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The Daily Tar Heel

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Divvying up the minimum for state employees

nothing (nuth'ing), pron. 1.no thing; not anything; naught. 2.approximate salary of a UNC housekeeper (see poverty). 3.the proposed \$522 pay raise for state employees.

State employees may be pleased to learn that this year, unlike last, they probably can count on a salary increase from the General Assembly. But if the present proposal before the legislature goes through, they certainly won't have to count very high. In fact, they may find that this year's raise really adds up to about as much as last year's — nothing.

There are many ways to look at the \$522 across-the-board increase. For workers in the three lowest salary grades it is either a small step away from the poverty line or a large percentage increase. For employees on the upper end of the pay scale it is either an improvement over last year — after all, something's better than nothing — or a slap in the face. No matter how you look at it though, it just doesn't amount to much.

The problem is simple: There's a limited amount of money to go around for pay raises. But instead of doling a little to everyone, the more obvious solution would be to redistribute the money so it does some good for the workers that really need it.

The housekeepers are just one group of state employees who are paid near poverty-level wages and could use a raise. \$522 is a start, but it really only adds up to about \$30 a month after taxes — hardly an enormous windfall.

Defenders of the proposed increase argue that

\$522 adds up to be a larger percentage increase for employees on the lower end of the pay scale (about 4 or 5 percent). But 4 or 5 percent of nothing is nothing. Underpaid employees need a real increase and a decent living, not misleading statistics from politicians.

Employees on the opposite end of the spectrum will not fare much better from the increase. For the better-paid state workers, \$522 is a drop in the bucket. After all, how much difference is there in making \$35,000 a year and making \$35,522? Certainly the extra change wouldn't make UNC more competitive in attracting the nation's best professors.

The increase would be little more than a token, and many employees have called their legislators to voice their dissatisfaction. It's insulting to be given so little compensation for a year of hard work and to have it pass as a raise. As little as it amounts to, upper-level employees might as well not get a raise at all.

There is something to be said for treating all employees alike and spreading around the burden of a tight state budget. But if there are only limited resources to work with, it seems like legislators ought to try to get the most out of the money that's there. The need is obvious. Raising the salaries of workers who make next to nothing should take precedence over offering a nearly nonexistent raise to well-paid professors and administrators.

The General Assembly should reconsider the distribution of pay increases, and give lower-paid employees a real raise this year.

Dinner and cocktails at Lenoir

Hats off to the folks at Marriott for extending Lenoir Dining Hall's hours to include dinner.

Early in the first summer school session, senior Shelley Senterfitt collected petition signatures of more than 170 students asking the Carolina Dining Service, which Marriott operates under contract, to open for dinner. It has been open from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Senterfitt, a resident of Ruffin Residence Hall, argued that campus residents shouldn't have to reheat leftover lunch or trudge to Franklin Street to get a decent dinner.

She proposed closing after lunch and then reopening in the evening.

Chris Derby, general manager of Carolina Dining Services, met with Senterfitt and promised a compromise. This week he came through with the announcement that the venerable cafeteria would be open 5-6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, beginning June 29. Lenoir closes on summer weekends because demand is so light that it's a money-losing venture.

The price is reduced hours at Union Station, which will be open until 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday instead of 6:30 p.m. That's a good compromise. A hot entre makes a better meal than chips or cookies.

Now it's up to students to come out and demonstrate an appetite for the service so Lenoir doesn't go on another crash diet. For summer school students, Lenoir's dinner is a winner.

This leads to a final point. Keeping in mind that summer service isn't a money maker, and noting that Lenoir's menu includes a salad bar and on occasion ice cream bars and potato bars, we propose the addition of a liquor bar to Lenoir.

Bring the old Pine Room back as a pub. Crowds would flock to the campus watering hole; no doubt it would turn a profit. Besides, students — of legal age, of course — could enjoy a brewsky or two without having to drive to and from a bar, thereby reducing the risk of death or injury. University administrators ought to support that.

It's an idea we can all drink to.

Labor advocates sing the blues

The U.S. Department of Labor announced last week it will not be taking over the N.C. Labor Department. The federal government had intended to seize the state's program after the Hamlet fire last fall demonstrated what a sorry job North Carolina was doing of protecting its workers. The federal government has decided that North Carolina is taking the right steps to fix the whole bloody mess.

But having one's nose pointed in the right direction and foot on the right path is no guarantee that one will arrive at the intended destination. More guidance and pressure may be required to get worker safety up to par in this state. Labor advocates are singing the blues and asking the feds, "Oh, won't you staaay... Just a little bit longer." We agree.

In the wake of the amazing flurry of activity in the state capitol, we have discovered how to get the bureaucratic machine of state government to spring into action, cut a swathe through red tape, and (gasp!?) get something constructive done. All that is required is a threat by the federal government to take over a function of state government. That possibility lit a fire under a myriad of sorry butts in Raleigh.

The threat is so effective because when roughly translated into bureaucratese, it reads: "Get your act together in the labor department or we will replace you with federal employees." The "we will replace you" line always gets results, and the federal government can back up that particular threat.

But the threat should not be removed so soon. This particular issue is so embarrassing and politi-

cally explosive that derrieres all over the capitol turned a rosy pink from the heat of pressure and scrutiny.

Suddenly, there was no buck-passing, no song and dance, no lethargy and no apathy. Overnight, people became life-long advocates of worker's rights. Things got done. In only a few months an entire department of government has been restructured. Amazing.

It's a sad commentary on the N.C. Labor Commission that 25 deaths and federal intervention were required to bring worker safety programs as far as minimum standards. Read that again — "Minimum standards." This is the problem: North Carolina still doesn't have a good occupational safety and health program, merely one that will do in a rush.

The federal government is wrong to pull out now, just when things were starting to happen. Pavlov's dog only salivated when the bell rang, and state bureaucrats only hustle when their jobs are on the line. Those jobs need to be kept on the line and under intense scrutiny. Otherwise, the sense of urgency will disappear and the passion for worker safety will fade. The N.C. Department of Labor is a very old dog with very bad habits. More than a slap on the wrist is required for the new tricks to last.

Washington, please stay, for the sake of the lives that could be saved by a good (rather than merely passing) occupational safety and health program. Stay, and keep the home fires burning. And keep those butts rosy.



Morehead City maid says 'You can't top this'

While Boris Yeltsin scoured Middle America last week for business tips to take home to Moscow, the Morehead City Town Council was chasing away an entrepreneurial success story.

College graduates for the third consecutive year are lamenting the dismal job market outside the halls of academe, but 18-year-old Kristi Collins found a titillating way to stay on top — not that her top stayed on.

In May Collins pioneered a topless house-cleaning service, called Maid To Order, that, well, took off.

Collins gets \$50 an hour and cleans about 30 homes a week. Several customers were seen shoveling dirt into their living rooms between visits.

"I don't need any advertising," Collins said. "I have enough publicity already."

But her work aroused opposition. Town Manager David Walker and town council members began getting telephone calls from jealous gully-rolling "there's no action in my bedroom so I'm going to pry into yours" people.

The Mammory Majority had struck again.

"Can't you do something about it?" snooty residents demanded of the council.

"Well, Councilman Cleo's got her today," Mayor I. Rentz Hehr II said, "and Rupert's wife Zelda signed Kristi up for Friday, tryin' to get old Rupy fired up for their anniversary."

"I don't expect I'll see her until she

cleans daddy's trailer on Wednesday," the mayor said. "I'm afraid my place will have to go dirty till then. There's nothin' I can do."

After mounting harassment from the never-nude crowd, the council two weeks ago passed an ordinance requiring all Morehead City maid services to apply for licenses.

Not a minute too soon, either. The following sort of conversation between homeowner and prospective housekeeper no doubt unfolded several times daily:

"Look, I'd like to hire you and all, but without the proper papers, I can't very well just hand you a can of Comet and a brush, now can I?"

"I s'pose not." (Dejected.) "How 'bout if I throw in pasties?" "Spreme Court said that was protected free speech."

Getting a license involves paying a \$50 application fee, obtaining a \$10,000 bond, providing letters of reference, submitting to a criminal background check, keeping a list of clients and agreeing not to clean au naturel in front of minors — kids, of course, never seeing anyone naked until their 18th birthday (as in birthday suit).



Matthew Eisley
Say the Word

Apply to be a maid? Who gets turned down? Is this still America?

The old boos almost fell out in shock when Collins told the council to stuff it. "If they try to stop me, they can't," she said. "It's my right. I'm a maid and it doesn't matter what I wear."

Alas, Collins sagged under pressure and decided to cleave from Morehead City to implant her business across Bogue Sound at Atlantic Beach to avoid the tassel hassle. Ta-ta, Morehead.

Why? "I feel like everything I do is being watched," she said.

Imagine that.

Meanwhile, Nelson Taylor, Morehead City's town attorney, finally owned up that, gee, since private behavior in the home is pretty much considered private behavior, maybe the town couldn't regulate topless maid service.

Too late. Collins is knocking on different doors now. Besides, there's a better breeze blowing off the ocean.

Town Manager Walker, who likes to keep abreast of trends, says he worries Collins' efforts are a sign of things to come.

"I think we're going to get more and more of this," he said. "You could have topless pizza delivery services, topless plumbing services."

As for bottomless plumbing services, now that's an idea that might sell.

Matthew Eisley, a senior from Albany, Ga., is offering introductory housekeeping rates if you call now.

Latin American Studies a break from the norm

You have probably noticed that for every good characteristic of an institution, there is an equal and opposite bad characteristic. UNC, for example, has the good characteristic of being among the top-rated universities in the nation, and all that that implies.

Balancing this, some would argue, is the less appealing characteristic of having an overwhelming abundance of students. I will testify that the issue of "being a number" is highly dependent upon where you place yourself within the world of UNC, however. You don't have a lot of influence over where you will live for your first year at UNC, so that's one factor you must entrust to fate and hope for the best. Although your social life will be left to random selection, your academic pursuits need not be.

As you browse through the Undergraduate Bulletin, seeking the major that's just right for you, I invite you to consider the curriculum in Latin American Studies, which is the undergraduate component of UNC's internationally recognized Institute of Latin American Studies. Studying Latin America with the guidance of ILAS's unpretentious, accomplished faculty offers a unique retreat from the numbers game you can play in other departments. In a department with fewer undergrads, your name and face are familiar to the faculty, and it is much easier to become involved with department activities. Isn't it common knowledge that you have a better chance at anything you pursue, whether it be a scholarship, acceptance into a distinguished graduate program, or even a job, if you are well-known by people with a lot of pull, like professors?

These opportunities are all part of the Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies, which was officially created in the late 1980s and is funded by

Becky Cline
Guest Columnist

the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. As one of the 12 federally designated National Resource Centers nationwide, the Duke-UNC program funds a broad variety of special opportunities for its undergrads.

Undergrads can gain an advantage through the cross-campus teaching system, funded by the Mellon grant. Not only does a student gain invaluable knowledge from the experiences of the UNC professors, but from the Duke professors as well.

The Duke professors? Yes. The joint program between UNC and Duke allows UNC and Duke professors from sister departments to trade campuses for a semester. Likewise, students are welcome in Duke classes not offered at UNC. Your first reaction might be that you don't want to contaminate yourself with anything associated with Duke, but we've been big about this and seen through our athletic differences to find that this two-university system offers us a great advantage over other Latin American programs in the country.

A very important part of studying Latin America is understanding its rich and varied culture. To encourage this, the Duke-UNC program funds an annual Latin American Film Festival in the fall, during which films are shown on five different campuses throughout North Carolina. The Institute works closely with other departments on campus to provide lectures, special classes and activities that illustrate a wide spectrum of Latin American culture. The Institute supports efforts to learn about how gender, race, music, political and

economic development and other factors affect Latin America. This is one benefit of an interdisciplinary major, in that the realm of exposure is almost infinite.

Student groups and community activities compliment the Institute's contributions to the general community. Students with an interest in Iberia or Latin America have formed a campus group called the Carolina Hispanic Association, or CHISPA. The group has drawn on its resources to teach those willing how to samba, merengue and lambada the night away at its Latin American dances, held on campus. CHISPA has also ventured to the Latin Corner, a dance club in Raleigh, and to Jacaranda's — a Mexican restaurant that stays open late for dancing — in Durham.

A more direct way to experience the culture of the area you study in is to immerse yourself in it. The option to study abroad is one of the most attractive aspects of the major. I can't sing the praises of living in another culture from personal experience yet, but friends who have done it swear by it. UNC has active programs for undergraduates in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, with the option of studying for a semester or a year. ILAS provides the opportunity for rising seniors to conduct original research for an honors thesis in their field through merit-based travel grants.

As you can tell, the intimacy of ILAS at UNC is only one of the many virtues of the Curriculum. Please consider participating in some of the events this fall, and feel welcome to come by 316 Hamilton for more information. Enjoy your summer!

Becky Cline is junior Latin American studies major from Cary.

READERS' FORUM

Race a crucial factor in Rodney King verdict

To the editor:
In his June 18 letter to the editor, "King jury did its job, delivered a just decision," Darryl Stephen Norton characterized the Simi Valley court decision as our legal system "working the way it was supposed to work." He admired the courage of the jury to come forward with an unpopular decision, despite the pre-trial "prejudicial 'guilty' verdict" arising from the media's repeated showing of the video tape.

Mr. Norton has misunderstood the meaning of the Simi Valley decision on virtually every count. He stresses the need for a fair defense for the officers; this is not the point. The point is that the verdict was obviously WRONG. Despite the correct courtroom procedures,

our justice system perpetuated injustice.

His main point is that the jury saw all the evidence, not just the video. What evidence was there that could possibly mitigate the excessive bludgeoning of this black man, the disgusting gloating recorded afterward, the admission of one officer that excessive force was used? No such mitigating evidence has come to light, because there was none.

Finally, how can Mr. Norton write such a long letter to the editor on this issue without once mentioning race? It is pretty to think of our nation without racism, but ignoring the fact does not make it so. Imagine Rodney King as a white man, beaten in the presence of 14 black officers...

We cannot excerpt this trial from its context, judge it to be procedurally acceptable, and move on. The persistent bias in our judicial system, police force

and society at large against blacks was made far too plain in this case to be ignored. The mask of "procedural correctness" was for a moment lowered to reveal an ugliness that faces neither Mr. Norton nor me, as white men in this nation.

MICHAEL A. TROTTI
Graduate History

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters, please follow these guidelines:

- Letters should be limited to 400 words.
- If you want your letter published, sign and date it. No more than two signatures.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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Distribution and Printing: Village Printing Company

The Daily Tar Heel is published by the DTH Publishing Corp., a non-profit North Carolina corporation, Monday-Friday, according to the University calendar. Callers with questions about billing or display advertising should dial 962-1163 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Classified ads can be reached at 962-0252. Editorial questions should be directed to 962-0245/0246.

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