

Lisa Bradley

Effects of the tenure system

Most people would probably agree that a major feature of any university is a tenure system. The significance of such a system lies in the protection it affords faculty members against capricious and arbitrary dismissals of a political nature and against violations of their freedom of expression, whether verbal or written. Indeed a primary grievance directed at the five-year review systems in operation at many universities is the potential abuse inherent in such a scheme.

Controversies arising in discussions of tenure surround neither the need nor the value of a tenure system, but rather the actual provisions of the system. Here at UNC the bestowal of tenure, as rigidly defined by the Board of Governors, or of promotion rests upon considerations of the following duties and responsibilities of faculty members: community service, publishing/research endeavors and teaching. Seldom do faculty members excel in all of these fields and many times the overriding qualification is the quantity of publications or research either completed or ongoing. Besides, the quality of an institution's education is measured to a great extent by the quality of research produced by the faculty of that institution, and their resulting eminence in respective fields.

Publication/research requirements serve an important purpose in our society. The generation of new theories, ideas, opinions, insights, etc. vitalizes the academic world and serves as an important goal of any university. At the same time these requirements ideally offer assurances that faculty members "keep up" with current thought and that consequently students will receive an education that is neither outdated nor stagnant.

There nevertheless exist two well-grounded criticisms of publishing/research demands. In the first place one might note that the phenomenon of "publishing for the sake of publishing" inevitably will arise, at some point, out of this system. The production of consistently creative and original materials within a specific period of time and of a sufficient quantity is recognized as an unreasonable request for the following reasons: (1) the fact, albeit frequently denied, that some fields of study quite simply offer no prospects for original thought and (2) the often lengthy time involved in producing truly reflective and carefully prepared research precludes the possibility of requiring a specified quantity of work within a given period of time. What emerges in



"I DON'T CARE HOW MANY BOOKS YOU'VE WRITTEN, BILL—THEY DON'T GIVE TENURE TO FOOTBALL COACHES!"

the place of original materials all too regularly are manuscripts, articles and book reviews which at best might carry labels of pedantic, trivial, obscure, innocuous, etc.

One must too consider a second indictment against publishing requirements. The promotion of learning is a stated purpose of the university, rivaling the generation of new ideas in importance. However, the premium placed upon research, for tenure and promotion purposes, has a deleterious implication for teaching. The inherent danger lies in the opportunity research demands create for the relegation of teaching to a secondary status. This problem magnifies itself because no institution mechanisms exist to pressure those tenured faculty members who are, in the eyes of both graduate and undergraduate students, less than competent teachers into proving their teaching abilities. Furthermore, regardless of a faculty member's "rank and of the quality of his or her teaching

abilities, anyone who prolifically publishes and or who brings "distinction, recognition and honor" to the University will not be too strongly "encouraged" to correct teaching deficiencies.

There seems to be no viable remedy for the "publishing for the sake of publishing" illness. Any university efforts to stress quality of research will open themselves to charges of prejudice and subjectivity and will perhaps have further adverse effects upon teaching. Corrections in this area will arise only when fundamental belief and priority changes occur in the academic world.

Steps may be suggested, however, toward alleviating the harmful impact of research demands upon teaching. The requirement of education courses offers one solution, as does the "passing" of a classroom observation period. An even better suggestion is the participation of students in the tenure/promotion/hiring/dismissal proceedings: the resultant undesirable consequences for students must be

taken into consideration, however.

These criticisms of the effect of tenure upon teaching are by no means implications that the tenure system and quality education are incompatible. These protestations should rather be viewed as lamentations of one who wishes that the quality of teaching would be as highly respected as the quantity of research—that somewhere in this in many ways fortunate university there would be a place for those faculty members who are dedicated to the goal and aspiration of the teaching of others at the expense of doing research. The dismissals of faculty members who, in the eyes of students and frequently of fellow workers are inspirational teachers as opposed to mediocre researchers, reflects a tragic state of affairs on a campus whose avowed purpose is the promotion of further learning.

Lisa Bradley, chairperson of the Academic Affairs Committee, is a senior psychology major from Raleigh.

Forrest Read

Dilemma: survival of the mind

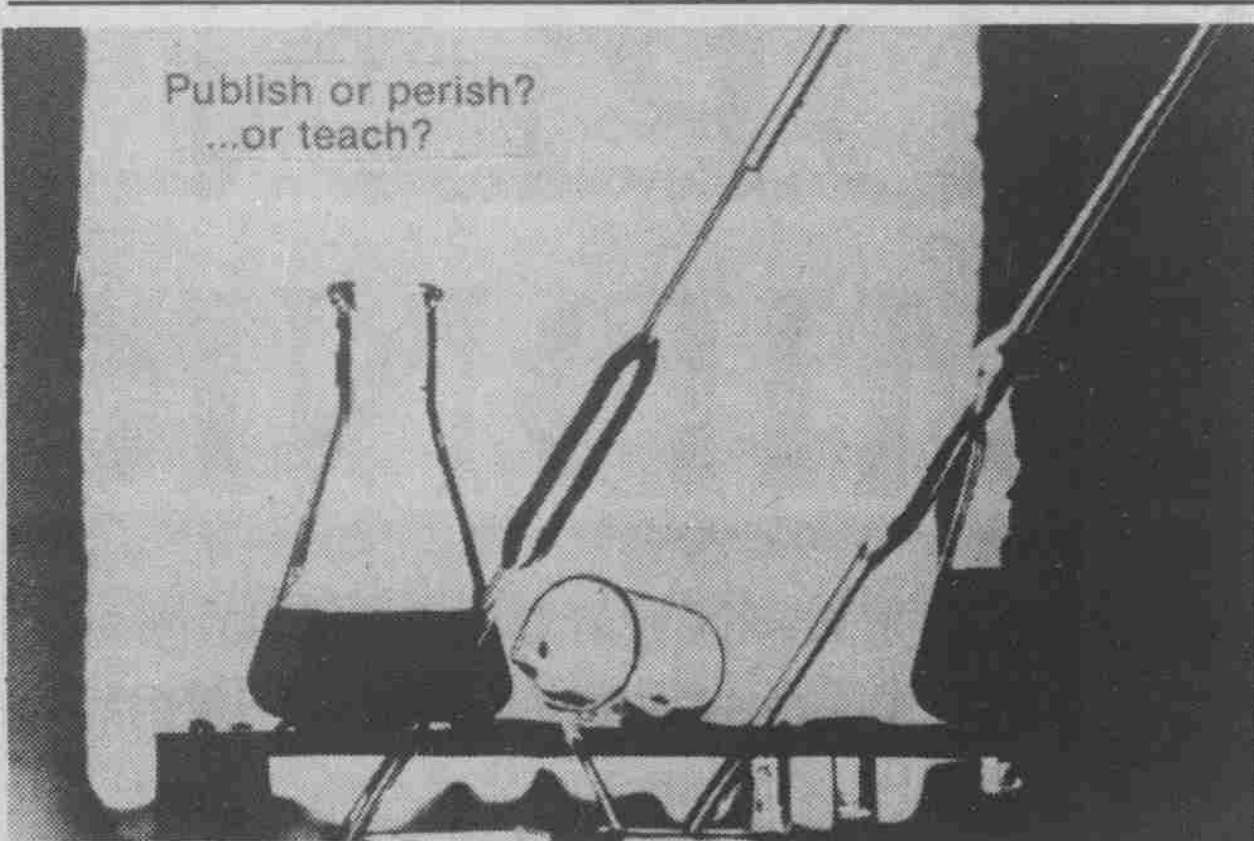
The editors of the *Daily Tar Heel*, presumably reflecting student attitudes, want to know "whether there is an overemphasis on research at UNC and whether this forces professors to live by the dictum 'publish or perish.'" The second "whether" answers "yes" to the first while implying that to "publish" is a professor's only way "to live."

In their specific questions, the editors assume correctly that "publish or perish" is a factor in the hiring, firing, promotion or tenure of UNC professors, then ask "is its effect positive or negative?" and "does it have an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and therefore on the educational value of the University?" Tending themselves toward "negative" and "adverse," they wonder "Are the manuscripts published by professors always really worthy of publication?" "Does the tenure system take teaching merit into account?" "What, if any, are the detrimental effects of tenure?"

To answer these questions for a university offering varied studies involves intimate knowledge both of the studies and of departmental practices. To answer them for my own department, English, would result in pros and cons depending on point of view, i.e., the administrator's, the colleague's, the student's, the teacher's and the serious scholar's or intellectual's. One would seldom find all these in a single person, so it would become a matter of self-interest, as in the questions asked by the *Daily Tar Heel*. And such, indeed, is the nature of the beast "publish or perish," a slogan coined to dramatize how administrators and tenured professors intimidate those seeking to join their ranks.

The conjunction "or" is indicative. In practice it often does become "publish or teach," on the assumption that to publish is to be serious while to teach is not. A wittier version is George Bernard Shaw's "Those who can, do, those who can't, teach." Shaw, of course, did both, and there lies the secret: it should be "publish and teach," or, looking at origins, "think and teach," "write and teach."

Not everyone's experience and



This column is the first in a series of five discussions by professors on the merits and/or demerits of publishing requirements as the major basis of tenure decisions.

Lisa Bradley's column, above, introduces the salient problems involved in a "publish or perish" system, particularly its effects on the quality of teaching at the University. See page one for a related article on the tenure system.

perspective will be the same, but in my observations and for myself there is no honorable or intellectually satisfying way to make these alternatives "either/or"; such bifurcation fits better the "fish or cut bait" of "the struggle for existence" and the melodramas of existentialism.

In the life of the mind, it has been said, there are no victories. The consolation, if one can survive the "both/and" of irresolvability, is no defeats. And how keep it going? By struggling in a field larger than a classroom containing a captive audience of nonpeers, and by refusing to let the classroom, whatever percentage of the clientele might prefer it, become a showcase for easily digestible materials and for ever-soaring grade-point averages.

I am talking about research in the genuine sense of trying to advance human awareness, with all that implies.

No one who is trying to do that will be satisfied until he has written for his peers, very few of whom are at his university. Nor will writing for his peers be enough. He (or she) will also want to get the young going on the same track: how can it be otherwise if one is impassioned by a quest, and wants to impart it, and wants to share it in all its translations? Such, we are told by great thinkers, writers, and teachers, is "the gay science" (cf. the tone of our best, "p. or p.").

How could it be an honorable profession, both subjectively and objectively, if teaching were not refreshing itself through thinking and writing? If the yellowed notes of courses taught over and over were not being renewed? How can there be enthusiasms, not hoked up but real, if there are not struggles with stubborn materials, against old theses, for new

light? To be sure, talk breeds ideas; but the spoken word countenances more bullshit than the written, which demands mental discipline and composition. I have lost many fine ideas and turns of phrase in the classroom, as in bull sessions. Only writing, where ideas can be elaborated, gives ideas a chance to enter significant relations and to become lasting.

The classroom, like my job, is here and now. But what about the past, for which I feel responsible, and what about the future, which I want to try to affect? Teaching can do that in part, but only on a fairly elemental level. Alas, that level is as far as most students want to go. But "the educational value of the University" has another claimant, one indeed "universal"—not this year's students, or North Carolina or the United States, but the human mind. I want to plug into that. So should more students, and may be more professors, too.

"Can a professor survive as a university instructor if he emphasizes teaching rather than research?" Again the "either/or." In my experience the two are neither antagonistic nor separable: if one does not feed the other, one grows to a monster while the other perishes. There are many ways to "survive as a university instructor," if that means to "get tenure." But tenure has a detriment, and it works both ways: it may promote ambition beyond the quotidian claims of teaching; but it may also relax the struggling mind until it yields to such opiates as adoring students, "the Southern part of heaven," or an ever-increasing fit of easy-chair and middle-age spread. For a low-grade institution some wit coined the variation "publish or stay."

I fear these last more than I fear "publish or perish," for in my profession, as I see it, survival of the mind—whether one person's or a university's—is more important than anybody's job, or anybody's preference of one professor over another, or any quasi-political slogan.

Forrest Read is an associate professor of English.

perspective

Monday, November 10, 1975

Hostilities must cease

In two major confrontations between Student Government figures and the Black Student Movement, the BSM budget has been frozen, legally impounded by the treasurer of the student body and the chairperson of the Campus Governing Council Finance Committee. Both of these fund freezes, while procedurally proper, have been of little benefit to any element of the student body.

The first fund freeze came as a result of an alleged illegal checking account and possible misexpenditure of funds by the BSM Gospel Choir. The freeze ended for all but the Gospel Choir funds following a BSM march on South Building and the Carolina Union, inaction by the CGC and internal struggles within the executive branch.

The second freeze followed the BSM presentation of world heavyweight champion Muhammed Ali and the handling of cash receipts from the program. Security agents were apparently paid from sales of tickets without BSM processing the money through the Student Activities Fund Office as required by CGC budget law. That freeze has not yet been lifted, except for a lump sum for Ali's honorarium.

The fund freeze has hurt the programs sponsored by the BSM. *Black Ink*, the official publication of the group, could not publish for an extended time because of the impoundment. The Gospel Choir, recognized as one of the best in this part of the country, cannot spend any of its budget for travel or other expenses. Students, both black and white, cannot benefit fully from these programs as long as the vital funding is not forthcoming.

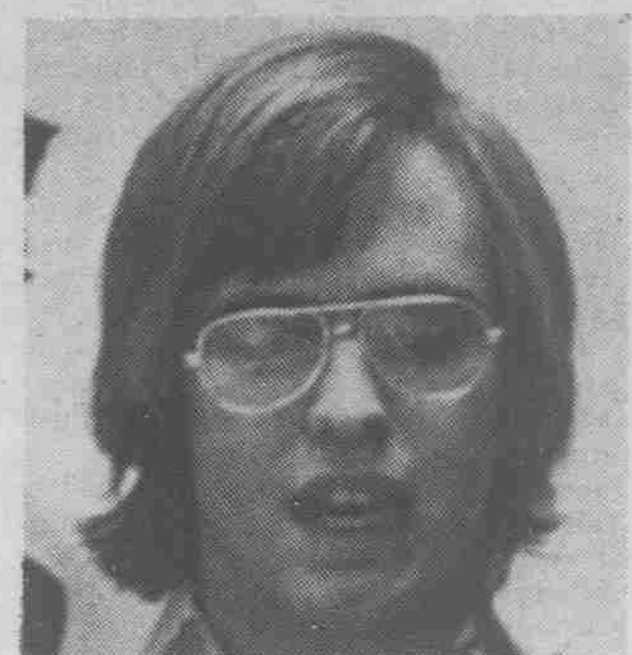
This is not to say, however, that the BSM funds should not have been frozen. Flagrant violations of Student Government law, should they occur, must be dealt with swiftly and thoroughly. But in both these BSM fund freezes, the application of the law and proper remedial steps have been hampered by overreaction on the part of the CGC Finance Committee and Student Government. Former Finance Committee Chairperson Bill Strickland quickly refused to honor a requisition for Ali's expenses on the day of the speech (but before the speech occurred) because someone labelled the request "late." The BSM refused to discuss the funding situation with a *DTH* reporter and closed ranks behind its chairperson in an effort to regulate

any information released. Until the anti-BSM forces in Student Government relax their aggressive stance and until the BSM leadership loosens its grip on pertinent information, further clashes between the two groups will inevitably reoccur.

And students will suffer for it. In the spring, when the new BSM leadership seeks a budget with which



Lester Diggs
BSM chairperson



Bill Strickland
Former finance chairperson

to expand its programs, the legacy of the current leaders may limit the appropriations. What is good about the BSM will suffer because of what is bad.

Officials of both the BSM and Student Government ought to encourage the special investigation of the BSM Gospel Choir under Dean Harold Wallace and CGC Representative Sheri Parks to come to a rapid conclusion. Both sides should sit down and iron out the "failures in communication" which have caused the current fund shutdown.

Until some happy medium can be reached and the hostility reduced, more and more major confrontations will mark the remainder of this academic year.

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