he—the sole occupant of the car—debarked at ground level, his eyes automatically fell on the large marble pillar in the center of the lobby, where the stacks of the Daily Tar Heel formerly were deposited.

From time to time in the past, he had automatically stooped to pick up an imaginary copy of the student newspaper, but he now reminded himself that it was exactly a year ago this day that students had voted to abolish compulsory funding of the Tar Heel. After that, he recalled, the demise of the South's finest daily campus journal had been swift. It was an event which had received front-page coverage in the daily North Carolina press; he still had several clippings reporting the collapse.

He sauntered into the snack bar and bought coffee and two jelly doughnuts for breakfast. He didn't have a dime for a newspaper—someone had said something about a blockade of the Suez Canal yesterday—and he looked around the nearly deserted room for a discarded paper.

Spying a still spread paper on a table near the magazine rack, he hurried over and deposited his wares, eagerly seizing the newsprint. However, his face fell as he discovered it was only the Society Section of the Charlotte Observer.

Letters to the Editor

Food Service Demise: End To Student-Teacher Chats?

To The Editor:

The proposed closing of Lenoir and other eating facilities within the central campus strikes a serious blow at one of Carolina's points of strength. Carolina has always been noted for good teaching and excellent faculty-student relations.

Might it be worth something measurable in dollars to retain a few places within the community where faculty and students can walk together to relax, discuss, and share food or coffee together at a table? During my three years at Carolina, I have had more opportunity to talk personally with undergraduate students at Lenoir Hall and other dining facilities than the total of all office conferences. I hate to be forced to discontinue the practice of an open invitation to all my students to join me after class or any other time they see me free at the food facilities. This opportunity for dialogue benefits me personally; certainly it has helped me to understand and agree with much that concerns UNC students. I believe, too, that students profit from an opportunity to talk "off the record" with a faculty member.

The University is greatly concerned with the depersonalization of education. It has asked every department to go to great length to restructure its course offerings and stretch its budget to provide small group Freshman Seminars starting next fall. Freshman Seminar is a wise step

forward. I would hope that the University in its need for economy would not simultaneously close off another avenue for faculty-student dialogue and make it impractical to share informal conversation on a one-to-one basis in a relaxing atmosphere of food and beverage.

John M. Dennison
Chairman, Geology Department

'Proto-Quasi' Term To Precede 'Fascist?'

To the Editor:

It is sad to see so much ill will generated by Mr. Agar's imprecise use of the term "proto-fascist" in reference to the Student Committee for a Free Press. From his description in today's column of his opinion of the Committee, it is clear that the proper term is "proto-quasi-fascist." Had Mr. Agar used the correct technical terminology, I am sure the misunderstanding with the "free press" people could have been avoided.

*The interested reader is referred to any standard text on the subject.

Charles H. Alexander Jr.
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ring: "Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy startled the political world last night in a speech at Chapel Hill, announcing he has had a change of heart and will be a candidate for president in 1972. Kennedy's surprise announcement was cheered by a crowd of only a dozen or so persons in Memorial Hall. The poor attendance at the senator's speech was attributed to a lack of its publicity among students."

George's rosy, pan-like face seemed to split apart with a gasp. "How about that!" he cried. "And I didn't even know Kennedy was going to be here!"

"Nor did I," sputtered Tim. "Why doesn't somebody tell us these things?"

"It would have been in the Tar Heel..." died on George's lips.

"Well, anyway," continued his roommate after a pause. "It's another weekend. What are ya gonna do tonight?"

"Well," replied George. "I thought I'd go to the free flick. Know what's playing?"

"Sure don't. I called the Union five times last night and it was always busy. Guess we'll have to hike up there and read the posters."

"What a waste of time. Why don't some of the campus publications print something about it?"

Tim shrugged. "They only publish when they want to, you know. Once a week, once a month... who knows? The Radish costs too much, and the last issue of the Renaissance I saw was devoted entirely to a proposal for drafting Barry Goldwater for president in '72."

George drummed his fingers disconsolately on the formica. "I really wanted to go to the basketball game this week end, but I didn't feel like standing in the ticket line for two hours in the cold at eight in the morning. It really makes me mad that I can't see the games I want, when my money goes to pay for athletics!"

"I know what you mean, brother. I wonder how long the teams could last if their money were taken away like the Tar Heel's was?"

"How long can a man go without water in the desert?" George responded. "For that matter, what about the Yack? I don't like paying for all those sweetheart pictures, if my own picture can't get in because of them!"

"And look at student government. What do we ever get out of that? Hot air

from a bunch of committees. A lot of politicians walking around with Robert's "Rules of Order," like the Red Guards tote "Quotations from Chairman Mao!" What a lot of baloney."

The two students sensed their rapidly rising temperatures and realized they hadn't been stirred up like this in a long time.

"Tim," said the one, "did you vote to take away Tar Heel funds?"

"No, I didn't... I didn't vote."

"Neither did I," mused George. "And you know I always thought of myself as being pretty liberal. Come to think of it, I had no real complaints with the Tar Heel. They didn't write anything about our only beer blast of the year, but only nine people attended it. I know they used cuss words, but I kinda thought that took guts."

"Yeah. But a lot more people got mad because of that and the fact they didn't like the tone of the editorials. They were the ones who got out and voted and killed the paper."

"And we, who didn't vote, just as surely helped kill it," George concluded sadly.

He rose and walked over to the newsstand, but he still couldn't find a dime in his pockets. He looked longingly at the papers, the whirled with an anguished look on his face.

"Damn it, it just isn't worth buying the Durham Morning Herald just to get a crossword puzzle to work," George exclaimed. "And I don't even know whether they carry Andy Capp comics."

He flopped back into his chair and gazed at his roommate. "The Tar Heel cost about a penny an issue... I admit, I miss it."

Tim nodded sadly. "You know, I think we messed up when we let the paper be killed by a few soreheads."

"We sure did. We messed up."

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