

# Southern Bell phone rate hikes hit students harder than normal consumer

By HOWARD TROXLER

*"Up goes the tuition, up goes the telephone . . ."—Donald Boulton.  
"Students form a constituency that's easy to step on."—Student Body President Bill Moss.*

This spring, the University announced the sale of its utilities; the electric utility to Duke Power, the water and sewer to Orange County, and the telephone service to the Southern Bell Telephone Company.

Southern Bell subsequently announced a set of rate hikes for the Chapel Hill area which set off a storm of protest from UNC students. Now, months later, the protest has died down and the rates have taken effect. This is due less to any resolution of the issue than to a marked lack of student concern.

Are the rate hikes justified? Mike Carson, manager of Southern Bell's Chapel Hill branch, says they are. Carson cites expenses that the UNC-owned telephone system did not have as the reason for the rate increases.

"I can understand why students would be concerned," says Carson. "But at the same time, rates have been constant all over the state for some time, and students have been paying these rates, and I don't hear any complaints from them." Carson predicts "less and less concern" about the increased rates as the years pass and the present student population is gone.

"Chapel Hill has the highest household income in the southeast. In many cases, the parents are actually paying the bills instead of the students, and they're not complaining."

Carson adds, "Nobody likes to pay high rates. But at the same time, there are a lot of facts that people don't understand."

According to Carson, 55% of every dollar Southern Bell takes in goes to expenses that the University did not have to pay. Among these expenses are property taxes, income taxes, depreciation expense, insurances, employee programs, and a North Carolina gross receipts tax (6% off the top of Bell's gross income). To offset these additional expenses, Bell raised the Chapel Hill residential rates \$1 per month and business phones \$6.75 per month. These are standard North Carolina rates.

Southern Bell took in \$250 million in North Carolina in 1976. Bell had a \$200 million operating expense, had to pay out \$50 million in dividends and interest on debts, and had to invest \$175 million to maintain existing facilities and keep up with demand by building new facilities. The deficit had to be met by selling bonds and borrowing money.

The rates do not entirely offset the expenses Southern Bell has in providing

The loss is more than made up for with long-distance fees, however. Long distance is where the money is.

The crux of the issue is the increase in installation fees, from \$7.50 to \$20.00. Students are hit especially hard by this increase, because they are a transient population. Carson said the installation charge increase was necessary to cover the enormous expense of establishing records, billing cycles, computer time, accounts, and the actual labor involved.

John Temple, Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance, agrees with Carson that the rate hikes are needed. "I don't feel that the students are being taken advantage of by Bell. They were getting a break from us." Temple maintains that the rate increases are justified.

The University itself will be out an additional \$500,000 to \$700,000 a year in phone bills alone; UNC has 35% of the phones in the Chapel Hill area.

## *"We are not typical consumers because we change residence twice a year"*

service to the students. Twice a year, when students move in and out, Bell is strained by the influx of connect and disconnect orders. "It's quite a hassle," said Carson of the student population. "It's only fair that the people who use a service more pay for it more. Another example of this was our decision to start charging for directory assistance. Everybody was paying for it, and only a few were using it. It's the same thing with the installation charge."

Local service is inherently a money-losing venture, says Carson. "Local service rates would have to be increased 75% to make local service self-supporting."

Temple said that Bell was ordered by the state Utilities Commission to enter a bid for the telephone utility, and the University accepted that bid, even though it was not the highest bid submitted. The University wanted Bell to buy the utility, and it was at the University's urging that the Utilities Commission ordered Bell to bid.

The rates now in effect were approved by the Utilities Commission as "fair and reasonable." Are these rates fair to the student users of the telephone service?

The Chapel Hill Telephone Company, owned by UNC, was operating in the black at its old rate levels. A fact not mentioned by Carson while he was citing reasons for the

increases was that students are above-average users of long-distance and toll calls, and long distance is the money-making end of the business. Are students an asset or a burden to Bell, as the company claims? Is Southern Bell taking advantage of the students by cashing in on their need for telephone service coupled with their necessary twice-yearly move?

Donald Boulton, Dean of Student Affairs, does not favor the installation hikes as they have been implemented. "I'm not going to say that the rate increases are not justified—but couldn't we get them in smaller doses? What has happened obviously is that the rates have jumped overnight. I'm saying I feel there's a better way of doing it. I don't believe the installation charge is a reasonable one."

Boulton suggests that the hike be spread over a period of two or three years.

He is currently investigating possible avenues of protest concerning the rates. "It doesn't really do much good to go to the telephone company . . . this has to go to the Utilities Commission."

Boulton stressed the need for student involvement. "If 8,000 student voices are heard, it is a powerful force. But if it's just Don Boulton, . . ."

According to Boulton, "As long as the telephone company was owned by the University, we were reluctant to add capital improvements, in anticipation of the sale of the utilities. What we have now inherited is that we have to pay for the setups that did not get put in there."

Student Body President Bill Moss proposes that the rates be increased over a period of time instead of "zapping" us with it all at once. "A boycott won't work. They're in the position where it doesn't matter."

"I think the increase is outrageous," says Moss. "I view Student



UNC has 35 per cent of the telephones in Chapel Hill.

Government's job as to go over their commission and try and present whatever arguments we may have."

The 8,000 students who live in dormitories at UNC-CH are in a peculiar situation. We are not the typical consumers because we change residence twice a year. The installation charges approved by the commission are considered fair for the average consumer, and students are not average.

It is not easy to protest utility rates to an already business-oriented Utilities Commission. An attorney in the Attorney General's office has already said, "I see no reason that students should be exempted from these rates."

But the burden of supporting Bell's operating expenses should not fall on

one segment of the consumer. Students are hit much harder by this rate structure than the average consumer.

"I do believe at this point in time it's worth our while to seek some sort of alternatives on this installation cost—some kind of stages, instead of this overnight jump," says Boulton.

It is worth our while. There are alternatives to what Bell has handed us; but no one is going to find them for us. Everybody likes students. Raise their tuition, raise their telephone rates, take their money. You don't hear them complaining. It is disturbing when decisions are based in part on a knowledge that the students can do nothing about it.

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## Neutron bomb — deterring or encouraging a nuclear war?

By ED RANKIN

It is a scenario that gives Pentagon officials nightmares. Swift-moving, well-equipped Soviet troops launch a blitzkrieg on a porous North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense line in Western Europe. Severely outmanned and poorly armed, NATO soldiers and commanders suddenly realize that they cannot withstand a prolonged conventional war with the Soviets. There is simply nothing in their arsenal to deter the attack.

President Carter faces a decision soon that can keep this horror story from becoming a reality. He must decide whether the U.S. will deploy the neutron bomb, a nuclear weapon which unleashes unusually large amounts of deadly radiation.

The controversial weapon is thus effective in killing people but leaves buildings and vehicles intact for later use. Funds for the research and testing of the bomb have already been approved. But now it is up to Carter to make another tough decision concerning the future of America's — and NATO countries' — military futures. In July he drew criticism in many circles when he nixed production of the B-1 bomber and opted instead for the Cruise missile. The heated neutron

bomb issue is guaranteed to make Carter more enemies whatever his choice.

The neutron bomb is definitely a precision weapon — a fact that both supporters and opponents of the device note in their arguments. It is not dropped from a plane but is delivered by an artillery shell or a missile warhead.

But what perhaps distinguishes the neutron bomb from other tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is its explosive punch — only one kiloton. Other nuclear warheads carry a payload of ten, 20 or 50 kilotons. Thus the neutron bomb is truly a nuclear weapon designed for the battlefield — but one on friendly territory. If a standard ten-kiloton warhead were detonated everything within a radius of one mile would be leveled. A neutron bomb exploded 130 yards above the ground and would destroy all structures within only a 140-yard radius, it would kill anyone within a mile of the explosion. Any person within 1/4-mile radius would likely die of radiation poisoning or other aftereffects within a month. Radiation from the explosion can penetrate armor at considerable ranges. The same armor possibly could resist the heat and blast of a regular nuclear explosion. Radiation from the bomb, however, dissipates quickly and does affect an area farther away than 1/4

miles. For a defensive organization like NATO this fact is crucial. An occupied city need not be reduced to rubble to drive out enemy troops. Civilians could re-enter the city after a safe amount of time and find the majority of their buildings intact and their land uncontaminated. A country would not have to be destroyed to be saved.

But it is this precision that frightens opponents of the neutron bomb. Battlefield warheads, they contend, blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear war. The precision of such a weapon would encourage its use. But the critics who fret that the neutron bomb will increase the likelihood of a nuclear holocaust overlook two key facts. First, NATO is a defense organization, and thus any use of this weapon would take place on friendly territory. The neutron bomb is considered a defensive — not offensive — weapon that can deter attacks and, at the same time, defend territory. Second, before any NATO commander could use the neutron bomb, or any other tactical nuclear weapon, he would have to request permission from the U.S. President because of an alliance agreement. The weapon would not be in the hands of any trigger-happy ally who could fire at any provocation.

Other critics of the weapon charge

that this is an "inhumane" weapon that prolongs suffering before death.

Still others fear that deploying the neutron bomb will seriously hinder future arms control negotiations such as the SALT talks. But the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which analyzes the impact of new weapons on arms negotiations, said in a recent report that deploying the neutron bomb would not appreciably affect future SALT talks and the like.

Whatever his choice, President Carter is weighing his decision carefully. He said last week that he is conferring with allied and NATO leaders before making any decisions next month. If Carter gives his OK to deploying the neutron bomb, it will not mean he is escalating the arms race or increasing the chances for a world-wide nuclear conflict.

It has been said that NATO's threat to use tactical nuclear weapons has steadily lost credibility the last few years and thus the organization's deterrent power has been weakened considerably. The neutron bomb would present a credible deterrent. And it is by enhancing deterrence that a country makes it less likely it will have to use nuclear weapons at all.

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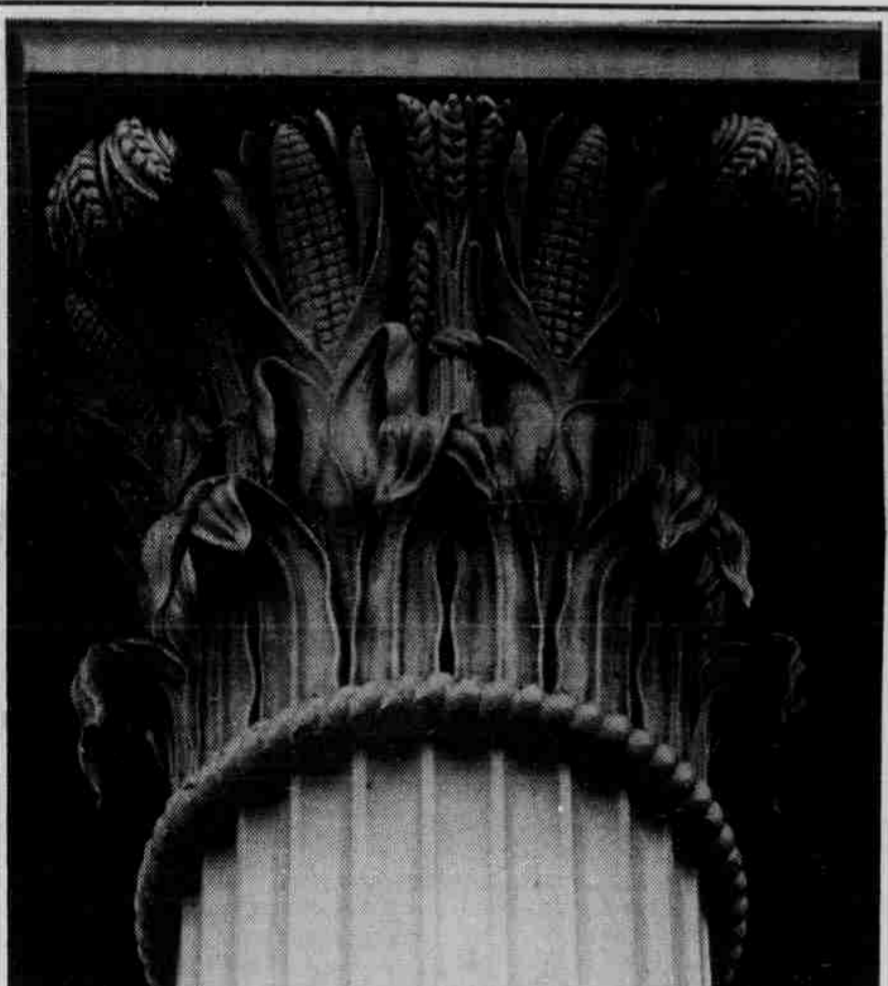


Photo courtesy of UNC News Bureau

## Corinth with corn ears

By GREG PORTER

When the state legislature considered the creation of a zoo several years ago, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-NC, is said to have quipped, "If you want a zoo, just build a fence around Chapel Hill." Whatever Helms may have intended, his remark is nevertheless a compliment and an apt description of this town.

If a zoo is an exotic collection of animals, then Chapel Hill certainly qualifies. The town is more than The First State University or The Southern Part of Heaven. It is a warm and natural haven for quite a variety of mammals: southern belles and women's libbers, greeks and freaks, homo- and heterosexuals, rednecks and knee-jerk liberals, dorm rats and apartment dwellers, jocks and geniuses, naifs and sophisticates, pedagogues and teachers . . . to name a few.

In its heterogeneity, Chapel Hill has not changed much in the decades since the late Jake Wade wrote, "This is a town touched by strange magic and one to which its peoples, many of them a curious breed, hold a rare and somewhat inexplicable attachment. . . . In Chapel Hill that man in the dungarees, coming out of the post office, is just as apt to be a best-selling novelist as the town's leading plumber or the divorced author of profound treatises on the science of nuptial compatibility. . . ."

"Chapel Hill . . . where there are circles and cliques, as in all towns, for the socials, round tables and sports, but where those who travel together are frequently of oddly dissimilar tastes. A famous singer breaks bread often and attends games with a Kenan professor. . . . A coach has tea regularly with a brilliant author. . . . A university department head finds more wisdom, truth and beauty in the philosophy of a bistro keeper than in the ivory towers of his own intellectual level. . . ."

An exotic collection it is. A diversity of people and intellect grounded, unified — by what? An appreciation of human life in myriad forms? A sense of tradition? Saul Bellow has divided modern society into those people who are happy just to be, to savor the moment — and the majority, who always strive to become, who mortgage the present for the abstraction of the future. Is there perhaps something here that makes being primary and becoming secondary?

One building here tells a great deal about the ambience of the place. A monument in its own right, the Playmakers Theatre is not so readily associated with Chapel Hill as the Bell Tower and the Old Well. It is a quiet symbol.

Inside the theater, students have struggled to master the classics for many years. Outside, the theater is guarded by columns which seem, at first glance, Corinthian. On closer examination of the pillars, there is a surprise. At the capital, there are not the customary acanthus leaves, but corn ears. Yes, ears of corn. It might seem ludicrous to a stranger. But the simple beauty of those corn ears, rooted in soil of red clay, is as important an element of this place as the elegant strength of a Corinthian column. That is a strange magic. A town that embraces the world and seeks its glories, yet cherishes humble roots.

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## Survival of the fittest

# Leftward swing leads to armchair liberalism

By LOU BILIONIS

Mainstream America is radical.

According to a recent Harris Poll, the average American of 1977 shares the same mindset of a 1960s radical. Middle America as a whole has shifted leftward in the past decade, holding a political and social philosophy far from what used to be known as the status quo.

Bankers in gray flannel suits, businessmen, politicians, mothers and fathers, students: Middle America at its finest is a teeming hotbed of leftist perpetrators.

Twenty years ago, barely a soul existed in this country who did not decry the evils of communism. Yet last year, socialist and communist parties actively campaigned in the Presidential election. Two decades ago, drugs were things sold in drugstores; 19 years later, the PTA was endorsing the decriminalization of marijuana. Back then, an adult was one fortunate enough to reach the age of 21; today, an 18 year old drinks, votes and pays taxes.

Of course, America has let its hair down a great deal since the 1950s. But it still is hard to believe that the mainstream of this melting pot is radical to the core.

An observation in the Times of London last spring may shed some light on the dilemma. The article concerned student protest, and offered an analysis:

young people today are more concerned about preserving the status quo than instituting change. They will march in the street to retain existing privileges, the article noted, but will remain "clinging to what they have got rather than groping for something new."

Hardly radical, one would say. Yet these students, traditionally the left wing of American society, are seemingly

more conservative than their predecessors. And we don't need to consult the Times of London to discover this fact. A cursory glance of life at Carolina affords the same outlook. Student groups are willing to protest economic issues, but only if they involve a serious infringement of presently enjoyed privileges. Toward the political, students here are even less active. Many

involve themselves through the system, but few, if any, stand up to promote a drive for something new and, ideally, better.

We're fearful of the future and its uncertainties, and equally fearful of change, which only brings that unknown future one step closer to the present.

What, then, could Louis Harris possibly have meant when he disclosed the American swing leftward. The answer to this paradox seems to lie in the differentiation between thought and action. Simply, we're all armchair liberals nowadays. We philosophize utopias only to awake when the dream is over and return to the dull routines of our existence. We fantasize change but practice a rigid set of Darwinian guidelines.

In other words, when polled, we express the thoughts; when pressed to action, one dog eats another to preserve the status quo.

Imagine, for a moment, a radical of the '60s confronting the typical student of this decade. If Louis Harris and his team of pollsters envisioned the scenario, I doubt whether they would have put such great stock in their statistical results. Sure, we hold some of the same ideas. But a comparison of actions is absurd. While the former fought for change, we fight against it.

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