

A Branch-eye view

Life at Carolina has probably never been so masterfully portrayed as it has for the past year in the cartoons of John Branch. He has used his own blend of insight and wit to provide comment on campus phenomena ranging from the smoking ban to Mike O'Neal, and has also digressed occasionally to shed light on the real world.



Branch courtesy of Branch

We are fortunate and proud to have been able to present his work in the *Tar Heel*. We certainly agree with Jeff MacNelly of the *Richmond News Leader* that Branch is "the best of the college perpetrators of political cartooning."

A collection of Branch's work will go on sale at the Little Professor Book Store this Friday, and will be sold on campus and at the Intimate Book Shop next week. John will undoubtedly graduate in May and his commentary will be missed next year. This book will provide a momento of his contribution to the University.

Growth in diversity

The University served as host for the Southeastern Gay Conference this weekend. Three hundred gays from eleven Southeastern states and New York gathered for a program that included workshops, consciousness raising sessions and social events.

The conference gave rise to a question that has been frequently raised since the Carolina Gay Association (CGA) was founded two years ago: Should the University support an active gay organization?

That such a question even be considered contradicts the most basic premise of this institution. The University's purpose is to foster individual growth, and growth can occur only where there is diversity. Students must be allowed to choose freely from alternative ideas and life styles, and to synthesize these into new ideas. Neither the University administration, faculty, student government or students themselves should attempt to dictate what is and is not "right." Instead they should fight to insure that all students be able to embrace any philosophies or practices they choose, so long as they do not infringe on the rights of other members of the community.

Certainly the CGA has not infringed on the rights of other students at UNC. Many students, however, have continued to protest the existence of the CGA. Gays may do what they please in the privacy of their rooms, students argue, but they should not be recognized by the University as an official organization or subsidized by student fees.

To deny the CGA recognition or deprive them of funding is to take from gays the right to be gay. If the CGA is not allowed to fight for the rights of gays, no one else will.

There has been much discussion on this campus about the rights of women and the rights of blacks, and much has been done by the University and student government to insure these rights. Similar action should be taken to preserve the rights of homosexuals. Like women and blacks, they must be supported in their attempts to fight discrimination and maintain their identity.

The CGA has accomplished a great deal on a budget, appropriated by student government, of only \$600. They have performed a vital service for gays on campus, helped to educate non-gays about homosexuality and established enough respect in the area to enable them to serve as hosts for this year's Southeastern Gay Conference. They have undoubtedly been effective, and they deserve support.

One of UNC's greatest attributes is its commitment to diversity and the free exchange of ideas. This commitment must be preserved.

The Daily Tar Heel

84th Year of Editorial Freedom

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End subtle guerilla warfare

Plus/minus grading could relax tensions

By LORI WAGOR

Have you ever received a grade that was lower—if just a bit lower—than you thought you actually earned? Maybe you thought you deserved a B+ for your 3.33 average rather than just a plain old B. Would the plus attached to your grade be the reward you sought and worked for?

Concerns and questions of this sort have sparked an inspection of the grading system at UNC to find out if indeed there is a more accurate means of measuring a student's performance. One suggestion that has emerged from all the ruckus is to include pluses and minuses on the final grades.

Initiated by Prof. James Leutze of the History Department in spring 1975, this plus/minus option would effectively decrease the point spread between letter grades. Under this system, a student with an 81 and one with an 89 would no longer be lumped under the same "B" grade. Rather, an 81 would be reflected as a B-, and 89 a B+.

Attaching pluses and minuses to grades is by no means a novel idea. Five of the eight Ivy League schools already use this system of grading. But it is new to UNC and Prof. Leutze is its spokesman.

Compounding the issue of accurate grades, is grade inflation. Statistics show that grades have steadily increased over the last decade and a half, with grades improving by one half of a letter grade between 1960 and 1973. Inaccurate grades, coupled with inflation, inevitably spell trouble for the student, not to mention institutions of higher education.

Grades need to fairly reflect a student's abilities; they need to offer rewards for hard work. And necessarily, they in turn figure decidedly in the student's future aspirations.

No one is in full agreement about the proper way to measure grade inflation or how to decrease it. Leutze believes that grade inflation is partially a result of large classes.

"In a large class where you have less of a chance to get to know the student and thereby make personal evaluations of his work, you have to rely solely on tests and other measuring devices in order to arrive at his grade," he believes.

In other words, an instructor becomes more mechanical and bureaucratized. Differentiations between an 81 and 89 are not made and when 75 per cent of the grades in a large class are B, that B doesn't mean very much.

A teacher's responsibility to his student is twofold: (1) to present material that is as academically pure and intelligible as possible and (2) to evaluate the ability of the student to absorb that material. Instructors are failing in the latter responsibility if evaluations are not as fair and accurate as possible.

Presented to the Faculty Council in September 1975, Leutze's proposal would assign numerical values to letter grades with

plus and minus variants. For example, a B+ would equal 3.33, a B 3 and a B- 2.67. There would be no A- grade. In his resolution Leutze observed that he excluded the A- in order to emphasize the uniqueness of the grade A.

Most will agree that in any grading system there are inherent problems, but as Leutze suggests, "there is much wisdom in reducing the cost of inaccuracy." Sensitive to injustices and flaws within the system, he has found that the good students who are thinking more deeply about the problem felt that they were being hurt by the lack of pluses and minuses.

The absence of this option together with grade inflation work against the student in two ways: First, students tend to work harder for grades and yet no differentiation is made between the high and low range of a grade. And secondly, grades in general are being devalued—a legitimate B is now termed "average."

To achieve equality in grading, Leutze's system would have 11 possible grades rather than the traditional five. This new option would provide a more accurate and fairer evaluation of a student's performance and at the same time, would counteract inflation.

Since unanimity among faculty is almost impossible on such an issue, Leutze suggests that the best system would be to include the traditional letter grades with a plus/minus option. According to Leutze, "This would

allow those individual professors who felt able to make the distinction required to include pluses and minuses with a student's grade, while at the same time allowing those individuals who were not so inclined to continue giving only letter grades.

"It would be impractical and unfair if any system were forced upon the faculty." The important factor in any system is the need for general agreement among the faculty. With the option attached, a relatively systematic approach to grading can be accomplished.

Though some faculty members simply won't—for mechanical or other reasons—figure grades with pluses and minuses, this will not adversely affect the student's grades. The grading system is only as good as the graders, with or without the plus/minus option.

When this plus/minus option first was scrutinized by the Committee on Instructional Personnel earlier this year, it met with defeat. Rather, the committee composed of the Provost and all Deans, denied pluses and minuses and set out to redefine grades: A=outstanding; B=superior; C=good; D=fair; F=failed.

This redefinition is merely a "semantic change"—or simply put, no change at all.

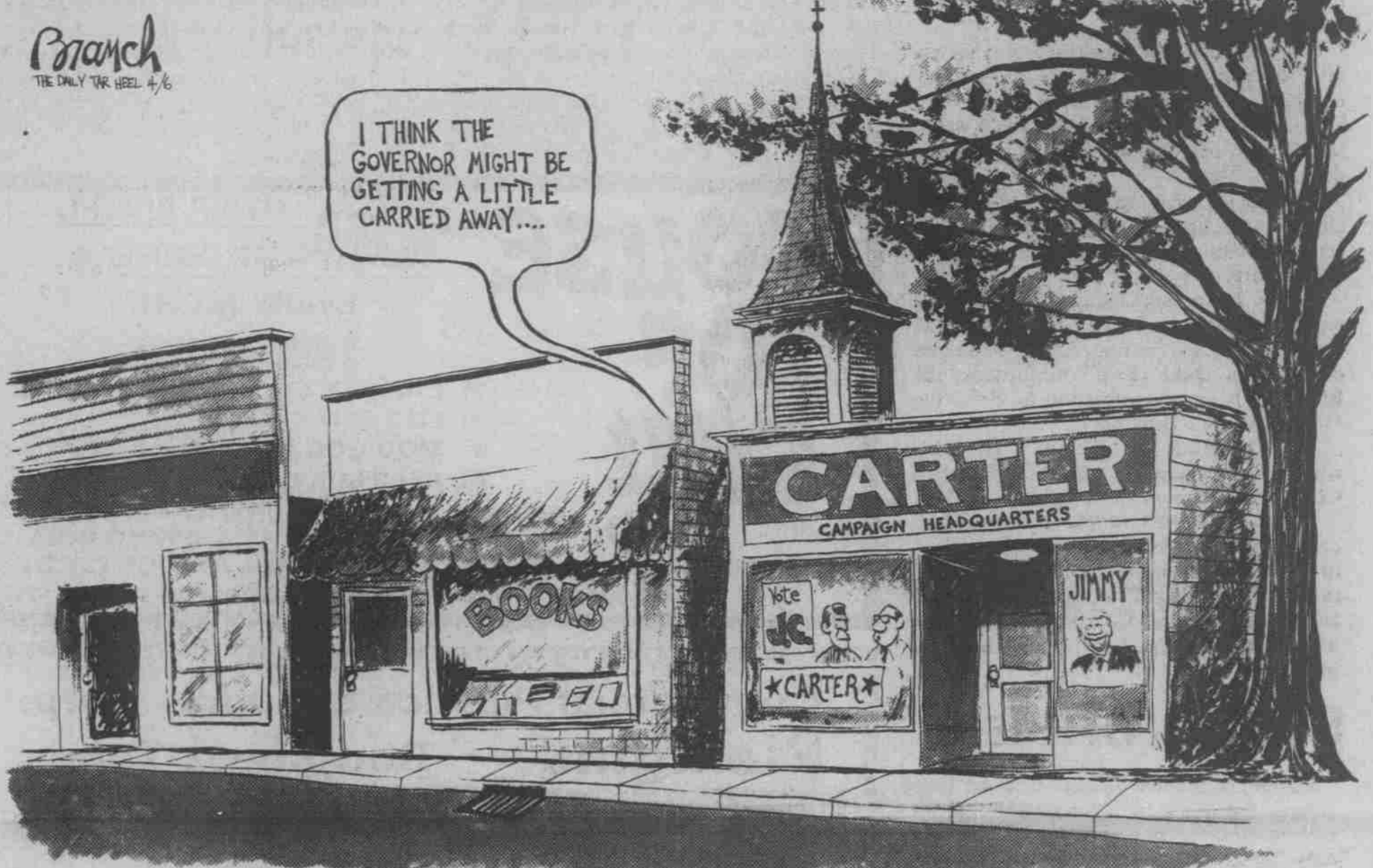
One of the arguments against Leutze's proposal is that if pluses and minuses are accepted as part of the grading system it is possible that more pluses than minuses would be given, and this in turn would lead

to more grade inflation. The psychological impact that this sort of change would have in terms of serving as a reminder—a positive reinforcer—to the instructor that the grading system had indeed changed and in the face of that change, he would think harder about giving a grade.

Prof. Samuel Williamson of the Curriculum in Peace, War and Defense adds a further dimension to the why and wherefore of this change. He points out that "some faculty claim current pressure from grades leads to a detrimental emphasis by the student in seeking safe courses, in withdrawing from courses at the first sign of trouble, in taking an incomplete or in subtle or not so subtle guerilla warfare with the instructor."

In other words, with the plus minus option there would be in effect three possible grades within each letter grade and thus borderline cases between A and B or B and C will be more accurately recorded with far less tension. And, as Williamson notes it would reintroduce the element of civility and relaxation into the student-teacher relationship.

Lori Wagor is a recent graduate of UNC with a major in political science, and now works in the department of Peace, War and Defense.



letters

Advertising: answer to night bus service?

To the editor:

May I throw in my two cents? I think it's a good idea to keep the U bus running for the extra two hours, since I am one of those very south campus students who stay on campus after 11:30 at night. But next year I plan to move off campus (rising room rent on campus, you know), and suddenly I find the transportation that I was depending on will no longer exist at night at all! Safety or otherwise, it will be a pain in the neck to either walk, hitch, or bicycle (which I'd have to buy) back to my apartment in the dark in the event that for some reason I'd have to stay on campus.

May I propose something to those in charge? This bus system in Chapel Hill ranks around second or third in the country, so I've heard. And since the DTH can raise revenue through advertising, why can't our bus system? I believe there is a market for this form of advertising, and it could support the town routes at night to some extent, as well as decorate those ugly old buses.

Victoria Smith
248 Ehringhaus

Shootout in Chapel Hill

To the editor:

I really don't consider it my prerogative to advise Dean Smith on the running of his basketball program, but I think I've stumbled across something that could greatly aid Carolina's efforts. To impart a "Tough Guy" image of next year's roundballers, Coach Smith should take immediate action.

In the pre-season *Sports Illustrated* issue, we could convince the editors to feature Tommy LaGarde on the cover. Under the heading "Shootout in Chapel Hill," LaGarde could pose with a basketball in one hand and a .45 in the other. His head should be shaved in a Mohawk, and the cover could be captioned "'Suck on this!' snorts UNC's Tommy LaGarde."

The majorettes could also toughen up their acts. The flaming batons are a nice touch and should be used more extensively. However, those flimsy batons normally used have to go; the girls should twirl crowbars in their standard routines.

The half-time film clips featuring pristine shots of the campus (the Old Well, the Bell Tower, etc.) must be revamped. I suggest we feature shots of the Town Hall Halloween party and a rumble in front of the Carrboro Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise.

It is plausible that Mr. Smith might reject these proposals (the Board of Governors could become alienated or something). Yet I believe these reforms could aid in shaking the "guys in baby blue jump suits" image that

many basketball opponents have of Carolina.

Mole Johnson
114 S. Columbia

Republicans no help

To the editor:

Unregistered but eligible voters that believe in electing pro-ERA legislators this year should not be deceived by Marshall Hurley's letter of April 1. Indeed, one should take it as other April 1 suggestions. As folly.

Mr. Hurley implied that by registering, voting and electing more Republicans to the state legislature that ERA would pass. He

criticized Bruce Tindall for encouraging people to register Democratic to elect pro-ERA legislators.

If past legislative records are any indication of how prospective Republican legislators might vote on ERA, one can disregard Mr. Hurley's hypothesis. A legislative analysis of how House members voted shows that two-thirds of the Republican legislators voted against ERA. Furthermore, 78 per cent of the House Republicans supported a bill to put ERA to a statewide referendum. Voting North Carolinians would probably have defeated the referendum in a campaign marked by distortions and demagoguery. Luckily, that referendum bill failed thanks to the overwhelming number of Democrats that did not want irrationally to decide ERA's

fate. While the defeat of ERA by both Democrats and Republicans was very disheartening for me, the support for the referendum incensed me.

Clearly, the record shows that more Republicans in the last legislature would not have enabled the passage of ERA. Since Democrats stand a good chance of victory in November, ERA supporters should work hard to see that the right Democrats are elected.

To insure that ERA is passed next session, register Democratic and campaign and vote for Democrats on August 17 that will faithfully represent you.

Peter Gilmore
2016 Lakeshore Dr.
Chapel Hill

SCAU explains activities

Consumer union aids students

By BRAD LAMB

The current furor over student fees necessitates some comment from the Student Consumer Action Union. SCAU, formed in the Spring of 1973, is a student organization which receives all of its funding from Student Government. Because we are funded this way, and more importantly because we are a consumer organization, this SCAU column will be devoted to describing some of the more recent projects and services which we provide for the student body.

The purpose of SCAU is to educate consumers and to serve as the advocacy agency for all UNC consumers. All members of the UNC student body are eligible to use any SCAU service.

SCAU's initial project was "The Southern Part of Heaven?," a guide to apartments in the Chapel Hill area, and is now in its 5th edition. The present housing program is concerned with improving Tenant-manager relationships. An advisory board of students, townspeople and realtors is being set up to hear serious complaints.

Another one of SCAU's more popular booklets is the restaurant guide, *Franklin Street Gourmet*, first published in the summer of 1973. The new 3rd edition gives reviews and comments on 64 local restaurants.

In addition to these activities, this semester SCAU helped a group of angry consumers present their case against a local veterinarian to a state regulatory board. This project was a direct result of the Consumer

Complaint Line (933-8313). Following the receipt of numerous complaints regarding a local veterinarian, SCAU researched the procedures for appealing to the State Veterinary Board and notified the complainants of the required actions. A majority of these persons wrote detailed accounts of their grievances, and traveled to Raleigh to testify before the State Veterinary Board. This board's decision is expected soon.

The Consumer Complaint Line is operable 24 hours a day for persons who want to complain or volunteer.

At this time SCAU has two projects in final preparation stages. A *Guide to Automotive Repairs*, first published in 1973, will be available in May. This new edition will publish results of surveys concerning the quality of automotive repairs in addition to the regular listing of area garages. Also, a similar guide on bicycle dealers will be released later this semester.

Even though SCAU is constantly working on regular publications, special booklets are printed in response to student demand. *CASH*, the guide to banks, was produced especially to help freshmen and junior transfers select the right bank for their needs without depending solely on bank's advertisements. Another edition of this book will be reprinted this summer. A survey of health services in this area will also be released for the first time near April 15th. This guide identifies the available health services (including Student Health Service) and, more importantly, tells where these services are located and how they can be utilized.

During the upcoming fall semester, several new projects will be initiated as a result of student complaints or suggestions. New guides to record/stereo stores, clothing merchants, and sporting goods/camping stores will be printed. Special studies of Servomation and University Housing are also being considered as possible projects.

SCAU also lobbies for student consumer interests on local, state, and national levels, and represents UNC at such occasions as the White House Regional Conference on Consumer Representation Plans recently held in Atlanta. Comparison Shopper, a bi-weekly grocery survey, is yet another service offered by SCAU.

Students interested in learning what makes business work in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area, where students provide a sizable part of the income, are finding SCAU is a good place to start.

Brad Lamb is a sophomore Spanish and Biology major and is the new Chairman of the Student Consumer Action Union.

The *Daily Tar Heel* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must be typed, double spaced, on a 60-space line. Unsigned or initialed columns on this page represent the opinion of the *Daily Tar Heel*. Signed columns represent the opinion of the individual contributor only.

Letters should not run over 50 lines (about 300 words) and should be mailed to the *Daily Tar Heel*, Carolina Union.