

Runge finishing up first weeks in office

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Feature Writer

"Don't get ripped off!" "Student Government is the worst bargain in town." Sound familiar? A few months ago, these slogans were the calling cards of Ford Runge, then candidate for the office of student body president.

Runge's sun did indeed rise over the Blue Sky, and these slogans have since become the themes of his administration. The Student Consumer Action Union is the backbone of his organization in Suite C.

The Consumer Union has been busy handling complaints for people calling in or dropping by. Under executive branch supervision, SCAU has prepared a pamphlet concerning tenants' rights in Chapel Hill.

Entitled "The Southern Part of Heaven? A Guide to Apartment Living in Chapel Hill," the pamphlet is designed, according to Runge, "to acquaint the apartment dweller, or someone seeking an apartment, with information pertinent to available housing, the relative merits of various types of housing, and tenants' rights with regard to leases, deposits, and rents."

In addition to the forthcoming tenants' rights booklet, SCAU is also preparing a Chapel Hill eating guide, to be ready for the incoming freshmen this fall.

Concerned primarily with menus, prices, service evaluations, and sanitation records both past and present, the dining index will also attempt to document any instances of "treated" meat. "Enzymes are sometimes added to gray meat prior to its being served to make it appear red," Runge explained.

An information sheet on laundry service—both on and off campus—is expected to be completed possibly by the end of exam period this semester.

Next fall, SCAU's tenants' rights committee, under the direction of chairman Dewitt McCarley, will organize a statewide conference on tenant consumerism. Representatives from all sixteen branches of the Consolidated University will attend, as well as members of various tenants' rights groups around the state.

McCarley is presently developing tentative plans for a newsletter publication to be distributed across the

state. Together with the conference, Runge feels that these efforts will mobilize the forces needed to secure the establishment of North Carolina laws protecting the legal rights of tenants.

Runge views the current crisis concerning the deemphasis of federal financial aid to students as "the greatest issue facing us at this time." The termination of aid constitutes an especially pressing problem for minority and disadvantaged students.

Runge, Willie Mebane (Chairman of the Black Student Movement), and Bill Geer of the Financial Aid Office are working together to confront the crisis. The trio has contacted the National Student Lobby and the North Carolina delegations in Congress. A massive letter writing campaign is underway, media coverage has been organized, and the BSM plans a meeting rally.

Runge has developed several formats for action to alleviate some of the problems of minority groups. He plans to expend the operations of the Committee on Community and Minority Affairs created last year by Richard Epps. Warren Carson, chairman of the committee and past chairman of the BSM, hopes to focus the efforts of the group on the unique problems that confront minority students.

Cooperation between the Black Student Movement and Student Government is important to Runge, for many issues can be dealt with far more effectively when the two groups work together as a coalition. The recent mobilization of students to march on Raleigh with the Tuscarora Indians was the result of such a joint effort.

Improvements in communications have also highlighted the first months of Runge's reign. Runge claims to have implemented plans for a Student Information Network designed to facilitate the flow of information between Suite C and the student body. The network serves primarily as a clearinghouse for complaints.

Through a system of representatives both on and off campus, complaints are channeled to specific branches of student government. For example, a question about dorm life would be turned over to the Residence Hall Association. "If action is not taken within three days of the time that RHA receives the memo, we will



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handle the complaints ourselves," Runge promised.

Runge believes that a president must be both visible and available to be effective. "One of the major problems of student government in the past is that once the President is elected, he pulls a disappearing act," Runge commented.

Since he assumed office in February, Runge has visited ten dormitories to discuss plans and explain the programs of his administration. The meetings also provided an excellent opportunity for creative feedback. This program will be expanded in the fall to include apartment complexes.

Past administrations have also deemphasized the student services aspect of student government. "All services could—and should—be expanded as soon as possible," Runge said. A typing class coordinated with the Guidance and Testing Center will be offered in the fall.

Runge views the office of President as

an open-ended one, lacking rigid definition. "Past presidents have seen the title as more honorific than substantive," he said. "The office merely afforded a student the opportunity to play 'junior executive.'"

"The key to being effective is a willingness to work," Runge continued. "It is a commitment which involves being able and willing to shoulder the full responsibility of the office, and then to surpass that goal to seek out programs and policies that are in the best interest of the student body. In short, I see the position as a full time job."

Runge points to the recent pass-fail decision by the faculty council as an example of his role as a go-between for faculty and students. The foundation of his responsibility as a representative of the students is to keep the Trustees, among others, in touch with the concerns of students.

This year, for the first time, the President is a member of the legislative branch of student government—the Campus Governing Council. Runge hopes that this unique position will help create a stronger bond between the different branches of government.

According to Runge's interpretation of the relationship the President's role on the CGC is not that of initiator. Instead, Runge believes that he should serve as an arbitrator between the different factions of the Council. "I have no intention of spearheading any attempt to move the CGC in a direction it is not disposed to move to," he commented. "I want to be in a position to offer compromise."

Runge maintains that UNC and Chapel Hill are not separate entities—and to think that one can get along independent of the other is a serious mistake. The thrust of his policies is to make students an effective force for change in the community where they live.

Runge believes that his office in Suite C has been more open to people and activity than any previous administration. "My intentions now are no different than the ones advocated during the campaign," he said. "They are specifically designed to organize aggressive consumer action programs, as well as pursuing general policies which are of direct benefit to Chapel Hill students."

"I am not interested in a political career," he concluded. "I do not view the office as a stepping stone to any higher political involvement. We've got things to do here and now."



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