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"IT WASN'T SLAVERY TIME ANYMORE"  
FOODWORKERS' STRIKE AT CHAPEL HILL  
SPRING 1969

by

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of The  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
Department of History.

Chapel Hill

1979

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Adviser

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JOHN DEREK WILLIAMS. "It Wasn't Slavery Time Anymore":  
Foodworkers' Strike at Chapel Hill, Spring 1969  
(Under the direction of Jacquelyn Dowd Hall.)

Intolerable working conditions provoked UNC cafeteria workers--most of them black women--to walk off their jobs. Although unprecedented, the strike came at a time and place that were already ripe for confrontation over labor, racial, and student issues. With negotiations at an impasse, scuffles between student strike supporters and opponents prompted campus administrators to close Lenoir Dining Hall. At the insistence of North Carolina's governor, Lenoir was reopened under guard of the state patrol, thereby invigorating debate about academic freedom and the university's political integrity. Later, the governor forced the evacuation of the building which strike supporters occupied. The four-week strike ended when, after extraordinary procedures, state employees throughout North Carolina received a twenty-cent increase in the minimum wage. This study surveys conditions prior to the walkout, outlines strike events chronologically, and assesses the assumptions and strategies of participants.

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## PREFACE

The early years of my life were spent in Durham, North Carolina, on an unpaved elm-lined street that ran a ridge and kept separated the poor neighborhoods--one, black; the other, white--which crowded close from either side. One evening under the corner streetlight which was a frequent gathering place for neighborhood kids, my older brother Winston got into a wrestling match with a black friend. The two were serious but not angry. A mixed crowd including me, barely ten years old, clustered around urging them on. From the tangle of grunts and arms and legs, my brother got the upper hand and pinned his opponent to the ground. Still flailing but on his back and definitely beaten, the black guy cast plaintive glances up at us bystanders, particularly at me I thought. "Hey," he shouted, "Get this nigger off me!" In a flash I gained some new though vague perception about the way life was in the South in the 1950s.

I attended Durham's segregated public schools, and then in the early 1960s followed a number of my friends north to New England for private school and college. When I returned to the South in the summer of 1969, it was to be a teacher in the public schools of Chapel Hill. While

in the North, I had felt the nation's turmoil, and was prepared to find changes as well in the North Carolina that I had left. One bit of evidence for such change was the article I had read in the New York Times about Chapel Hill's new black mayor, Howard Lee. Nevertheless, when that first sultry July day draped itself heavily about me, I sensed that however changed, this still was home. On the first day of school--a hot August day--and my first day of teaching, one of my seventh-grade history students-to-be made the following public pronouncement: "That ol' honkie ain't gonna teach me nothin'." I knew then that the South had changed and that I still had a lot to learn.

For several years I remained on the faculty, attempting with questionable success to disprove the foregoing prediction, and discovering in the process that I enjoyed studying history, whether my students did or not. I heard of the reputation of the history department at the University of North Carolina, and was attracted particularly to the idea of oral history. I believed that history for broadest truth and value needed the lively human voice to complement the written word. I enrolled in graduate school and took among other courses a class taught by Jacquelyn Hall, director of the Southern Oral History Program. We read, we wrote, we criticized--the normal graduate school tasks--and we set out to write as a group research project, a history of the 1969 strike by workers in the UNC food service.



The project suited a class in oral history. The strike appeared to be a significant historical event which had happened at a particularly volatile time in the history of the nation and the South. We suspected that the mood and tone of the strike--its passions and its problems--would be found in the voices of oral sources, not between the covers of a book. The strike had been a dispute of workers (women, mostly) against management. It reverberated with sharp racial overtones and involved also students, faculty, administrators, police, and state politicians. As we began our research, our class found that contemporary accounts of the strike were inconsistent and that journalistic interest had died as quickly as it had been born, as soon as the strike was no longer "news." And yet, around Chapel Hill we found many people who still, in 1974, felt freshly touched by the 1969 foodworkers' strike.

The class project proceeded with vigor. We read through written material, and interviewed nearly three dozen of the strike's principal participants. We discussed our findings with one another; we criticized one another's interview techniques; we suggested to one another places to go and people to see for further information. But alas, completion of the project was more than the class could manage. Although individual versions were presented in summary, we never wrote a comprehensive history of the strike.

I intended personally to see our class project through to its end, but could not afford the luxurious pain of graduate school. In 1975, I left Chapel Hill to be the principal of a school in southwest Virginia. I took thoughts of the foodworkers with me. Several years later, I was able to recommence my efforts to complete the food-worker project. I found that by then my perspective had changed. Not only did I have to relearn what had happened in 1969, I also had to revise much of what I had learned in 1974 during the class project.

I thought that I still understood the strengths of oral history. Skillfully used, it can plug the holes left in written accounts and can give an event's participants the voices that they deserve and otherwise might not have in written history. Oral history, of course, has its limitations. One is the availability of sources. A researcher understandably wants to interview people who are most accessible to him. Those sources, however, are not necessarily the ones who can give the most accurate or most representative account of a past event. Another problem is memory itself. People remember an event in different ways, according to the intensity of their original involvement and their experience since. Memory fades; it distorts and reconstructs past events in the changing context of current history. I discovered, for instance, that what a participant remembered in 1979 might well be different from what he saw during 1969 and from what he

thought in 1974 when he was first interviewed about the strike. I had to be wary of the tendency to assume that what appeared to be the best recall in the present was in fact the best account of the past.

Clear perception of the events in the spring of 1969 was made more difficult by that strike's chronological proximity to another workers' strike at UNC less than a year later. The second strike, in numerous ways similar to the first, contained many of the same participants. Looking back years later, these participants often had trouble distinguishing between the two strikes. A history of the second strike should be written--as an event, it was a logical sequel to the first--but my concentration here is on the first.

In spite of the pitfalls, I found oral sources to be extremely useful. I was struck by the freshness of language, place, and detail which was still in the minds of the protesters, like the foodworkers, who had made no written records of the events of 1969. I found that the statements of those who had had positions of university leadership were also useful, but in a different way. Their memory tended to reconstruct not the language and visual detail of particular incidents so much as it gave an overriding view of the strike as an abstract part of the larger problem of university governance. Protesters during the strike had demanded specific changes in the circumstances of their everyday lives; interviewed later, such participants

were quite willing to discuss what had personally motivated their actions during the strike. In contrast, interviews with administrators showed them to have retained a sense of themselves as guardians of institutional roles; in their descriptions they were thus more reluctant to disclose personal feelings apart from those roles. The accounts of other participants, such as UNC faculty members and students, generally combined elements of both concrete detail and abstract principle.

In piecing together a history of the strike, I found that the various accounts presented diverse problems of scholarship. My object was to reconcile the oral accounts with one another and with the available written records, which came chiefly from newspapers and university archives. Since I have placed the words and thoughts of others in the context of my own narrative, I cannot avoid distorting the meanings originally intended. But such are the problems of any historian. I have tried to portray the strike chronologically and also to analyze conditions which preceded the walkout and to assess the underlying assumptions and strategies of participants in those 1969 events. I hope that the inclusion of oral sources and the attempt to understand the motivations of participants will give the strike a richer and truer history than would otherwise be possible.

This project was conceived in the Southern Oral History Program. Jacquelyn Hall, her colleague Bill Finger,



transcribers, and members of the oral history classes in the spring and fall of 1974 deserve credit for an enormous amount of work. Working with them was for me an invaluable experience. The people I have met while trying to find out about the strike have continued to be an inspiration. The foodworkers especially have been kind to me and tolerant of my questions. Jackie Hall has been the best of advisers--hammering me with advice and showering me with patience. Leon Fink and Joel Williamson have given me generous counsel and encouragement. Brother Winston (a master now at wrestling with words), brother Jim (who said my writing was readable), and my mother (who has endured the company of her son, the curmudgeon) have all helped to keep my loose ends from unraveling. Through it all I have felt, as I had at the scuffle under the streetlight more than twenty years before, that I was learning something important about the subtleties and ambiguities of human relationships and language, even if I was not sure what to make of that knowledge.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On Sunday afternoon, 23 February 1969, the university

Where are the men who will fight against the will  
of the majority? . . . Where are the loyal North  
Carolinians who will let nothing stand in the way  
of progress? Where are our leaders?

J. Carlyle Sitterson, UNC student, 1931

Everybody's name is Mary Smith tonight.

Elizabeth Brooks, foodworker, 1969

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On Sunday afternoon, 23 February 1969, the seventeen employees of the University of North Carolina<sup>1</sup> food service prepared for dinner as usual in the campus's Pine Room cafeteria. As the four o'clock opening time approached, the workers--mostly black women who had for years cooked and served meals to the university community--took their places behind the serving counters. But when Pine Room supervisor Ottis White opened the door and UNC students began to crowd into supper lines, the cafeteria workers walked out from behind their counters and sat down together at a table in the dining room.<sup>2</sup>

Students stood banging on the counters with their trays as supervisor White approached the seated foodworker group to ask, "What in the world is going on?" Someone told him, "We're on strike," whereupon he turned to Mary

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<sup>1</sup>"University" refers to UNC at Chapel Hill, unless the Consolidated University is specified. The latter comprised four campuses in early 1969 (Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Charlotte) and was in the process of adding Wilmington and Asheville campuses. The state of North Carolina also supported a regional university system and other colleges.

<sup>2</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 24 February 1969; Greensboro Daily News, 24 February 1969; Raleigh News and Observer, 24 February 1969.

Smith, an employee of eight years, and said, "Mary, come back here to the office, I want to talk to you." Mary Smith, described by a co-worker as "like a mother" to the other employees, was a woman of strong influence among them. If the men of management could persuade her, then she would tell the others, "We're going back to work," and they would "just go back to work." But it did not happen so simply. Instead, foodworker Elizabeth Brooks spoke up to White: "You can't talk to Mary in the office; . . . you'll have to talk to all of us. . . . Everybody's name is Mary Smith tonight."

Frustrated, Ottis White called in George W. Prillaman, the director of the university's food services. Prillaman "yelled out" in a "real heavy voice"--one of the reasons employees were frightened by him, according to Elizabeth Brooks--"Mary Smith! . . . I want to speak to you!" Again Elizabeth Brooks spoke up, "You can't speak to Mary Smith. You have to speak to the group." Prillaman persisted, calling out again to "Mary." This time Mary Smith herself answered him: "Mr. Prillaman, we're a group now and so you'll have to talk to all of us."<sup>3</sup>

Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks were cousins, both

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<sup>3</sup>Quotations from Elizabeth Brooks, interview by Beverly W. Jones, 22 October 1974, Southern Oral History Program Collection (hereinafter cited as SOHPC), in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. See also Elizabeth Brooks interview by author, 13 September 1979, SOHPC; and Verlie Moore interview by Beverly Jones, 19 October 1974, SOHPC.



employment elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Most workers initially had found the routine of their jobs acceptable and the camaraderie of fellow workers enjoyable. Their employer, the university, was a stable and respected institution; it had no history of significant labor unrest. Labor unions, which had had a difficult enough time organizing privately-owned businesses in the South, steered away from UNC. State statute prohibited both the formation of unions by public employees and collective bargaining by public agencies.<sup>6</sup> With his paycheck a service worker at UNC also received, unsigned, a sense of place and of belonging to tradition.

Certainly the university had a proud tradition. Since 1795, when students were first admitted, the nation's oldest state university had established itself as one of the country's pre-eminent academic institutions. Except for the state government, the Chapel Hill campus was, according to J. Carlyle Sitterson, "probably the single most influential force in the history of the state."<sup>7</sup> Sitterson, a North Carolina native and a graduate of the university at Chapel Hill, had been a distinguished UNC professor of American history for two decades, dean of the university's College of Arts and Sciences for another,

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<sup>5</sup>Arthur J. Beaumont, interview by author, 17 November 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Tornquist, "Organizing Labor in North Carolina," New South, Spring 1970, pp. 57-69.

<sup>7</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson, interview by D'Ann M. Campbell, 10 December 1974, SOHPC.

in their thirties. They had been reared in large farm families in piedmont North Carolina and were now mothers of their own families in towns close to Chapel Hill. Mary Smith had six children and commuted to work from Durham. Elizabeth Brooks, two years younger, had nine children and commuted from Hillsborough. Neither woman had sought her job because of economic desperation. While accompanying a friend to Chapel Hill in 1961, Mary Smith had been offered a food service job without even asking for it. She accepted, expecting to stay only temporarily. For Elizabeth Brooks, once her children were old enough to attend school, the adventure of getting out of the house and earning extra money prompted her "to do something I had never done before."<sup>4</sup> Her job with the university food service had begun in September 1968.

The other workers in the university cafeteria service had taken their jobs for a variety of reasons. To them, as to Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks, prospective university wages and benefits seemed adequate, not extravagant but better than those offered for comparable work by private employers nearby. The job of cooking, serving, and cleaning required little advanced training or education. Indeed, the university had a reputation for providing jobs for unskilled workers who might be able to find no

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<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979. Other background from Mary Smith interview by author, 18 September 1979.

and, since 1966, the chancellor of the Chapel Hill campus of the Consolidated University of North Carolina.

Before the town of Chapel Hill existed, UNC had provided the services traditionally needed to support its notable academic enterprises. Even after Chapel Hill came to surround the university, UNC maintained a virtual monopoly on the provision of such basic communal utilities as water, electricity, telephone, lodging, laundry, and meals. The university food service in particular, under the direction of UNC graduate George Prillaman since the early 1950s, capitalized on the price stability following World War II to become an "extraordinarily successful" operation. Headquartered in the center of campus, at Lenoir Hall, and featuring a home-cooked forty-cent "student special" which was, according to Carlyle Sitterson, a "wonder to behold,"<sup>8</sup> the cafeteria service provided more than a place to eat. Lenoir Hall became, in the words of law professor Daniel H. Pollitt, "a clubhouse for the campus."<sup>9</sup>

Pollitt and many other professors used Lenoir Hall as an informal adjunct to their offices. It was the place where a cup of coffee cost a nickel and all refills were free. Psychologically as well as physically, Lenoir Hall

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Daniel H. Pollitt, interview by author, 4 September 1979, SOHPC.

was the hub of the university community, an institution within an institution. Its manager, George Prillaman, received recognition for his skills by being elected president of the National Association of College and University Food Services in 1967.

While UNC for reasons of custom and financial success maintained operation of its non-academic services, historical tradition, together with the force of North Carolina law, had long caused UNC to reserve its academic services exclusively for white people. Not until 1951, and then under the pressure of litigation, had the university admitted its first black students in the graduate programs of law and medicine. The blacks were given segregated living quarters on campus and were assigned at football games to the endzone "colored section" away from other students. Although the few blacks in UNC's professional schools were soon granted full privileges by the administration, the UNC Board of Trustees reaffirmed its policy against the admission of black undergraduates. Blacks who wished to attend North Carolina's public colleges still had to choose, as they did in other southern states, among exclusively black institutions. In 1955, however, a federal district court ruled in Frasier v. Board of Trustees of University of North Carolina that the famous Brown v. Board decision of the previous year applied "with even greater force to students of mature age" than to



younger children. The university subsequently admitted its first three black undergraduates.<sup>10</sup>

Through the later 1950s and early 1960s, the volatile issues of race relations and public school desegregation were the focus of much national and southern attention. Many changes took place in North Carolina and in the South, but for a variety of reasons, tradition held strong and integration came slowly. Although in 1968 the state had a black population of 24 percent, blacks made up less than 1.5 percent of the student enrollment at the university in Chapel Hill--107 out of 11,010 undergraduates were black; less than 4 percent of the graduate students were black.<sup>11</sup> Not until 1966 had UNC-CH appointed its first black professor. None of the top-level UNC administrators was black. At the same time, except for the janitors in the gym, who traditionally were white, nearly 100 percent of the university's non-academic service personnel--janitors,

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<sup>10</sup>Neal Cheek, "An Historical Study of the Administrative Actions in the Racial Desegregation of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: 1930-55" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973).

<sup>11</sup>Minutes of Faculty Council meeting, 6 December 1968, citing report of Committee on the Treatment of Minorities (J. Dickson Phillips, chairman), from the Chancellors' Records: Sitterson Series, file on Faculty Affairs, in the University of North Carolina Archives at the University of North Carolina Library (hereinafter cited as UNC Archives), Chapel Hill. Also see contemporary newspaper accounts of the committee's report. See reference a decade later to the Phillips Committee in the "Report of the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Chancellor . . . on the Admission Policies and Practices of the University as such Policies and Practices Affect Minority Students" (Charles H. Long, chairman), 12 June 1972.

maids, and foodworkers--were black.<sup>12</sup> Even as the decade of the sixties drew to a close, a distinctive color line persisted at UNC.

When Mary Smith, Elizabeth Brooks, and the other Pine Room workers walked off their jobs in February 1969, everyday reality had for them long since supplanted sentimental attachment to university tradition. By then the employees knew that several dozen UNC black students would support their action, but they had no way of knowing how the rest of the campus would respond to their walkout. Nonetheless, the workers seemed convinced of the justice of their cause and of the message they meant to convey that working conditions in the food service had long been worsening. The deterioration had been accompanied by a heightened awareness on the part of individual employees that they were not alone in their problems. Workers had already tried both individually and collectively to communicate their grievances to director George Prillaman and to other administrators responsible for managing the food service. At every turn, claimed the workers, they had been ignored. Their walkout came about because it was, according to Mary Smith, "just the only thing that we knew to do. We couldn't get any attention any other kind of way."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

<sup>13</sup>Mary Smith, interview by Valerie Quinney, 10 April 1974, SOHPC.

The employees believed that if the university regarded its food service as successful, then success was a veil covering unfair treatment of service workers. The employees felt that if the university valued its commitment to academics, then it should commit itself as well to the needs of black people and to non-academic workers in particular. If tradition meant that employees had to work under intolerable conditions, then that tradition must be broken.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GRIEVANCES

Mary Smith remembered that as a little girl she tried with her siblings to make ends meet by working on a neighbor's adjoining Alamance County farm (their mother had died when Mary was seven years old). The neighboring landowner, she said, would "treat us different" from the way he treated his own family; he would "make us stay out in the hot sun . . . scold us . . . make us eat last," and for pay he gave "whatever he wanted to give us." At work in the UNC food service--what she called her "first public job"--Mary Smith found to her chagrin that the treatment of employees reminded her of the demeaning experiences of her childhood. "I just saw it all over again," she said.<sup>1</sup>

Although Mary Smith did enjoy her cafeteria work well enough to stay years beyond her original intentions, she said that she had noticed ever since she had been there the methods by which management had "shortened" the paychecks of foodworkers. In August 1968, for instance, the State Personnel Department and the university had announced that a fifteen-cent increase in the minimum wage--to \$1.60 an hour--

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Smith, interviews by Beverly Jones, 9 October 1974 and 8 February 1975, SOHPC.



would be effective for all state employees on the first of October.<sup>2</sup> Those employees in the bottom wage scales obviously expected to benefit from the improved minimum rate. But in practice not all of those employees profited from the announced change. Some workers making \$1.45 an hour said that their wages did not change at all; at least one, Grace Harris, a dishwasher in the Pine Room for several years, continued to earn \$1.25 an hour long after 1 October. Even experienced workers who already made \$1.60 an hour were disgruntled because, they said, their salaries stayed unimproved while new and temporary employees suddenly began making as much as they.<sup>3</sup>

In December 1968, the State Personnel Board authorized the university to give selective merit raises (applicable only in the lowest salary ranges) to some of the experienced full-time workers. Although such raises were to have become effective 1 January 1969,<sup>4</sup> by late

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<sup>2</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson, statement released 16 August 1968, Chancellors' Records: Sitterson Series, file on Strike: Non-Academic Workers 1968-70, in the UNC Archives. Under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, the university had until 1 February 1971 to comply with the \$1.60 minimum wage. As a point of comparison, state statute in 1968 mandated a \$1.00 minimum (soon to be raised to \$1.25) for private employees. Nominally, therefore, both the state and the university paid public employees in excess of the minimum guidelines.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith, interview by author, 18 September 1979.

<sup>4</sup>Fred B. Haskell to Deans, Department Chairmen, Directors, and Managers, 9 January 1969, Business and Finance Division Records, file on Food Service, in the UNC Archives. Memorandum #106 outlines the criteria, subject to the availability of funds, for determining which employees should receive the increase.

February, after three biweekly paychecks, eligible food-workers had received neither the pay increase nor a satisfactory explanation from management for the delay. Even more exasperating for workers was the knowledge that even if the October and January pay raises had been received, neither increase would have applied to employees in higher salary classifications.<sup>5</sup> These workers said that the university food service did not give them either the automatic or merit raises they deserved. Some "real smart ladies," said Mary Smith, "very neat and dependable, . . . had been there five or six years and never gotten a raise."

Through personal experience, Mary Smith had learned of another method by which wages could be shortened. On her way to the infirmary one day to have a cut hand tended to, she had seen on her food service application that she was classified as a dishwasher. She was surprised, she said, because "I never worked in the dish water. . . . I was cooking every day."<sup>6</sup> Dishwashers were on a lower pay scale than cooks. Although by 1969 Mary Smith had succeeded in getting her own classification upgraded, she was not alone in thinking that management intentionally confused employee job descriptions. Elizabeth Brooks discovered that

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<sup>5</sup>Under the State Personnel Act, each job classification was assigned a salary grade. Within each grade were six levels (steps) of pay, based on experience. At the first two steps, annual raises were supposed to be automatic; at the other steps, incremental raises were based on merit (and subject to the availability of funds), with management the judge of performance.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974.

she and most others were subject to whatever duty the supervisor and the exigencies of the day demanded. She might be required to substitute for an absent colleague by tending simultaneously the main serving line, the sandwich counter, and the salad bar; or, if a male employee was absent, she might have to lift heavy pots, set dish trays on a high conveyor, move thirty-gallon trash containers, or mop floors after the meal. The workers said that they were continually being held responsible for extra duty; it was not just an occasional occurrence. In short, said Elizabeth Brooks, women were "just working all over the place."<sup>7</sup> Specific job descriptions would probably have given supervisors the flexibility to assign "other related duties" to employees, but the UNC cafeteria workers said that they had never seen a written description of their basic duties.

The workers reported that management used other classification practices to deny them rightful recompense and benefits. According to employees, they were told that a new or "temporary" worker was entitled to be promoted to a permanent position after working full time for a probationary period of ninety days. Under State Personnel Act regulations, a permanent worker would gain better job security, eligibility for automatic and merit pay raises, and more generous sick-day, vacation, holiday, and

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<sup>7</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974; also interview with Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith, 18 September 1979.

retirement benefits. But the classification system in the UNC dining halls, said the workers, was predictable only in the way that it did not work. Employees like Paul Byrd were hired for three months, laid off, then hired again. Other full-time employees remained classified and paid, month after month, as part-time help. Often, for employees like Amy Lyons--a "temporary" worker for three years--the ninety-day deadline for graduating into the relative security of permanent status would quietly come and go, unrecognized by management.<sup>8</sup>

Whether they were officially considered permanent or not, employees said that overtime pay was a problem. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act as amended in 1966 stipulated that the university owed employees time-and-one-half pay for all overtime work. Workers said that if they spent extra time on the job, however, management customarily carried the additional hours as regular wages over to the next pay period. Or if workers were given time off in lieu of overtime pay--normal university policy, intended to cut expenses for labor--workers were rarely given an hour and a half off for each overtime hour worked.

The problem of extra time spent away from home had long been compounded for many workers by the food service system of split shifts, a routine by which an employee might work breakfast, be off several hours, then work

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.; also Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974.



lunch, be off, then work supper. During the off-duty hours, workers were free from job responsibility (the food service provided them with no special recreation or job-training facilities), but the system demanded that workers remain away from their homes and families for twelve hours or more in order to be credited for eight hours of work. Mary Smith and others in the Pine Room worked uninterrupted eight-hour shifts. Nonetheless, she worried about the split shift as it pertained to other foodworkers on campus and she shared with nearly all of them yet another demanding aspect of food service employment: that of working on weekends. Mary Smith said that she had worked every Sunday and many Saturdays for eight years without a weekend off.<sup>9</sup>

Foodworkers felt that management had taken unfair advantage of them, not only by shortening their money and benefits, but even more importantly, by denying them human respect. In other circumstances, employee Sarah Parker's assertion that "we were people"<sup>10</sup> might seem curiously unnecessary; in the context of the food service, however, her statement can be understood. Time and again, workers had been unsuccessful in their attempts to get supervisors to address them as "Mr." or "Mrs.," even though the use of "courtesy titles" was part of the university's stated personnel policy. Employees said that often they received

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Sarah Parker, interview by Beverly Jones,  
<sup>29</sup> March 1975, SOHPC.

telephone messages long after the actual call, with the result being confusion and family hardship. One worker, Edna Lyde, was told as she got off work one evening that her father had died early that morning. Employees could of course expect to be fired if they arrived at work under the influence of alcohol, but they said that supervisors "could come in drinking." One supervisor in particular not only was drunk but also regularly carried a gun on the job. No wonder then that a worker asking a supervisor about a pay shortage would resent the irony of the response, "You've got enough to get drunk on."<sup>11</sup>

By 1969, the sexual and racial divisions in the cafeteria service had fueled the workers' frustration. Supervisors were always white and nearly always male. The workers--except for the cashiers, some chefs, and part-time UNC student help--were black and nearly all female. No food server had been promoted to supervisor. In the Pine Room, Mary Smith, respected by her colleagues as a "very strong and hard-working woman,"<sup>12</sup> had performed supervisory functions; she had filled out requisition orders, trained new workers for their various jobs, and sometimes supervisors for theirs. Something besides ability seemed to

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<sup>11</sup>Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

<sup>12</sup>Freddie Parker, interview by Beverly Jones, 18 October 1974, SOHPC.

have kept her from officially becoming a supervisor.<sup>13</sup>

If the university had been forced publicly to answer questions about discrimination, then it might have sought technical refuge in its exemption from the federal Equal Opportunity Employment Act, Title 7 of which prohibited racial discrimination in hiring and promotion practices.<sup>14</sup> More likely, however, the university would have claimed that vestiges from the "old order" of management--stemming from the time when UNC was an institution for whites and dominated by males--could not be easily or quickly excised. Workers, for their part, seem to have been concerned more with the conduct than with the color or sex of their supervisors. It was insensitive supervisory behavior that they abhorred. Elizabeth Brooks cited what was to her an egregious example: when Pine Room employees were hard at work, with the line of waiting students "out the door" and workers "running all over" trying to get the meal served, supervisor Ottis White would refuse to help, standing instead at his office door, staring like a guard over his prisoners.<sup>15</sup>

The habits and attitudes of supervisors seem to have played a major role in aggravating the employees' dissatisfaction with their working conditions. Still, the

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<sup>13</sup>Although not acknowledged by management, Mary Smith seems to have met minimum education and experience requirements as set by the state for "food service supervisor."

<sup>14</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

<sup>15</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

workers would have probably agreed that a certain amount of friction could be expected in the everyday relationship between employee and supervisor. When the Pine Room workers walked off their jobs on 23 February, however, their anger went beyond shift supervisors and beyond normal disagreements with management; it focused on what workers saw as a system of organized oppression directed by George Prillaman. Prillaman hired the supervisors. They were under constraints imposed by him, even if they did not take all managerial cues from him. Prillaman intentionally and successfully, said the workers, kept everyone in the food service afraid of him. Some employees felt that Prillaman wanted to hire illiterate service workers not from any interest in their social welfare, but rather because he could more easily take advantage of them. If a job candidate had difficulty filling out the application, said Mary Smith, Prillaman hired him.<sup>16</sup>

Employees made a catalogue of other examples of Prillaman's transgressions. Foodworkers had pay deducted for their meals whether they ate or not, but workers said that Prillaman did not hesitate to have Mary Smith cook steaks for him to take out to his family and friends. Before he went to the beach, workers said, he loaded his station wagon with supplies from Lenoir Hall's kitchen. Although such stories were not always verifiable, workers

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<sup>16</sup>Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.



seemed to have fixed the image of these episodes in their minds.<sup>17</sup> Into the same pattern of perception fit the employees' suspicion that Prillaman was intentionally keeping them underclassified and was stashing away shortages in their paychecks.

Yet in spite of their obvious resentment about the way George Prillaman managed the UNC food service, at the time of their walkout the workers did not demand his ouster nor that of any other individual. Employees may have believed that Prillaman ran the plantation, but they suspected that his system of administration must have been at least tacitly countenanced--perhaps even colluded with--by university and state officials at higher levels. How else, workers asked themselves, could so little action have been taken, over so long a time, to rectify such evident injustices?

#### Early Attempts at Remedy

Not surprisingly, over the years a smattering of individual complaints had come to the attention of dining-hall supervisors and director George Prillaman. By March 1968, awareness of growing discontent among non-academic employees had prompted UNC administrative officials to draw up and disseminate detailed procedures by which an employee could resolve his grievances. Step one of those

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Verlie Moore interview, 19 October 1974; interview with Elsie Davis, Verlie Moore, Oveata Compton, and Mary Smith by author, 27 November 1979.

procedures called for an appeal to the employee's administrative superior or to the university personnel director.<sup>18</sup> By conferring with George Prillaman, food service employees were thus following established university policy.

Prillaman oversaw the operation of six campus dining facilities. Since his Lenoir Hall office was in the same building as the two central cafeterias (the Pine Room downstairs specialized in short-order food; a larger dining hall was on the first floor), Prillaman was particularly accessible to those workers. Not all employees had the courage to speak to Prillaman face-to-face about questions left unsolved by supervisors. Those individuals who did try to talk with Prillaman reported that "he would always put us off." Sometimes he refused to meet with workers, saying that he did not have time. Sometimes he met with them but denied the validity of their complaints, saying, according to Mary Smith, that employees were "dumb."<sup>19</sup> Often, however, Prillaman promised to give their grievances his serious consideration, usually asking in return for their patient understanding of the limitations he faced in coordinating policies of a food service bound by complicated university and state regulations.

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<sup>18</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson, "Appeal Procedures . . ." memorandum to all university employees, 1 March 1968, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike: Non-Academic Workers, Ad-Hoc Committee on Grievances, UNC Archives.

<sup>19</sup>Mary Smith interview, 9 October 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

By the fall of 1968, however, the workers felt that they had given Prillaman more time and understanding than results justified. To Elizabeth Brooks, a relative newcomer to the Pine Room staff, Prillaman's promises "really got next to me . . . I had been raised that you do what you say . . . I just always asked questions and tried to find out why. I had to have an answer."<sup>20</sup> Frustrated by what they saw as Prillaman's failure to respond, some workers, without intending to abandon the channel through Prillaman, decided to make additional appeals to other authorities.

Several employees attempted to check irregularities in their pay with the university's payroll office. They discovered that Prillaman kept a separate set of books in his office and that the payroll department was reluctant to question paychart figures submitted by the food service office. Also in the fall, five workers journeyed to Raleigh, hoping to see state personnel director Claude E. Caldwell about job-classification problems. Once there, without an appointment, the workers were shuffled among subordinates and their problems given a promise of attention. Instead of an investigation by state officials, however, the workers said that they received only a letter thanking them for their visit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

<sup>21</sup>Elizabeth Brooks, interview by oral-history class, 14 November 1974, SOHPC; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

The university's 1968 appeal procedures held that an employee could, if reluctant to meet first with his administrative superior (Prillaman in this case), appeal directly to the university's personnel director. In October, a group of employees sent a typed memorandum to the "Employers of Lenoir Dining Hall." Beginning with the statement that "We, the workers of Lenoir Dining Hall, suggest the following changes for the improvement of Employer-Employee relationship," the memo listed twenty-one suggestions for improvement.<sup>22</sup> How the employees conveyed their list up through administrative channels is unclear, but even if the workers did not intend to follow established procedure, UNC personnel director Fred B. Haskell did see their list.<sup>23</sup> Haskell normally reported to the university business office. After an administrative reorganization in November 1968, he became responsible directly to the chancellor's office, where Claiborne S. Jones, assistant to the chancellor, was also chairman of the University Personnel Council.

Various individual workers also talked to James Arthur Branch in the fall of 1968. They hoped that Branch

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<sup>22</sup>In the Business and Finance Division Records, file on Food Services, UNC Archives, there are two such memos. One, dated 18 October 1968, had eleven suggestions; the other had the same first ten, skipped #11, and added ten more. See note below for evidence of all twenty-one.

<sup>23</sup>Fred B. Haskell to J. C. Eagles, 5 November 1968, memo with detailed comments about the list of twenty-one suggestions drawn up by Lenoir Hall employees, Business Records, UNC Archives.



would help because, having been business manager of the university before taking a leave of absence in 1966, he was an administrator with whom many foodworkers were personally acquainted. As director of auxiliary enterprises and services since his return to UNC in September 1968, Branch had the authority to investigate Prillaman's operation of the dining halls and to report his findings directly to Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., UNC vice chancellor for business and finance. According to the foodworkers, Branch cautioned them against expecting instant results but seemed sympathetic to their requests.

By the end of 1968, therefore, the foodworkers had informed all levels of the administration of their difficulties.<sup>24</sup> In the weeks that followed, employees said that they noticed a reduction in split shifts but saw no other evidence that the university was concerned about their well-being. As employee Verlie Moore remembered, there was still "fresh good food, but that was the only thing."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Additional evidence of the administration's awareness comes from an agenda for a "Food Service Conference" which lists Prillaman, Branch, Eagles, and Jones among the participants planning to discuss the foodworkers' suggestions for improvement, 22 October 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives; see also speech by Chancellor Sitterson, 11 March 1969, which refers to his knowledge of those suggestions.

<sup>25</sup>Verlie Moore interview, 19 October 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979; Mary Smith interview, 9 October 1974.

Early Administrative Concern  
about the Food Service

Although the foodworkers saw little proof of the university's interest, the administration had been aware for some time that the non-academic area of its operation needed serious attention. Even before Carlyle Sitterson was appointed chancellor in 1966, the food service in particular was facing an uncertain financial future. National and regional inflation rates were accelerating. Compelled by the North Carolina General Assembly to maintain a self-supporting meal service, the university found that rising supply, overhead, and labor costs were making self-sufficiency more difficult to achieve. Under line-item budgeting, a system in which expenditures and receipts had to balance for each separate function, the university could not transfer funds internally to an area of particular need, such as the food service, without special authorization from the General Assembly.<sup>26</sup> Although wages for North Carolina's state employees were not particularly high, the university's administrative flexibility was limited nonetheless by the non-discretionary wage scales prescribed by the State Personnel Board.

Economic aggravation came in 1965 when the state stopped paying for employee fringe benefits, requiring instead that enterprises like the UNC food service pay

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<sup>26</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974.

for such extras out of operating receipts. The financial squeeze intensified at UNC in Chapel Hill with the opening of Chase Cafeteria. Built over George Prillaman's objection that without a mandatory meal-buying program UNC could not guarantee necessary student volume,<sup>27</sup> Chase became, as campus security chief Arthur J. Beaumont phrased it, "a boondoggle . . . an architect's dream and a cook's nightmare."<sup>28</sup> UNC students ate at Chase much less than officials had anticipated. Instead of increasing food service income, Chase drained the cash reserves built up at Lenoir Hall.

Complications continued after 1966. The new chancellor, Carlyle Sitterson, had distinguished himself in academic life during his forty previous years at the university, but he was not as familiar with non-academic affairs. At a time of rapid overall university growth (enrollment rose from just over 11,000 students in 1963 to nearly 17,000 five years later), Sitterson found himself dependent for business advice on the existing core of university administrators. The staff that dealt with the multi-million dollar non-academic operation was already undermanned, however; it subsequently was crippled when James A. Branch, the only administrator who in Sitterson's

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<sup>27</sup>George W. Prillaman, interview by author, 6 September 1979.

<sup>28</sup>Arthur Beaumont interview, 17 November 1974.

estimation "had any real knowledge of the people in that area of the university,"<sup>29</sup> resigned in July 1966 from his post as business manager.

Then, as of February 1967, UNC and other state educational institutions were brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act. This act required the university henceforth to comply with federal guidelines for both minimum wages and rates of overtime pay. Chancellor Sitterson informed all university administrative offices of the need for adhering to the new regulations and "just assumed," he said later, that his instructions would be followed. Meanwhile, circumstances in the business office left George Prillaman with the primary responsibility for deciding how to maintain financial self-sufficiency in the food service. Prillaman, realizing that "the measurement as to whether he was doing his job was in effect how well he could keep costs in line,"<sup>30</sup> considered alternative ways of making the food service at least solvent, if not profitable.

Prillaman might have sought a solution in higher meal prices. But that avenue seemed blocked by a noticeable change in student eating habits; rather than being satisfied with a hearty fare of meats and vegetables, students seemed

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<sup>29</sup> Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974;

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; see also correspondence with administrators about compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act, Chancellors' Records, UNC Archives.



more inclined to snack in their dormitory rooms or somewhere downtown. Although historically the university had not had to worry about competition from Chapel Hill eating establishments, such alternatives for students were increasing. If Prillaman, unable to rely on a compulsory meal program, raised prices too high, he would jeopardize needed volume of student customers. As another consideration, higher meal prices might disconcert influential alumni who wanted to preserve the cheap "student special" as a valuable part of UNC's tradition.<sup>31</sup>

Prillaman could choose to reduce inventories or draw from the food service's cash reserves. But to do so would give only a temporary reprieve, would mean a reversal of recent commitments to expansion, and would be a sign to the public that the food service was in financial difficulty. Another way of combating rising expenditures would be to cut back on labor costs. Layoffs might upset workers, but to Prillaman, a more important consideration was the likelihood that students would protest any cutback in service. The well-being of the food service depended on student patronage.

While Prillaman contended with the food service's special problems, Chancellor Sitterson was busy reorganizing

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<sup>31</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979; Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979. Each suggested that administrators were under pressure from alumni, as well as students, to keep prices down.

the university's entire business operation. Evaluations by outside management experts showed that UNC's growth merited not only a change in the size of its administrative staff, but also a change in kind--in effect, said Sitterson, "a whole new approach." In May 1968, after two years of searching, Sitterson appointed a "hard-headed businessman"<sup>32</sup> to the newly-created position of vice chancellor for business and finance. That man was Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., a tobacco warehouse owner and former state senator from the eastern part of the state. The following September, Eagles asked his friend Abie Branch to rejoin the business staff and gave him a mandate to investigate "all phases of dining halls operations."<sup>33</sup>

Eagles and Branch had administrative responsibilities which extended beyond the dining hall operation; nonetheless, they seem to have given much of their attention to the food service. Like George Prillaman, they viewed the food service primarily as a business in financial trouble. Operating reports showed that Lenoir Hall served

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<sup>32</sup>In his interview, 10 December 1974, Sitterson noted the difficulty he had had in finding a businessman of proven abilities who could afford financially to take the relatively low-paying university job. Correspondence in the Chancellors' Records, Business file, UNC Archives, indicates that Sitterson also had some difficulty in getting the state to fund the position; see letter from Governor Dan K. Moore, 10 April 1968, about Sitterson's request to transfer \$27,000 in university salary funds so that Eagles could be hired.

<sup>33</sup>James A. Branch to George W. Prillaman, 9 September 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives. Letter refers to discussion between Branch and Eagles.

nearly 435,000 fewer paying customers in fiscal 1967 than in 1966, and 230,000 fewer in 1968 than in 1967. On 1 July 1968, the ledger for Chase Cafeteria disclosed a deficit of over \$100,000. The Pine Room also was operating at a loss.<sup>34</sup> Eagles, Branch, and Prillaman agreed generally that the services of the separate campus cafeterias needed to be consolidated and that the facilities needed to be made more attractive. With Branch as the go-between, Eagles kept informed and in turn advised Prillaman about the efficacy of renovating Lenoir Hall and instituting mandatory meal programs for students.<sup>35</sup>

Occasionally Eagles and Branch acted independently of Prillaman's counsel. According to Prillaman, Eagles could have, but did not, capitalize on his legislative connections in Raleigh to get special help from the state budget office.<sup>36</sup> One thing that Eagles did do was to authorize Branch to explore the possibility of leasing the university food service to a private contractor for

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<sup>34</sup>Operating Reports for Lenoir Dining Hall, as of 30 June 1967 and as of 30 June 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives.

<sup>35</sup>Correspondence during the fall of 1968 between Eagles, Branch, and Prillaman, Business Records, UNC Archives.

<sup>36</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979. Eagles had served on the Advisory Budget Commission during his five terms as state senator. The Raleigh News and Observer, 31 December 1958, described him as Governor Luther Hodges's "leg-man" in the General Assembly. When he assumed his post at UNC in 1968, the Charlotte Observer, 30 April 1968, called him a "money-raiser, par excellence," and said that the university had given him the "unpublicized task of promoting and defending UNC in the State House."

the following school year. By the end of December 1968, Branch--inspired by the arrangements which other state-supported universities had already worked out, and enticed by the prospect of freeing the university from managerial responsibility for a failing business--had asked at least three catering companies to submit preliminary proposals for taking over future management of the UNC food services.<sup>37</sup>

The complementary problems of  
personnel and finance

In dealing with the food service, Eagles and Branch were primarily concerned about its financial stability, but neither they nor other UNC administrators were ignorant of the brewing dissatisfaction among the campus's non-academic workers. As far back as October 1967, Chancellor Sitterson had appointed a University Grievance Committee, with his assistant Claiborne Jones as its chairman, and charged it with devising coherent and uniform appeal procedures for non-academic employees. On 1 March 1968, the chancellor's office announced those grievance procedures to all university employees.

On 1 April 1968, "to encourage clear understanding and to reduce fears or false impressions of unfair treatment," the chancellor amended and expanded the university's personnel policies. Sitterson advised

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., to James A. Branch, 16 October 1968, with copies to Claiborne Jones and George Prillaman, suggests exploring the possibility of leasing; also correspondence between Branch and officials from Servomation, ARA Slater, and SAGA food services, Business Records, UNC Archives.



department supervisors to keep "well-informed" of policies and to "communicate freely" with their employees about grievances; he announced a "decentralization agreement" with the State Personnel Department, whereby the university would have "significantly increased responsibility" for arrangements with its own personnel; he set up a University Personnel Council (with Claiborne Jones as chairman, and later, Joseph Eagles as a member) to coordinate policies between the chancellor's office and the university and state personnel offices; and he appointed a standing university Committee on Non-Academic Employee Appeals to serve as the appellate court for employees seeking procedural remedy for their grievances.<sup>38</sup> Such announcements seemed to have come none too soon. An April strike in nearby Durham by Duke University's non-academic workers aroused widespread student support there, and for UNC administrators made the potential for campus disruption in Chapel Hill all the more apparent.<sup>39</sup>

George Prillaman may have been pleased that the administration was attempting to clarify appeal procedures for employees, but he was also concerned that university and state controls on treatment of workers tended to limit his managerial flexibility. Federal and state standards for

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<sup>38</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson memo, 1 April 1968, Chancellors' Records, file on Non-Academic Workers, Ad-Hoc Committee on Grievances, UNC Archives.

<sup>39</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 10 April 1968.

wages, overtime pay, and benefits might be suitable for workers, but to Prillaman, regulations were of little use without appropriations. Still, the welter of rules was, in spite of the constraints, so confusing that it gave management an opportunity to exploit regulatory ambiguities and loopholes. Certainly George Prillaman had a financial incentive to do just that. For instance, since some salary increases were contingent upon the availability of funds (all salaries, including his own, came from receipts), Prillaman exercised discretion in granting merit raises to his workers. In the absence of close supervision by state job-classification specialists, particularly after the university's decentralization agreements with the state, Prillaman could be expected to keep employees on as low a salary grade as possible. And since split shifts were not prohibited by the state, what Prillaman called the "inherent nature"<sup>40</sup> of food service work--with labor needs peaking at meal times--created an economic incentive for their continuance.

Also, since the State Personnel Act protected permanent full-time employees, Prillaman could avoid some state controls by keeping workers classified as temporary or part-time help. In July 1968, Prillaman admitted to Vice-Chancellor Eagles that "carrying employees on

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<sup>40</sup>George W. Prillaman to Joseph C. Eagles, Jr.,  
 3 July 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives.

temporary payroll beyond the normal period is not a good policy." Prillaman went on to explain why the policy should be continued nonetheless: "The labor market . . . is the tightest we have ever encountered. . . . We are able to employ only chronic drinkers, unreliaables and spasmodic workers." It did not take long to evaluate the services of such workers, Prillaman said, but "dismissing them for others of a like kind" was a "frustrating process and no solution to the problem."<sup>41</sup> Prillaman's solution was to keep "unreliaables" on temporary payroll as long as he employed them.

By October 1968, all levels of the UNC administration were aware of the foodworkers' grievances. Even Chancellor Sitterson knew of the workers' memo to their "Employers"; he authorized his staff to discuss the suggestions in that memo. To Joseph Eagles, James A. Branch, Claiborne Jones, and Fred Haskell, many of the employees' proposals must have seemed reasonable. Some, in fact, were already university policy--compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, prompt delivery of telephone messages, use of courtesy title, and notice of two weeks before laying off full-time workers.

How Prillaman defended his management policies is unclear. He probably guarded his prerogatives by declaring

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

to his superiors that he treated workers with the respect they deserved and as fairly as financial circumstances would allow. Presumably, Prillaman said that he could not give merit raises unless funds were available; that he could not fire a supervisor just to make way for a woman like Mary Smith who "couldn't write her name";<sup>42</sup> that he could not avoid layoffs entirely; that he could not avoid having workers occasionally perform extra duties; and that he was within state guidelines in granting leave, holiday, and overtime benefits.

Exactly what instruction Prillaman got from his superiors is likewise difficult to determine. Apparently Branch, Eagles, and Haskell did encourage Prillaman to abandon split shifts, give some weekends off, stop keeping workers overly long in temporary status, and have group meetings with employees to discuss grievances.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the administrators knew the financial constraints under which Prillaman operated, and they probably suspected that the employees' list of suggestions represented an

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<sup>42</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979; Elizabeth Brooks attributed Prillaman with the same quotation, interview 18 September 1979.

<sup>43</sup>Fred Haskell to Joseph Eagles, 5 November 1968, a detailed review of the foodworkers' suggestions. Other Business Records reports show that there was a conscious effort by late 1968 to reduce split shifts and give some weekends off. Also see memo from Prillaman to food service employees, 19, 22 November 1968, inviting them to meetings, UNC Archives; in later interviews, Pine Room employees claimed that they never received such invitations.



overstatement of the actual dissatisfaction among workers. In sum, although they questioned some of his policies, the administrators did not push Prillaman to alter drastically his conduct of everyday food service affairs.

Thus within the UNC administration, traditional relationships were maintained, although under increasing strain. Chancellor Sitterson early in his tenure had recognized that the campus's business operation was not capable of responding effectively to new circumstances of university growth and economic necessity. As a consequence, he and other high administrative officials had tried for two years to establish channels of communication and direction which were more appropriate to the times. Their approach was based on the premise that under tighter organization the university would be both more efficient financially and more responsive to its workers. Towards the end of 1968, the reorganization process had started but was not yet well enough fixed to be easily evaluated.

By then it was evident to administrators (and to foodworkers, albeit from a different perspective) that the food service was in trouble. Branch, Eagles, Haskell, Jones, and Sitterson gave varying degrees of their attention to the problem and its solution. They must have realized that the food service difficulty had many related aspects and that separate solutions to financial instability and personnel discontent were impossible. If, for instance, administrators urged George Prillaman to put stringent

controls on food service expenses--nearly 50 percent of which were labor costs--they were at the same time encouraging, however unintentionally, more unrest among workers. Thus in a sense the administrators were forced by the situation to operate at cross-purposes with themselves.

In spite of the confusion, the administrators seem to have tried, at least sporadically, to be respectful of the workers' needs and to animate the Lenoir Hall management staff to be sensitive to those needs. The workers' charges of administrative negligence may have been justified even though the written correspondence among administrators gives no evidence of the intentional malice alleged by some workers. Nevertheless, neither the food service's chances for solvency nor the employees' working conditions would much improve unless substantial policy changes were made. Administrators considered the foodworkers' needs but they were mainly preoccupied with the food service's need for financial stability. To the most outspoken of the workers, if the university wanted a first-class food service, then the administration had better give workers its primary consideration.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STUDENTS

UNC's dining hall operation existed of course to serve students. Hence management made decisions based to a large extent on its perception of student demands--demands which in turn affected the working conditions of cafeteria employees. For example, before Prillaman saved money by cutting back on the dining halls' operating hours, he had to consider what James A. Branch called the "far reaching implications insofar as student relations are concerned."<sup>1</sup> In October 1968, the weather became an additional consideration. A severe drought impelled Prillaman to suspend dishwashing operations in Lenoir Hall. With the introduction of disposable paper plates and plastic utensils, students did much of the after-meal cleanup themselves. As a result, the work of some cafeteria employees became expendable. On 11 October, Prillaman laid off ten Lenoir Hall employees.

For the first time, workers appealed publicly to students for help. The Daily Tar Heel, UNC's student

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Branch to George W. Prillaman, 9 September 1968, Business and Finance Division Records, UNC Archives. Branch admonishes Prillaman not to discuss publicly plans for the cutback.

newspaper, said that an unidentified worker had written to the paper, urging that students refuse to clean up after eating, thereby to dramatize the need for rehiring the ten employees. On 16 October, Prillaman admitted an "error in judgment" and offered to rehire the suspended workers. An 18 October editorial in the Tar Heel applauded Prillaman's response to public pressure and emphasized the university's dual responsibility to its students and its workers.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in spite of student concern for the cafeteria workers laid off during the drought, few students seemed troubled by--if they were aware of--the full range of foodworker grievances against management. A 12 October Tar Heel editorial, which suggested that management refund to students the savings earned by the enlistment of cost-free student help, made no suggestion of monetary restitution to workers.<sup>3</sup> Later in October, when management set up two "all-you-can-eat" self-service rooms in Lenoir Hall, students let their appetites talk for them; there was no indication that students worried about the declining need for food servers.

Student protests nevertheless continued to focus on the food service. During the previous summer, Prillaman

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<sup>2</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 12, 17, 18 October 1968. Later, workers laid off were reimbursed from the chancellor's discretionary fund, authorized by Claiborne Jones; see note, 12 December 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 12 October 1968.



and Thomas A. Shetley, manager of the UNC Student Stores, had arranged to have the dining halls supply campus snack bars with sandwiches.<sup>4</sup> Prillaman hoped that the agreement, besides providing an additional work opportunity for foodworkers, would boost dining hall revenues. But UNC students did not like the new arrangement; they thought that the snack bar sandwiches were unappetizing and too expensive. Shetley explained that high prices were the result of the university's October commitment to raise the minimum wage. Enough students were still dissatisfied, however, to induce UNC's student legislature to recommend, as protest, a boycott of Lenoir Hall breakfasts.<sup>5</sup>

Under pressure, Prillaman agreed to reduce the price of the sandwiches he supplied to the snack bars, but no sooner had that issue quieted than another student complaint surfaced--this one about discourteous snack bar employees. In response, Shetley conceded that the university had hired some inept workers, but he maintained that state personnel restrictions mitigated against the employment of higher-qualified people and against conscientious work by current employees. As J. A. Branch

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<sup>4</sup>Arrangements between Prillaman and Shetley were made with concurrence of James A. Branch; final agreement signed by all three, 19 September 1968, Business Records, UNC Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 24 October 1968 and 2, 3 November 1968.

would claim later, "the system did not encourage dedicated workers."<sup>6</sup>

Throughout this period of growing public discontent, dining hall workers were caught in the middle. Campus grumbling about soggy sandwiches and surly service hurt the employees' pride but left them little chance to respond. For example, foodworkers knew, Mary Smith said later, that the sandwiches were not very tasty by the time students bought them, but employees had no control over what was essentially a problem of distribution and storage. With regard to the charges of worker rudeness, Mary Smith pointed out how much easier it was to be respectful when one also received respect.<sup>7</sup> At the time, management and not Mary Smith responded to the student complaints with the explanation that employee wages had driven up customer prices while the employee wage structure had driven down worker motivation. Both students and workers had grievances against management, but for the time being their interests did not coincide. Students may have intended to help the workers during the drought, but at other times students contributed to the frustration that was spreading among the foodworkers.

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<sup>6</sup>James A. Branch, summary of interview by D'Ann Campbell, 2 October 1974, SOHPC; see also Daily Tar Heel, 17 November 1968.

<sup>7</sup>Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

Black Students and Foodworkers:  
A Special Set of Allies

On 11 December 1968, the voice of the workers suddenly seemed to change, and with it, the pattern of protest against the management of the university food service. On that day the UNC Black Student Movement (BSM) presented Chancellor Sitterson with a list of twenty-three demands. The black students were "stomping down," they said, because of their disdain for the "token, symbolic" efforts the UNC administration had made toward providing equal educational opportunity for all North Carolinians. The BSM demanded the immediate recruitment to UNC of more black students (the state was 24-percent black; the university at Chapel Hill, less than 2 percent), and it demanded revision of the curriculum and implementation of social policies more responsive to the needs of black students already on the campus.

The BSM letter to the chancellor spoke not just of student needs; it included those of the expanded community. Referring specifically to treatment of non-academic workers on campus, the black students accused the university of "the most violent form of oppression and the denial of human dignity." The BSM ordered the administration to "acknowledge its shortcomings" and to begin meeting immediately with employees and BSM members "to outline and implement constructive action" toward



alleviating "intolerable working conditions."<sup>8</sup> The BSM members intended to take their case to the public and the angry, impatient tone of their letter assured them of a statewide audience. The cafeteria workers, for their part, now had as a vocal ally a group of about one hundred UNC black students.

The alliance between black students and foodworkers which emerged in December 1968 was neither sudden nor accidental. Preston Dobbins, a twenty-two year old senior and principal spokesman for the BSM, said later that as far back as the spring of 1968, one of the specific goals of the BSM

was to try to establish some kind of ties with the surrounding black community. . . . We were just a few black students on a white campus and we wanted to not be isolated and not to forget our roots . . . The closest thing we had for contact with an aspect of the black community was the cafeteria workers right here on the campus.<sup>9</sup>

Foodworker Elizabeth Brooks, reflecting on the problems the employees had had in presenting their grievances to the administration, confirmed the origin of the tie between black students and foodworkers: "We confided in Preston.

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<sup>8</sup>BSM demands listed in letter signed by Juan Cofield to Chancellor Sitterson, Chancellors' Records, file on Black Student Movement, UNC Archives. Also see Daily Tar Heel, 12 December 1968; Chapel Hill Weekly, 15 December 1968.

<sup>9</sup>Preston E. Dobbins, interview by Jacquelyn Hall, 4 December 1974, SOHPC.



We kind of seeked him out from the others . . . he just seemed to be just a person that was looking out for things like this."<sup>10</sup>

Dobbins had indeed long been looking out for things like the foodworkers' problems. Even before he graduated from a Chicago high school in 1964, he was coordinating "activist-oriented . . . free-wheeling . . . and intense" programs in his own Woodlawn community. After attending Chicago City College as a "kind of passing idea," and getting elected student body president while there, Dobbins came to North Carolina for a "change," having been recruited by Michael Lawler to work in a Youth Educational Services (YES) project. After spending the summer of 1966 in Fayetteville, Dobbins began to like the state--"it was warm . . . there were a lot of trees and people were friendly"--so he decided to stay, coordinating for the next year a statewide YES follow-up program. It was, said Dobbins,

a very valuable experience. . . . I became aware of . . . how different groups relate to each other, based on power positions. . . . I also learned a lot about . . . the kinds of hassles that would come up, the kinds of frustrations that people feel.

Eventually, "as a result of just trying to do things and then feeling that I was getting nowhere," Dobbins too became frustrated. In the summer of 1967, still liking

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<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

North Carolina but with "absolutely no interest in any kind of political thing," Dobbins enrolled at UNC in Chapel Hill.<sup>11</sup>

During the fall, in spite of "really feeling sort of contented," Dobbins decided casually to attend a meeting of the campus chapter of the NAACP. What he said he discovered was a "bullshit group . . . really antique . . . I felt this fire start to stir in me again . . . I said to myself, 'Oh no' . . . I had sworn to myself that I wouldn't get involved." But Dobbins did anyway, as he explained:

I don't even remember really making a conscious decision. . . . I remember one week just . . . talking to people that I knew, saying that everybody ought to get together and go to the next NAACP meeting . . . [and] since every black student was automatically a member . . . we would vote the abolition of the group and then start another one. So that's what I did.

Dobbins admitted that voting the NAACP out of existence "was a sudden thing to happen" and "caused some antagonism" among the core of about a half-dozen NAACP faithful.<sup>12</sup> The campus NAACP later reconstituted itself and there was confusion for a time, at least to outsiders, about which organization black students belonged to, the NAACP or the exclusively-black insurgent group calling themselves the Black Student Movement.

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<sup>11</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 4 December 1974.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

BSM member Wallace R. Peppers recalled that the "university wanted numbers [about membership]; we couldn't ever find them."<sup>13</sup> Preston Dobbins claimed that by 1968, the majority of blacks on campus were "pragmatically" loyal to the BSM, and all were responding to "things in the air . . . there was a lot going on around the country in terms of black student political activism . . . [In Chapel Hill] there was some unrest but no direction."<sup>14</sup>

In February 1968, the slaying of three blacks by law-enforcement officers in Orangeburg, South Carolina, offered an opportunity for local blacks to give direction to their feeling of unrest. In Chapel Hill on 16 February, after a night of protests in nearby Durham and other southern cities, about sixty BSM members marched from the UNC campus to the downtown post office. There they burned an effigy of the South Carolina governor, read Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die," promised that it "was not the end of our activities," and marched back to campus.<sup>15</sup> In the next months, "a lot of things solidified with the group," remembered Preston Dobbins.<sup>16</sup> BSM members began to involve themselves in local community projects. They

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<sup>13</sup>Wallace Peppers, interview by William (Joe) Knight, 28 October 1968, SOHPC.

<sup>14</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 4 December 1974.

<sup>15</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 18 February 1968.

<sup>16</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 4 December 1968.

set up a tutorial program for Chapel Hill youth, headed by Jack McLean, a sophomore from Fayetteville. Black students helped register local voters--their interest at least partially attributable to the presence of Reginald A. Hawkins, a black dentist from Charlotte, in the North Carolina Democratic gubernatorial primary. Hawkins's son Reggie was a member of the UNC Black Student Movement.

According to Preston Dobbins, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on 4 April marked the "end of an era of peaceful non-violent reaction." Declaring themselves "mad as hell" and "ready to meet violence with violence,"<sup>17</sup> about thirty-five BSM members marched through downtown Chapel Hill on Friday the fifth. After buying several Confederate flags, they burned the flags in front of the Kappa Alpha fraternity house. Reports of a gun poked at marchers from a Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity house window stirred the blacks to angry threats of reprisal, but there was no violence. On Sunday after a memorial service, the BSM was expected to lead a group that would include Chancellor Sitterson and UNC President William C. Friday in a biracial procession through downtown. But at the last moment Dobbins refused, saying that he was not interested in leading anything that was "ninety percent white."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 6 April 1968.

<sup>18</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 9 April 1968.



On Monday, as two thousand people attended a memorial service on campus, the BSM moved to capitalize on the relationship they had established with the local black community. Abjuring authorization from campus administrators and saying that the university had not gone far enough toward showing proper respect for the slain Dr. King, the BSM asked all UNC black employees not to work the next day. On 9 April, about 90 percent of the university's black workers walked off their jobs. All dining halls but one had to be closed. Campus officials charged that the BSM had pressured employees into the work boycott, and Chapel Hill's police chief, William D. Blake, reported that at least fifty threatening calls had been made to downtown merchants and their black employees. Preston Dobbins in turn accused the university of intimidating its workers and hailed the success of the boycott: "Black workers will realize after today the tremendous power we have if we act as a community. We can cripple this University and the University officials realize it."<sup>19</sup>

In Durham that same week, four-fifths of the Duke University students were boycotting classes and maintaining a vigil in support of a strike by university dining hall employees. Joining with the Durham Black Solidarity Committee, the Duke students black and white were demanding

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<sup>19</sup>Quotation from Daily Tar Heel, 10 April 1968; also see Chapel Hill Weekly, 7, 10 April 1968.

a \$1.60 minimum wage and collective bargaining rights for the workers. In Chapel Hill, however, by Wednesday, 10 April, UNC students were in class and black university workers were back on their jobs.

The UNC Black Student Movement commanded more attention later in the spring. They heckled and shook an axe handle at former Georgia governor Lester Maddox when he spoke at UNC in late April. With the campus chapter of the YMCA, the BSM sponsored a teach-in on race and poverty. In September the BSM was one of several groups countering the university's official orientation activities with an unofficial "Disorientation." Later in the fall they sponsored a black symposium, but were disappointed when expected guest speaker Eldridge Cleaver failed to show up.

The main event, however, was the campus appearance on 21 November, at the BSM's invitation, of Stokely Carmichael. Speaking to sixty-seven hundred people in UNC's Carmichael Auditorium, Carmichael explained to the black students sitting close by and to the rest of the 95-percent white audience that white liberals did not help blacks redress grievances, but rather interfered with the necessary confrontation between black "revolutionary violence" and conservative white society's "institutionalized violence."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 24 November 1968; Daily Tar Heel, 22 November 1968.

Politicians and Editorializers Join the Fray

The previous February, a federal court had ruled as unconstitutionally vague a 1963 North Carolina statute--amended in a 1965 special session because it threatened UNC's accreditation--prohibiting known communist sympathizers from speaking on state college campuses.<sup>21</sup> The need for a new state "speaker-ban" law had been an issue in the election just completed on 3 November.

Recently-elected Democratic Governor Robert W. Scott had survived a tough campaign against eastern North Carolina Congressman James Gardner, a champion of George Wallace and an advocate of resistance to school desegregation as enforced by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Although Gardner attributed his defeat to Scott's receiving the "Negro" vote, "few blacks were enthusiastic about Scott's candidacy."<sup>22</sup> Many liberals, in fact, thought that Scott had run on a law-and-order platform that was especially appealing to militant segregationists. In his campaign, Scott had skirted commitment on the speaker ban, but shortly after his election and just as Stokely Carmichael appeared in

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<sup>21</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 18, 21 February 1968.

<sup>22</sup>Earl Black, "North Carolina Governors and Racial Segregation," in Politics and Policy in North Carolina, edited by Thad L. Beyle and Merle Black (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1975), p. 75; Daily Tar Heel, 8 November 1968.

Chapel Hill, Scott picked as his "chief legislative arm-twister" the former state senator, Thomas J. White.<sup>23</sup>

White was a member of the UNC Board of Trustees from eastern North Carolina and in 1963 had been a principal sponsor of the original speaker-ban law.

White was thus representative of the many people in the state who held UNC in high esteem yet worried about campus activism. The university in Chapel Hill had been a particularly effective force in the state's history, but its "influence had not always been welcome," according to Carlyle Sitterson in a later assessment. It was not surprising, said Sitterson, that as a public institution dependent upon the political process for its support, UNC had earned both "admiration and resentment by the state community."<sup>24</sup>

Although the mood of the crowd at Stokely Carmichael's speech was reported to have been "not frenzy or any real tension,"<sup>25</sup> his appearance seemed to draw out more resentment than admiration from the people of the state. Newspapers reported afterwards that an increasing number of state legislators were hopeful that the General Assembly soon to convene could rewrite a constitutionally

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<sup>23</sup>Announcement of White as liaison, Chapel Hill Weekly, 4 December 1968; descriptive quotation from Raleigh News and Observer, 7 March 1969.

<sup>24</sup>Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974.

<sup>25</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 24 November 1968.



acceptable version of the so-called "gag law." Many influential politicians and editors felt that the Chapel Hill campus should never have allowed Carmichael to appear. Even those who doubted the efficacy of renewing the speaker-ban law were appalled by what they called Carmichael's flagrant violation, with impunity, of a 1941 state statute prohibiting use of a public building to advocate the violent overthrow of government.

People more sympathetic to the university's predicament were not so concerned about the details of Carmichael's legal transgressions or the administration's failure to prohibit or prosecute, but still they fretted about what responsible action could be taken to deal with the "contemptuous character [and] . . . contemptible gospel" of a person like Carmichael.<sup>26</sup> Not until December did William Friday speak out on behalf of the Consolidated University's four-campus system. President Friday deplored the substance of Carmichael's remarks but he doubted the effectiveness of legal prior restraint on campus speakers. With the support of outgoing Governor Dan Moore, Friday defended the right of college students in Chapel Hill and elsewhere to hear Carmichael speak.<sup>27</sup> President Friday's statement, however, did not ameliorate the discontent. Already the BSM had presented Chancellor Sitterson with

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<sup>26</sup> Roland Giduz, Chapel Hill Weekly, 15 December 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Chapel Hill Weekly, 22 December 1968.

its list of twenty-three demands, allegations that held the administration responsible for prejudiced action against blacks, including campus non-academic workers.

#### White Student Activists Search for a Cause

As the year 1969 approached, then, the UNC administrators recognized the existence of problems in the food service, pressures from campus black students, and counterpressures from statewide public opinion. There also were the many concerns of everyday academic and business life, compounded further by the unrest of white students and faculty members. Like the blacks, many whites had been seeking to define their roles as active participants in social reform; the BSM demands gave those whites a special opportunity to act on their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Certainly by the fall of 1968, many UNC white students were already conscious, as the blacks were, of "things in the air." They too knew something about the 1960s civil-rights campaigns in the South, even though by 1968, as junior Buck Goldstein said, they had missed the chance to participate in the "moral crusade of the sit-ins."<sup>28</sup> Still, students had seen at least on television and in newspapers the unrest in urban areas throughout the country. Many whites who had considered

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<sup>28</sup>Burton B. (Buck) Goldstein, Jr., interview by Kathy Robertson, 17 April 1974, SOHPC.

themselves advocates of civil rights were made uneasy in the later sixties by the call for "black power." But whatever insecurities such advocates began to feel about their own activist roles, most would still have agreed with the Kerner Commission's assessment that white racism had been a principal cause of black revolt. Although blacks seemed to be asking less than before for white liberal help, many whites, driven by a sense of justice and perhaps by a need to assuage their own guilt about the past, continued to support black-led movements.

At UNC, some white students had participated in the NAACP, and though discouraged from membership in the BSM, some forty whites had marched in the blacks' February 1968 protest against the "Orangeburg Massacre." Shocked by the April assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., many whites attended the memorial services and later that month cooperated with blacks in organizing a campus teach-in on racism and poverty, featuring such speakers as Carl Oglesby, organizer for Students for Democratic Society (SDS), and Sandy Sellers, from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In April, some UNC white students had participated in the Duke University student vigil to uphold the right of foodworkers there to strike. In May, the Daily Tar Heel called on the UNC Faculty Council to set up an ombudsman for black-employee grievances.<sup>29</sup> By fall,

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<sup>29</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 8 May 1968.

"the need to get in touch with your racism," as Buck Goldstein called it,<sup>30</sup> clearly had motivated some white students to support the right of UNC blacks to seek redress of their special grievances.

The autumn air of 1968 had in it more than strictly racial issues. Student concern about race relations mixed with growing disaffection with the war in Southeast Asia. Young people across the nation felt threatened by the selective service system and were suspicious of university complicity with American defense industries. To many college students, campus administrators were the enemy incarnate, a bureaucratic authority which oppressed minorities, the poor, and students. In April at Columbia University, students fought the school administration as if it were merely the local agency by which American capitalism enforced racism, inequality, and economic exploitation. The following summer, any lingering optimism that the system could reform itself seemed shattered by the nightmares of Robert Kennedy's assassination in Los Angeles and the riots in Chicago during the Democratic Convention. By the fall of 1968, student revolt was in the air; few college campuses in the country were not troubled by the question, "Could it happen here?"

The South, a battleground for racial and class conflict in the past, was again caught in the unrest

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<sup>30</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.



spreading through the country. Public officials saw reason to be uneasy and UNC administrators were no exception. During the previous spring, they had heard students condemn racism and rail against suspected university collusion with the war effort. Students criticized the campus presence of ROTC programs; they staged "guerilla skits" against the war. In March, a group sat-in in Gardner Hall to protest the campus recruiting mission of a Dow Chemical representative; fifteen arrests were made after UNC officials called the local police.<sup>31</sup> In his September 1968 orientation address, Chancellor Sitterson acknowledged that "man learns from a conflict of opinion and value," but he urged students to be "responsible" in their "exercise of freedom."<sup>32</sup> In spite of the apprehension about possible open conflict at UNC, Dean of Student Affairs C. O. Cathey optimistically expected the university to avert disruption because its administrators were "happy to listen" to students.<sup>33</sup>

Not all students were convinced of the administration's beneficence. The Daily Tar Heel charged that the administration was ignoring the more fundamental question of whether the university intended to go beyond verbal promises to actual inclusion of students in the process

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<sup>31</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 19 March 1968; Chapel Hill Weekly, 20 March 1968.

<sup>32</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 17 September 1968.

<sup>33</sup>Editorial, "Will It Happen Here," Daily Tar Heel, 17 September 1968.

of deciding policies which affected student life.<sup>34</sup> Even the student body president, Kenneth C. Day, a senior from Burlington who, as another student leader described him, "wasn't a radical," warned that the university was not meeting the needs of its students.<sup>35</sup> If all concerned students did not agree on how to accomplish their goals, many did agree that curfew and visitation rules should be more lenient and that course curricula should be more appropriate to student interests.

Activist students could seek reform through several formal organizations, most of which were political life by UNC student government recognition. Student government itself had a legitimate tradition and its leaders, such as Ken Day, had easy access to offices of high administrators, including the UNC chancellor and president. The student judiciary oversaw enforcement of rules for students and the student legislature had the power by 1968 to apportion about \$250,000 in student funds for campus activities. One of student government's offshoots, the Experimental College under the guidance of Buck Goldstein, offered students a range of unofficial alternative-curriculum choices. Despite such programs, students who were most impatient for campus reform were convinced that

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 17 September 1968. Quotation about Day from Charles N. Jeffress, interview by Kathy Robertson, 17 April 1974, SOHPC.

the student government was too unwieldy and conservative to be an effective agent for change.

To some UNC students, the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC) seemed a better alternative. George Vlasits, a twenty-six year old former UNC student from New Jersey, was a full-time SSOC organizer, paid ten dollars a week. Based in a SSOC field office in Durham, he frequently was on the UNC campus. He already had received public attention for having refused induction into the armed services and for being one of the fifteen protesters arrested at the Dow Chemical sit-in at UNC. In September 1968, with the avowed intention of spurring "debate on important issues,"<sup>36</sup> Vlasits helped organize a campus chapter of SSOC. Sam Austell, a junior from Greenville, South Carolina, was said to be the organization's chief officer, but to Scott Bradley, a member from Darien, Connecticut, the election of officers and a statement of purpose were done merely to meet the criteria for university recognition. In return, SSOC received authorization to use campus facilities for meetings; it got no university funds. Bradley remembered that "SSOC itself was a real sort of amorphous thing . . . it wasn't that people were particularly concerned about membership . . . it was an organizational tool."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 17 September 1968.

<sup>37</sup>Scott Bradley, interview by author, 30 October 1974, SOHPC.

As such, SSOC had the support of the Daily Tar Heel editor Wayne Hurder, a senior from Champaign, Illinois, who called it a "good vehicle for effecting change." Originally formed in 1964 from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as an adjunct for predominantly-white college campuses, SSOC at UNC encountered skeptics fearful of its being too radical. To those who alleged that SSOC and the New University Conference (NUC)--its parallel structure among graduate students and young faculty--were mere fronts for SDS, Hurder answered that SSOC was "better than SDS" because it had a less-exclusive leadership and was oriented more specifically to the needs of southern students.<sup>38</sup>

During the fall of 1968, SSOC members lent their organizational support to several causes. In race relations, SSOC, along with the BSM and the campus YMCA--long an advocate of racial equality and harmony--helped coordinate a boycott of Durham's Northgate Shopping Center, a boycott designed by the Durham Black Solidarity Committee to pressure local business and government into providing better services for black citizens. The war in Vietnam drove SSOC members to denounce the United States's involvement and to support resistance to the draft. In November, eleven UNC students, including Bradley, Austell, and Andy Rose, local organizer for the United Anti-War Mobilization Front (UAWMF),

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<sup>38</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 26 September 1968.



were arrested for distributing literature at the Fort Bragg military reservation.<sup>39</sup>

On the electoral front, SSOC passed out leaflets at a Durham campaign visit by American Party presidential candidate George Wallace. On 3 November, election night, SSOC expressed its disapproval of all candidates by sponsoring a "non-election" party in downtown Chapel Hill. As votes were being counted that would make Richard Nixon the country's president and Robert Scott the state's governor, SSOC's party spilled from the sidewalk into Franklin Street. Larry Kessler, a UNC history instructor active in NUC, was arrested for obstructing traffic. When his friends moved to free him, five more arrests were made, including George Vlasits and a BSM member, Eric Clay.<sup>40</sup>

On campus, allying on occasion with leaders from Student Government, the YMCA, and National Student Association, SSOC took the initiative in pressing the UNC administration for more student rights. When SSOC circulated a petition calling for more liberal visiting privileges between campus men and women, nearly four thousand students signed it. SSOC submitted the petition to Dean Cathey, and then in the next weeks, led several hundred students in each of two marches (said to be the

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<sup>39</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 19 November 1968.

<sup>40</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 6, 8 November 1968; Chapel Hill Weekly, 6, 20 November 1968.

largest since protests against the 1965 speaker ban) from the campus to Chancellor Sitterson's residence. Such manifestations of student feeling stimulated negotiations which by December had the administration authorizing a limited form of open-house visitation.<sup>41</sup>

Campus activists continued to put pressure on the administration even in situations where the university could be held only indirectly accountable. Students were piqued by what they saw as over-reaction and rough-handling by the Chapel Hill police at the election night street party. They were angered by the Episcopal Church's reassignment of William R. Coats, a campus chaplain active with students in anti-war, open-housing, and racial-equality campaigns. SSOC, NUC, and UAWMF extended the range of their voices by jointly publishing the Protean Radish; a first run of one thousand copies quickly sold out. In early December, black students were still infuriated by Carolina Union director Howard Henry's handling of Stokely Carmichael's appearance (they said that Henry would not allow them to raise funds by charging admission) and by what they called Dean Cathey's pigeonholing of a \$64,000 Carolina Talent Search proposal to HEW which would have aided in the recruitment of minority students--items for which they held the campus administration directly responsible.

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<sup>41</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 4, 18, 29 October 1968, and 2, 14, 19 November 1968.

In spite of the difficulties, however, one could argue that the administration was both listening to and involving students in decision making. Besides changes in visitation policy, SSOC and NUC had secured from the administration a pledge to discontinue having campus police observers attend their meetings. Many students applauded administrative support of the right of professors to speak against the war. Many were encouraged by the Chancellor's advocacy of a relaxation in the state's marijuana penalties--a stand, along with visitation rights, for which Sitterson had received the public censure of prominent state politicians, including gubernatorial candidate James Gardner.<sup>42</sup> The administration, in sum, seemed to be steering down a middle road between radical-student and conservative-political pressures, responding to both but surrendering to neither. If such a policy appeared to lack decisiveness, it could nevertheless be justified if it prevented revolt from either side.

Meanwhile, the UNC cafeteria workers continued serving the university its meals. Like other groups on campus, the foodworkers had personal needs that required urgent administrative attention. Unlike the other groups, the workers remained almost invisible, their voices practically unheard among university dinner conversations

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<sup>42</sup>Gardner's criticism of the chancellor came only days before the election, Daily Tar Heel, 31 October 1968.

concerning other issues--that is, until 11 December, when the Black Student Movement dramatically spoke out in their behalf.

Tension Sustained:  
Administration in a Squeeze

Preston Dobbins claimed that he attempted to meet with Chancellor Sitterson a few days after presentation of the BSM demands, but that he was allowed to talk only with Claiborne Jones and Dean Cathey. Dobbins reported that through a gap in the office door he had seen Sitterson reading a newspaper. A South Building secretary gave a different version of the confrontation: "That ringleader . . . just came slouching in here real cocky-like and says to Dr. Jones, 'Hey, are you Jones?'"<sup>43</sup> However it happened, communication between administrators and black students was strained. Officially, Chancellor Sitterson replied only by promising in a letter to Dobbins and BSM co-chairman Juan Cofield that he would answer their demands in detail before the end of January 1969.<sup>44</sup> The black students were frustrated by the administration's failure to act.

Coincidental with the delivery of the BSM demands to the administration came the public release of a report

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<sup>43</sup>Both accounts in Chapel Hill Weekly, 15 December 1968.

<sup>44</sup>J. Carlyle Sitterson to Juan Cofield and Preston Dobbins, 16 December 1968, Chancellors' Records, BSM file, UNC Archives.



by a Faculty Council committee chaired by J. Dickson Phillips, dean of the UNC Law School. Formed the previous May, the group had studied policies for integrating minority students into the university community. Having observed the number of black students increase only to a trickle in the thirteen years since court-ordered integration, the Phillips committee urged the university to adopt a policy of higher risk in the admission of minority students who did not meet normal admission standards. The committee also recommended the appointment of an ombudsman "to act in respect to special racial grievances involving Negro students and other members of the University community."<sup>45</sup> The Phillips report was welcomed generally by supporters of more affirmative integration policies but some, remarking that the faculty committee had overlooked the need to recruit black professors to UNC, criticized the report as just another glaring sign of the white community's blindness to black needs.<sup>46</sup>

In any case, as people anxiously awaited the chancellor's reply to the BSM, tensions were heightened by publicity of troubles on other college campuses in

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<sup>45</sup>Minutes of Faculty Council meeting, 6 December 1968, Chancellors' Records, file on Faculty Affairs; see also Chapel Hill Weekly, 18 December 1968; cf. report by Long committee, 12 June 1979, for reiteration of many of the Phillips committee recommendations (notes, Chap. I, p. 8).

<sup>46</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 8 January 1969.

the country, particularly at Brandeis and at San Francisco State. In North Carolina and at UNC, many people deplored the BSM's quest for "reverse discrimination for purely color reasons."<sup>47</sup> Such people advised Chancellor Sitterson to stand firm against "this sort of foolishness"<sup>48</sup> from the "lunatic fringe."<sup>49</sup> One letter-writer asserted that high admissions standards were the "only chance" the campus had to avoid becoming a "totally negro university."<sup>50</sup> Another person was unsympathetic to the "African Niggers who want to run the School;" he suggested that Sitterson "tell them that people in hell want ice water."<sup>51</sup>

Not everyone was aghast at the BSM demands. George Vlasits urged whites not to question the content of the black demands but rather to focus on the common struggle by creating additional demands. The Daily Tar Heel was more temperate, preferring to use the term "necessities" instead of "demands," but it supported the black students and pointed out that their claims on behalf of university non-academic workers was "fully justified."<sup>52</sup> Even the

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<sup>47</sup>Editorial, Chapel Hill Weekly, 15 December 1968.

<sup>48</sup>Hugh Morton to Chancellor Sitterson, 12 December 1968, Chancellors' Records, BSM file, UNC Archives.

<sup>49</sup>Dean James C. Ingram to Chancellor Sitterson, 16 December 1968, Chancellors' Records.

<sup>50</sup>J. D. Medlin to William C. Friday, 17 December 1968, Chancellors' Records.

<sup>51</sup>C. Mitchell, Sr., to Chancellor Sitterson, 13 December 1968, Chancellors' Records.

<sup>52</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 12 December 1968.

local chapter of the Association of American University Professors (AAUP) held an open forum and passed a resolution supporting "in general" the BSM demands.<sup>53</sup>

In early January, Chancellor Sitterson, speaking at a television news conference, gave only a hint of his perspective on the issue. He said that the university had been concerned for some time that rising costs and high admission standards threatened to take UNC beyond the means of a "large percentage" of North Carolinians. Sitterson did not outline specific administrative measures to deal with the problem of costs and standards, but he did invite the faculty to join with the administration in considering university policy towards the "culturally deprived."<sup>54</sup>

The chancellor may have welcomed assistance in formulating new policy, but it was the UNC administration which had to accept the burden of accountability imposed by the state. The administration, more than faculty or students, had to fight the threat of the Chapel Hill campus's diminished influence at the state level. In times past, according to state Senator Ralph H. Scott, the "legislature was made up of UNC graduates and they never thought of having a governor that wasn't a graduate of

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<sup>53</sup>Daniel Pollitt to Chancellor Sitterson, 23 January 1969, about the AAUP's endorsement of the BSM on 14 January, Chancellors' Records; also see Daily Tar Heel, 16 January 1969.

<sup>54</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 8 January 1969.



Chapel Hill."<sup>55</sup> Now, across the state, even people normally loyal to the university, whether because they wavered in their allegiance or because they were less confident of their influence, seemed more reluctant than before to speak out on behalf of programs for the Chapel Hill campus. The Consolidated University in 1969 was expanding to its fifth and sixth state campuses, making the Chapel Hill campus relatively less predominant. The incoming governor, Robert Scott, was the first since his father twenty years before not to have studied at the Chapel Hill campus. One could expect, especially because of the publicity given to campus activists, that the campus's proposals for biennial appropriations would get unusually close scrutiny from the new state legislature convening in Raleigh.

As Sitterson prepared an answer that would be addressed as much to the state and to other college administrators as to UNC black students, he had the sympathy of the Chapel Hill Weekly. The paper, recognizing that the UNC administration was "bound by constitutional and policy limitations and some very hard realities," said that the chancellor would be politically vulnerable however he turned:

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<sup>55</sup>Ralph H. Scott interview by Jacquelyn Hall and Bill Finger, 22 April 1974, Politics Project, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.



If the Chancellor so much as appears to be retreating slightly before the BSM, he will be calling down wrath upon himself and the University as sure as the Legislature sits in Raleigh. If he turns the demands down out of hand . . . the Chancellor will be challenging the BSM to make its next move.<sup>56</sup>

It would be unfortunate, added a later editorial, adverting to Sitterson as a civil-rights advocate with proven credentials, "if black students fail to recognize that in Chancellor Sitterson they have a valuable friend."<sup>57</sup>

#### Sitterson Responds; Others React

Drafts of Chancellor Sitterson's reply to the BSM were circulated to deans and department chairmen for review and suggestions. The carefully-worded final text had the full concurrence of UNC President William Friday. The chancellor's official reply, nineteen pages long, was released publicly on 24 January. If it were possible to find high ground in the middle of the sea, Sitterson's letter aimed for it.

Pledging first that the university needed a "better future" than would be possible if it countenanced "unique treatment" of any color, the chancellor went on to a point-by-point response to the BSM demands. Some demands, he agreed, represented valid university needs; he announced the formation of faculty-student committees to study the possibility of an Afro-American curriculum and the

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<sup>56</sup>Editorial, Chapel Hill Weekly, 15 December 1968.

<sup>57</sup>Editorial, Chapel Hill Weekly, 29 January 1969.

improvement in the campus status of minorities (and he soon could appoint James A. Garriss, a black undergraduate, as assistant director of university admissions). Other BSM demands, however, Sitterson dismissed outright; neither Dean Cathey nor Howard Henry would be fired. Still other demands were too vague to act upon, said Sitterson, and others were simply beyond the reach of the university's administrative jurisdiction.<sup>58</sup>

Across the state, editors generally praised Sitterson for setting a "proper tone" for discussion; they said that he had gone "as far as he could go . . . in an impossible position."<sup>59</sup> One major daily did point out, however, that Sitterson could have cited legislative precedent for providing special treatment for the enhancement of black education.<sup>60</sup> On campus, the Daily Tar Heel was not complimentary. Charging the administration with a "dangerous complacency,"<sup>61</sup> it said that Sitterson had failed in a special opportunity to exhibit the "new attitudes, new understanding, new will" appropriate to the times.<sup>62</sup> Contrasting Sitterson with former UNC president

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<sup>58</sup>Text of response, Chancellors' Records, BSM file, UNC Archives; also in Daily Tar Heel, 4 February 1969.

<sup>59</sup>Charlotte Observer, as reprinted in Daily Tar Heel, 5 February 1969.

<sup>60</sup>Greensboro Daily News, as reprinted in Daily Tar Heel, 5 February 1969.

<sup>61</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 5 February 1969.

<sup>62</sup>Editorial, Daily Tar Heel, 4 February 1969.

Harry W. Chase, who dared teach evolution in the 1920s, and with Frank Porter Graham, a UNC president and U.S. senator who dared denounce North Carolina's Jim Crow laws in the 1940s, the Tar Heel rebuked the chancellor for choosing not to use the prestige of his office "but rather to hide behind the limits."<sup>63</sup>

The BSM took the attitude that if Sitterson were an ally, they needed no enemies. They said that they had interpreted Sitterson's delay to mean that he was setting in motion programs to implement their desires. They interpreted his letter as a "flat rejection" of their demands.<sup>64</sup> They were especially incensed by Sitterson's claim that non-academic working conditions were continually being improved. According to Sitterson, "vigorous efforts for several years" had brought the UNC employee pay scale above the federal minimum; he also noted the existence of a well-developed university grievance procedure and the continual recruitment and training of minority workers for promotion.<sup>65</sup>

To the contrary, the BSM pointed out that Sitterson had ignored their request for administration officials to meet directly with workers and black students. He had not mentioned the list of grievances sent to him by the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Chapel Hill Weekly, 26 January 1969.

<sup>65</sup> Text of response, Chancellors' Records, file on BSM.

foodworkers the previous October. He had not mentioned-- nor to their mind, investigated--either the problem of job descriptions or the possibility that some workers actually were receiving less than regulations required. And if there were a training program for promotion, why were no black workers aware of it? If there existed a grievance procedure, why were those responsible for hearing complaints-- from Prillaman to Sitterson--apparently so unwilling to process those grievances?<sup>66</sup>

### The Foodworkers Organize

In January, much campus and state agitation focused on the chancellor's official response to the BSM. Less visible during that time were the foodworkers' activities. Faced with conditions they saw as steadily worsening, the employees, especially in the Pine Room, developed a more aggressive style of protest. Elizabeth Brooks's experience seems to have been a touchstone of that new style. She recalled that even after the BSM had spoken out in the workers' behalf, and long after the foodworkers had first talked to administrators about pay shortages, her own ninetieth work day came and went without a promotion. Several weeks later, she was still a temporary employee. Dissatisfied and exasperated by the delay and by the noncommittal explanations of supervisor Ottis White, she decided to talk with Prillaman directly. Her fellow workers,

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<sup>66</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 4 February 1969.



she remembered, "were very upset . . . they were all afraid and were begging me not go up and bother him, because they thought that he would fire me." But saying that she did not care if she were fired, Elizabeth Brooks went anyway to check with Prillaman. He assured her that she would soon receive permanent status. Not satisfied, she told Prillaman that if her work were satisfactory, then she should be promoted immediately; she would not continue working as a temporary employee. When Elizabeth Brooks went back to work in the Pine Room, she was on the permanent payroll.<sup>67</sup>

Some years later, Elizabeth Brooks said that Prillaman had not known much about her except that she had a "big mouth." She interpreted her success as evidence that Prillaman wanted to keep her quiet. She remembered that her fellow workers first reacted with jealousy to her encounter with Prillaman. They started "whispering to one another and saying 'It's not fair. . . . She don't work no harder than we do.'" Nor had she been there as long as some of those still classified as temporary. But instead of being reticent about her accomplishment, Elizabeth Brooks took the opportunity to exhort the others. "I told them that what they were saying to each other wasn't going to help. . . . They

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<sup>67</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interviews, 22 October 1974 and 13 September 1979.

needed to . . . let Prillaman know their feelings the same as I had."<sup>68</sup>

The effect on other foodworkers of Elizabeth Brooks's challenge was magnified by their association with UNC black students. Episodes are difficult to pinpoint chronologically, but foodworkers were meeting with black students before the BSM's December demands. In the subsequent six weeks before Sitterson's reply, they met even more frequently. Elizabeth Brooks characterized the meetings as informal, happening when individual workers on supper break might grab a sandwich and then sit at a dining room table and talk with black students. After a succession of such impromptu gatherings, grievances began to be more commonly known and more carefully recorded. At some point, Preston Dobbins suggested and arranged for more-formal meetings between workers and students, away from the job. How many meetings were held, where, and how many foodworkers attended cannot be certified. But, say both the foodworkers and Preston Dobbins, such meetings did take place.<sup>69</sup>

Preston Dobbins remembered that complaints which had seemed bad enough when voiced by individuals, "sounded terrible" when foodworkers expressed them in a group setting. Dobbins later was to minimize his own role in organizing

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979; Preston Dobbins, interview by oral-history class, 5 December 1974, SOHPC.

foodworkers against what they saw as systematic oppression. "I didn't have to do anything," he said; meetings with the BSM merely provided a forum for foodworkers which "focused rather than scattered" problems that they already recognized.<sup>70</sup> But it seems clear that Dobbins did play a major role; he "could talk to you and really make you aware of some of the things that you had been overlooking," said Elizabeth Brooks.<sup>71</sup> The BSM--principally Jack McLean, Eric Clay, and Reggie Hawkins, in addition to Dobbins--acted as a catalyst, encouraging worker protest and accelerating its pace.<sup>72</sup>

Elizabeth Brooks's personal persistence gave the internal organizing effort an example of success. Mary Smith also was an important figure since, at least in the Pine Room, management and workers each relied on her influence with the other. At first she was reluctant to join the group sessions with black students, but concern for her co-workers (among whom was her sister Esther Jeffries as well as her cousin Elizabeth Brooks) gradually led her to commit herself more openly to the group's cause. Although conditions in the Pine Room may have been no worse than in Lenoir Hall upstairs or elsewhere on campus, the

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<sup>70</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

<sup>71</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

<sup>72</sup>Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

the combination of what Preston Dobbins called an "mediator" (Elizabeth Brooks) and a "strong follow-through personality" (Mary Smith)<sup>73</sup> caused organizing efforts to be concentrated in the Pine Room.

Meeting with the BSM seems, not surprisingly, to have made the workers more acutely aware than before that they were involved together in a racial conflict. The importance of racial justice was probably discussed explicitly in meetings of black workers and students, although the BSM involvement in the weeks before the walkout does not seem to have altered the character of the workers' grievances, which were basically unchanged since October. Throughout, consciousness of race seems to have been more important to the workers than consciousness of themselves as part of a larger labor movement. Foodworkers were aware of problems experienced by other non-academic workers on campus, but their vision was limited primarily to their own everyday needs. Moreover, the foodworkers did not seek the counsel of outside labor organizers. There are indications, however, that behind the scenes some UNC faculty members and black students had discussed the use of outside organizing help.

Back in the summer of 1968, Preston Dobbins, Joyce Hobson (a black UNC graduate student), and two UNC faculty members (Ted Cloak and Roger Wells) met with Peter Brandon,

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<sup>73</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.



a white union official who was active with non-academic workers at Duke University. Because they knew that collective bargaining and union contracts were prohibited for state employees, the group decided to ask Howard Fuller, training director of the Foundation for Community Development, to choose a "prober" to reconnoiter the UNC worker situation and identify "indigenous leaders" to head campus organizing efforts in the fall. The group also made arrangements, through Fuller, to support those efforts financially.<sup>74</sup> Later reports said that Otis Lyte, a black amateur organizer, was on the UNC campus in the fall of 1968.<sup>75</sup> Whether Lyte was the official "prober" and how effective he was in his organizing efforts can only be determined through inference. Foodworkers do not remember having received his counsel nor that of Brandon prior to the February walkout.<sup>76</sup>

During January 1969, meanwhile, popular suspicion of the food service's financial troubles was fueled by the university's announcement that it would delay construction of a long-promised snack bar in the new student union. J. A. Branch confirmed publicly that outside firms had

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<sup>74</sup>Memorandum from group of nine faculty members to "Faculty concerned with plight of non-academic employees," 31 July 1968, in Chancellors' Records, file on Strike: Non-Academic Workers.

<sup>75</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 16 March 1969.

<sup>76</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 14 November 1974; Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks interview, 18 September 1979; Mary Smith, Verlie Moore, Elsie Davis, and Oveata Compton interview, 27 November 1979.

been asked to determine why students were not patronizing available campus eating facilities.<sup>77</sup> Known privately among administrators but not admitted generally, teams from both SAGA and ARA Slater commercial firms had visited the campus, studied the food service, and were preparing contract proposals to take over dining hall operations in June.<sup>78</sup>

While some university officials concentrated on the economic predicament, personnel director Fred Haskell and George Coffey, university special services officer, attended to the personnel problem.<sup>79</sup> Coffey attempted to pacify what he took to be the "isolated nucleus" of dissatisfied foodworkers. On 10 January, Coffey wrote to the state personnel department that relations with dining hall employees had improved and that "overall morale appears to be quite satisfactory."<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, Prillaman moved to reduce substantially the number of workers on split shifts, but he was primarily occupied with finances rather than with employee complaints.

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<sup>77</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 8 February 1969.

<sup>78</sup>See correspondence between Branch and representatives of the firms, Business and Finance Division Records, file on Food Services.

<sup>79</sup>In a summary of her interview with Claiborne S. Jones, 28 November 1974, D'Ann Campbell reported that higher-level administrators had intentionally left Haskell and Prillaman to solve the employee grievances.

<sup>80</sup>George L. Coffey to Sam W. Badgett, with copies to Branch, Eagles, and Jones, 10 January 1969, Business Records. According to some foodworkers, Coffey and Prillaman offered raises to individual troublemakers.

At the end of the month, he set up a central commissary in Lenoir Hall and proposed laying off thirty-seven employees from Chase Cafeteria, a move made necessary, he remarked, by the "high-rising costs of labor."<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the growing group consciousness, Pine Room workers continued the tactics they had tried previously, and with much the same unsatisfactory results. Mary Smith said that the workers compiled a new list of grievances, including questions about the supposed January first pay raises, and asked her to represent them to Prillaman. Prillaman, she said, told her that he didn't "have time to look at this mess," to which she replied, "Then we'll leave it with you in case you find time." Prillaman also turned down her request to meet with employees as a group.<sup>82</sup> Workers recalled that he gave no reason for his refusal, but one can surmise that Prillaman realized that such a meeting would place him in a situation which would be both uncomfortable to him personally and compromising to him as director. Prillaman might also have felt that the food-workers were being unduly influenced by black students whom he regarded as interlopers in manager-worker relations. He may have believed that a general meeting would give a few soreheaded employees a stronger forum than their petty

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<sup>81</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 5 February 1969; also George W. Prillaman to James A. Branch, 28 January 1969, Business Records.

<sup>82</sup>Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

grievances and small following deserved, or that it would be interpreted as an implicit admission of bad working conditions. In addition, he may have felt that collective bargaining, proscribed by law anyway, was an ineffective method of correcting individual complaints.

Whether, as George Coffey suggested, his efforts and those of Branch, Haskell, and Prillaman actually mollified the majority of the dining hall employees is difficult to know. According to Elizabeth Brooks, satisfaction among the workers may have been apparent but it was never real. She remembered, for instance, one time when Prillaman came downstairs to the Pine Room crew and "bawled us out." He gave an ultimatum, she said, that included thinly-veiled threats about job security if employees kept meeting with black students. Prillaman's "throwing his weight around . . . shook up the majority" of the workers, said Elizabeth Brooks, and left many of them too intimidated to continue organizing activities.<sup>83</sup>

With the encouragement of black students, however, a core of about a half-dozen workers remained determined. The principal challengers were Mary Smith, Elizabeth Brooks, Esther Jeffries, Elsie Davis, and Sarah Parker from the Pine Room's second shift, and Verlie Moore and Amy Lyons from the first shift. According to Elizabeth Brooks, the other individuals in the dining hall told her more-tightly

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<sup>83</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.



organized group that "I'm not going to say nothing, but I be with y'all." Said Elizabeth Brooks about her wary co-workers, "We knew they agreed with us."<sup>84</sup>

### Opposition to the Administration Intensifies

Having gained the campus's notice with the presentation of their December demands, BSM members were even more the center of attention in the weeks following Chancellor Sitterson's January reply. Although many whites were gratified by what they saw as Sitterson's statesman-like firmness,<sup>85</sup> enough others were vocal about their disappointment to give the appearance of added white sympathy for the BSM's cause. The BSM meanwhile evaluated cautiously how best to use the new support. To some extent, black students chose to withdraw from public scrutiny, keeping to themselves while letting their partisans carry on the debate.

"We'd like white support but we'll do our own thing regardless," Preston Dobbins advised a noon rally of four hundred people in Memorial Hall on 7 February.<sup>86</sup> Then he stood watching as George Vlasits, sociology professor Richard Roman, and other representatives of SSOC, NUC, and the Graduate Student Association led a march downtown.

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.; also Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

<sup>85</sup>Numerous letters of encouragement to Chancellor Sitterson, in Chancellors' Records, BSM file.

<sup>86</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 9 February 1969.

Chanting "Work, study, get ahead, kill!," the demonstration, which was irritating but not disruptive to downtown businesses, concluded back on campus with one hundred supporters of the BSM staging a peaceful ten-minute occupation of South Building, where UNC administrators had their offices.<sup>87</sup>

Students also crashed the regular monthly meeting of the university Faculty Council on Friday the seventh. Though some faculty members worried about setting a dangerous precedent, students were allowed to stay as long as they did not participate in debate. During deliberations chaired by Chancellor Sitterson, the council passed a resolution which admonished demonstrators and assured the administration of faculty support for a "free and open campus."<sup>88</sup> Fifty-six UNC faculty members, mostly in the social sciences, were not satisfied with the stand of the Faculty Council; they sent a separate letter to the chancellor, calling on him to recognize the "validity and importance" of the BSM demands. The document, written by sociology professors Charles Goldsmid and Robert Stauffer, asked Sitterson to redouble efforts to accommodate minority needs rather than to exaggerate the university's past endeavors. The petition included a plea to increase wages and promotional

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<sup>87</sup> Raleigh News and Observer, 8 February 1969; Daily Tar Heel, 8 February 1969.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes of Faculty Council meeting, 7 February 1969, show approval of resolution by C. Carroll Hollis as substitute for one offered previously by George E. Nicholson and thought to be too provocative, Chancellors' Records, file on Faculty Affairs.

opportunities for campus non-academic workers.<sup>89</sup>

While the BSM took stock, announcing briefly that an Afro-American militia had been organized to take "actions to back up our demands,"<sup>90</sup> white allies of the BSM found themselves challenged by the newly-created Hayakawa Society. Named for the president of troubled San Francisco State University who had taken a hard line against striking students, faculty, and workers, the society claimed to be the first of its kind in the country and representative of the "moderate majority" who were interested in "peaceful and constructive change." President Grainger Barrett and other society leaders succeeded on Monday, 10 February, in meeting with Chancellor Sitterson and Dean Cathey. Urging like SSOC that students be involved in the university decision-making process, Barrett counseled the administration nonetheless to be chary of surrendering to radical and black-separatist demands.<sup>91</sup>

SSOC quickly repudiated the society's position and charged that Barrett and others were taking unfair advantage of their access to the state press, since Maurice Stocks, a founder of the society, worked part-time in the university News Bureau. While SSOC and the Hayakawa Society

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<sup>89</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 11 February 1969; Chapel Hill Weekly, 12 February 1969.

<sup>90</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 9 February 1969.

<sup>91</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 12 February 1969.

debated over who better represented "the people," a UNC Journalism School survey showed that although few on campus were members of radical groups, nearly half UNC's students thought that the university was a better place because of activity by campus radicals.<sup>92</sup>

If a formal poll had been taken in Raleigh, however, almost no state official would have been sympathetic with SOC's positions. From the state's executive office came a request by the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) for photographs of the 7 February demonstrators in Chapel Hill. Legislators in Raleigh were described as still "hopping mad" over Stokely Carmichael's appearance.<sup>93</sup> Worried that one campus already was the plaything of radical pressure groups and that other campuses might become so, Representative J. F. Mohn of Onslow County made ready to introduce a "super-gag" law for General Assembly consideration. Governor Robert Scott and the Advisory Budget Commission had refrained from expressing open criticism of the Chapel Hill campus, but they both recommended sharp cuts in appropriations for the expansion of the UNC Medical School. In a move to increase state revenue, Scott in February had advocated, among other levies, North Carolina's first tax on tobacco--a proposal which was to eastern legislators,

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<sup>92</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 13 February 1969.

<sup>93</sup> Chapel Hill Weekly, 12 February 1969.



said one observer, "as wise as advocating polygamy."<sup>94</sup> Chapel Hill loyalists feared that reductions in campus appropriations would become part of the political trade-off as Scott tried to secure passage of his revenue plan.

Not all the jousting between politicians, administrators, and students was confined to Chapel Hill and Raleigh. On 5 February, students at predominantly-black North Carolina A & T University in Greensboro occupied an administrative building until given a promise that their demands would be met.<sup>95</sup> The following week, on 13 February, over fifty blacks occupied offices in Duke University's Allen Building. Faced with a one-hour ultimatum and the imminent threat of being forcibly evicted by nearly one hundred and fifty Durham policemen and state highway patrolmen, the blacks evacuated the building at nightfall. They were joined outside by nearly two thousand allies, and then were hemmed in by law-enforcement officers. Bottles and rocks and tear gas were hurled in an ensuing "free-swinging melee." More than twenty persons required hospitalization.<sup>96</sup>

The shock of the news from Durham was felt throughout the state. Governor Scott complimented Duke President Douglas Knight's decision to ask for help from law-

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<sup>94</sup>Jack Childs, Raleigh News and Observer, 13 February 1969.

<sup>95</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 6 February 1969.

<sup>96</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 14 February 1969.

enforcement officers; he "has set the tone for our actions in potentially similar situations on other campuses," said Scott.<sup>97</sup> At the campus in Chapel Hill, such a tone was exactly what some activist students worried about. For the second consecutive Friday, SSOC organized a noon rally in the YMCA courtyard. George Vlasits, who had been at Duke the night before, told the crowd that as long as administrators insisted on using institutional procedures to change institutional procedures, then reform attempts would fail. BSM member Juan Cofield reinforced Vlasits's argument by noting that UNC administrators had established recent committees on minority affairs without first consulting the BSM. The mood of the rally was angry but Adolph Reed, local leader of the Young Socialist Alliance, vowed to ask Chancellor Sitterson "nicely one last time" to implement the BSM demands.<sup>98</sup> Subsequently, about one hundred persons jammed the hall in South Building. Conversation between the group and Dean of Men James O. Cansler was, however, neither nice nor particularly constructive.

During the weekend, it was learned that Duke University, in the aftermath of occupation and confrontation there, had consented to implement most of its black students' demands. Administrators there pledged to establish an Afro-

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<sup>97</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 15 February 1969.

<sup>98</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 15 February 1969.

American curriculum by fall (said to be the first at a predominantly-white southern university). They also agreed to set up a separate dorm for blacks, and to recruit and provide academic assistance for more black students. Duke President Knight called the agreement a "realistic understanding with students."<sup>99</sup> Others, noting the pressures leading up to the agreement, called it an administrative capitulation and, depending on the point of view, were either encouraged or dismayed about the prospect of a similar response by administrators elsewhere. In Chapel Hill, BSM supporters said that black demands at UNC had been less extreme than those at Duke; the implication was that at UNC, black needs could be accommodated at least as easily. Such a conclusion, however, ignored differences in administrative flexibility between privately-endowed Duke and publicly-supported UNC.

Aware of growing frustration on the UNC campus and intent on avoiding what one Duke official had called "damnable communication,"<sup>100</sup> Chancellor Sitterson agreed on Monday, 17 February, to a joint SSOC-BSM request to convene within ten days an open meeting of the chancellor, President Friday, several deans, SSOC, the BSM, non-academic workers, and others. Mickey Lewis, a BSM member, told the crowd of two hundred waiting outside South Building that

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<sup>99</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 23 February 1969.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

Sitterson was a "cool dude. . . . We're going to have to rap him hard to get anything from him."<sup>101</sup>

The following day, Sitterson met with six BSM members and discovered that they were not content with arrangements made on Monday. The blacks presented Sitterson with three new demands: they asked him to stop using white mediators to deal with black problems, to recognize the BSM as the official university organization representing black interests, and to accede to the BSM's right to place demands on the university. If their latest requests were not met by the end of that week, Reggie Hawkins promised that there would be a change from "reform to revolutionary tactics."<sup>102</sup>

On Wednesday, blacks provided further demonstration of their distrust of both institutional procedures and cooperation with whites. Reggie Hawkins and other blacks dropped out of the National Student Association, and all three blacks on the committee studying the status of minorities resigned from further participation. Some white leaders on campus, though stung by the BSM moves, nonetheless tried to throw their weight behind the black initiatives. President of the student body, Ken Day, joined student legislator Richie Leonard and Tar Heel editor Wayne Hurder in urging Sitterson henceforth to eschew normal student government channels and deal directly with the

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<sup>101</sup> Raleigh News and Observer, 18 February 1969.

<sup>102</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 19 February 1969.



BSM concerning black demands. To back up their resolve, the three whites offered to shift funds from student government programs to BSM "programs of merit."<sup>103</sup>

The chancellor responded on Wednesday night to the BSM demands he received on Tuesday. In a statement released to the press, Sitterson recognized the BSM's legitimate existence and said that his January reply to their original demands should not have been construed as a rejection of their valid needs, for which he had the "greatest respect."<sup>104</sup> He promised to reconstitute the Committee on Minorities after consultation with the BSM and student government. In tone Sitterson was conciliatory even though in content his statement did not capitulate. What the reaction would have been to his message alone, no one can say, because a simultaneous declaration by UNC President William Friday received overwhelming press coverage. As an executive officer of the state, President Friday reaffirmed his intention to do "what is required" to enforce a 1965 statute prohibiting obstruction of public buildings.<sup>105</sup> Campus activists black and white interpreted the statements by Sitterson and Friday as a double dose of administrative obstinance.

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<sup>103</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 20 February 1969.

<sup>104</sup> Daily Tar Heel, 21 February 1969.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.; Raleigh News and Observer, 20 February 1969; Chapel Hill Weekly, 23 February 1969.

On Thursday, the long-quiescent local chapter of the NAACP reappeared. Claiming fifty members, black student Kelly Alexander, Jr., announced that it would be improper for the administration and others to recognize the BSM as the sole representative of black interests. The NAACP nevertheless endorsed BSM demands which would improve black education, as long as "institutionalized segregation" was avoided.<sup>106</sup> Tensions were high on Thursday night as SSOC, the Hayakawa Society, and the BSM all held meetings. No one seemed sure what the next day might bring.

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<sup>106</sup> Raleigh News and Observer, 21 February 1969.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FOODWORKERS SIT DOWN

On Friday morning, UNC held to an uneasy peace. Perhaps the week of tension had at least opened the door to direct consultations between blacks and administrative officials, but disturbing portents remained. At Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill, the "disaster committee" released a memorandum to employees reviewing procedures for treatment of Mace and tear-gas victims. In Raleigh, the General Assembly had among its business the consideration of bills dealing with riots and campus disruption.

Also from the capital, Governor Robert Scott issued a thirteen-point memorandum to all state-university presidents. In it he recommended procedures for handling campus disturbances. His message was stilted and firm: campuses were not intended to be places of "refuge or asylum" for dissidents; picketing and demonstrations were allowed only if they did not disrupt regular activities. If campus trouble did erupt, then university officials must notify the governor; if a crime were committed, university officials must ask law-enforcement personnel to arrest offenders; if police saw a crime committed on campus, they could make arrests without consulting university administrators; and

if the governor thought it necessary, he would send in the highway patrol or National Guard.<sup>1</sup> Although the Raleigh News and Observer would describe his dispatch as "unduly abrasive,"<sup>2</sup> Scott said that he meant to boost, not undercut, the authority of campus administrators.

On the UNC campus, the most active allies of the BSM gathered for the third consecutive Friday for a noon rally in the courtyard outside the YMCA. This convocation was different from previous ones, however. This time the BSM did not participate. It met separately in Alumni Building, headquarters of the sociology department. There, shortly after noon, forty blacks emerged dressed in black. Chanting "We're gonna burn this . . . place down," they marched across campus, passing as they went a rather non-plused group of their white standbys. Arriving at Lenoir Hall, the blacks got their lunches and carried their trays upstairs to a private room. During the next four hours, the group sequestered themselves, discussing--as whites reliably reported--"something."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, most white observers did not notice that in the Pine Room downstairs, workers had been having a difficult week. First of all, they were upset because

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<sup>1</sup>Governor Robert W. Scott to Chancellor Sitterson, "Guidelines . . . relative to seizure of buildings and disturbances . . . ," 20 February 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike: Non-Academic Workers.

<sup>2</sup>Raleigh News and Observer editorial, 24 February 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 22 February 1969.



Doris Stephens, an employee from Durham, had recently been fired. Prillaman said that she was laid off to make room for a permanent employee being transferred from Chase, but workers felt that she was another non-temporary "temporary" employee whom supervisors had taken advantage of. For one thing, said workers, she was given insufficient notice of her release. More important, Pine Room employees contended that she was fired for refusing to lift heavy trays of dishes onto a high conveyor belt. To Elizabeth Brooks, that was "no reason at all," and represented a threat to other workers: "We kind of felt that if they were going to start firing the ladies because they refused to do this, then it could eventually come around to just about . . . all of us."<sup>4</sup>

Mary Smith remembered asking Prillaman that week about the January wage increases which had been promised but never given to eligible workers. She recalled Prillaman telling her, "Mary, one has already come through and that's for you . . . five hundred dollars more a year, if you stop everything that is going on now." She replied that she was not due such a raise, but she remembered his insisting, "I am worried today, Mary, . . . I think they will listen to you." She rejoined, "I don't see why you are worried, because if you have done your job right, you will not be worried." And again Prillaman: "I am going to admit to you I have been wrong . . . but I have not treated you wrong."

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<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

In spite of her special treatment, Mary Smith said she still felt wronged because Prillaman never did give her or other workers a satisfactory explanation about the raises.<sup>5</sup>

Compounding matters on Friday, Elizabeth Brooks had another confrontation with supervisor Ottis White. She had arrived at work to discover that the woman who served the adjacent counter was absent. According to Elizabeth Brooks, the supervisor asked her to work the extra counter, which she did. Later, during an after-supper lull, she asked the supervisor to get a part-time student worker to help clean the counter that evening. Again White asked her to do it. Without saying anything, Elizabeth Brooks "just didn't do it." As workers were about to leave, the supervisor called to her and, pointing his finger, said, "Next time I'm not going to ask you, I'm going to tell you." She answered by telling him that "it wasn't slavery time anymore. . . . Regardless of what he told me, I still had a choice. I could do it, or I didn't have to."<sup>6</sup>

Late that evening, according to Elizabeth Brooks, when the exasperated night-shift employees got off work, they

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<sup>5</sup>Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974; also see her interviews, 14 November 1974 and 13 September 1979.

went outside and kind of stood around in a little bunch and we said, "We got to do something about this." So we found Preston Dobbins before we left. And we told him that . . . we wanted to strike. But we did not know just in what way to do it.<sup>7</sup>

During their earlier meetings with black students, the idea of a sit-down, as a method of getting administrative attention, seems to have been raised and then dismissed as, said Preston Dobbins, a "passing notion."<sup>8</sup> By available accounts, the actual decision to strike was made on Friday, 21 February, by a small group of second-shift Pine Room workers and was largely unpremeditated.

Once notified, Preston Dobbins was ready with counsel. Elizabeth Brooks said that Dobbins told them that "If you're going to do it, and going to get results, you gotta do it in a normal way." Since the Pine Room would be closed for the weekend until Sunday afternoon at four o'clock, Dobbins advised the workers to come in Sunday and set up their counters as if it were a regular workday. Then, he told them, "Leave the rest to the black students."<sup>9</sup>

Dobbins asked the employees to come to campus somewhat earlier than usual on the twenty-third, so that they could meet with black students in Manning Hall before going to work. Elizabeth Brooks remembered that by the

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<sup>7</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

<sup>8</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

<sup>9</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

time the workers arrived on Sunday, the black students "had really got things planned out."<sup>10</sup> Already the students had taken what BSM member Ashley Davis remembered as a "solemn vote"<sup>11</sup> of support for the employees' action. As workers left Manning Hall to go next door to the Pine Room, the students told them, "Don't back down."

So the foodworkers set up their counters. Everyone stood ready to start serving when supervisor Ottis White opened the doors and then, said Mary Smith, "the thing just teed off. We walked out from behind the counter and everybody just sat down."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>W. Ashley Davis, interview by Russell Rymer, 12 April 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>12</sup>Mary Smith interview, 10 April 1974.



## CHAPTER V

### WEEK ONE:

#### ADVERSARIES FORTIFY POSITIONS

The Pine Room workers usually served over one thousand people in two hours. That Sunday, most of the students who first crowded into the cafeteria and banged on the counters were members of the BSM and SSOC. They expected no service, they got none; and neither did students who arrived fully expecting Sunday supper. George Prillaman had to decide what to do with the food already prepared (he reported "looting and theft"<sup>1</sup> by students), but his main concern was resolving what he called a "misunderstanding"<sup>2</sup> with his workers. As members of the press, forewarned by the BSM of the foodworkers' intentions, began to take notes and photographs, Prillaman put in an urgent call to James A. Branch, who soon arrived at the Pine Room. After first laying the ground rule that black students must stay away, the two administrators sat down with the workers for about thirty minutes.

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<sup>1</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 24 February 1969.

<sup>2</sup>Durham Sun, 24 February 1969.

The students stayed close enough to hear what was going on but purposely avoided the impression that they were occupying the Pine Room. When asked by a reporter if this represented the revolutionary tactics promised the previous week, Preston Dobbins smiled and answered, "Of course not."<sup>3</sup> While the students milled about, the employee group recounted their grievances for Prillaman and Branch and added a significant new demand: that the minimum wage for all foodworkers be raised twenty cents an hour, to \$1.80. The administrators told the workers that their grievances would be readily considered if they returned to work, but warned the employees to expect neither pay nor quick results from the walkout. Employees and officials agreed to meet again the following afternoon. The meeting split up; the workers went with their supporters to Manning Hall, while Pine Room supervisors and volunteers cleaned the dining hall.

The black students and Pine Room employees, by asking directly on Sunday afternoon and by phone later that night, set about convincing other campus foodworkers to join them in taking "just a couple of days off." The requests were accompanied more by intimidation than flattery, said some reports, but on Monday morning, nearly one hundred campus dining hall employees did not report to work. Only Lenoir Hall, with about a dozen regular employees,

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<sup>3</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 24 February 1969.

plus supervisors and volunteers, remained open. Although members of the BSM and SSOC made some attempts to block the cafeteria line, officials claimed that students, serving themselves and using disposable utensils, were able to eat there "almost as usual."<sup>4</sup>

In its regularly scheduled meeting that Monday, the UNC Board of Trustees worried about the foodworker walkout as another manifestation of student unrest. President William Friday, perhaps anticipating the board's apprehension, had invited several leaders from UNC's student government to attend the meeting. In the students' presence, Friday exhorted the board to sustain its "faith in the student generation." Citing board chairman and Governor Robert W. Scott's 20 February memo (which had outlined procedures to use in case of campus disruption), President Friday went on to say that current administrative policies were sufficient to deal with unrest. In a television news conference later that day, Governor Scott acknowledged that UNC students had the right of dissent but he advised dissatisfied ones to "go somewhere else."<sup>5</sup>

On Monday afternoon, food service workers attended the planned meeting with university administrators. This

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<sup>4</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 25 February 1969.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; general accounts of events Sunday and Monday also from Durham Morning Herald, 24, 25 February 1969, Chapel Hill Weekly, 26 February 1969, Daily Tar Heel, 25 February 1969.

time, personnel director Fred B. Haskell was with Prillaman and Branch. After two hours of discussion, Haskell announced that the university had met two of the workers' demands. First, some workers who had more than one year's experience would receive in their next paychecks a raise retroactive to 1 January. Complicated record-keeping procedures and a computer foul-up had caused the delay in payment, Haskell said. Second, the university henceforth would review the status of each full-time worker after his first ninety days of employment to determine if he should receive a "permanent" classification. Haskell also reviewed university grievance procedures and, noting that North Carolina law forbade collective bargaining with state employees, he invited workers to meet individually with him or George Coffey about remaining complaints.<sup>6</sup>

Employees were not content with the results of the Monday meeting. They were aware that the announced raise did not affect all cafeteria workers, skeptical about the reasons given for its delay, disappointed that the \$1.80 minimum and other requests had not been met, upset that administrators would discuss further grievances only with individual workers, and suspicious of the administration's sudden willingness to practice a policy of review for

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<sup>6</sup>Fred B. Haskell, statement issued 24 February 1969, Business Records, file on Food Services; also see newspaper accounts.



permanent classification. Elizabeth Brooks stated that administrators had reneged on a promise to bring worker pay records to the meeting and said that workers would refuse to meet as individuals with administrators. "We had gotten used to promises," she said later.<sup>7</sup> In short, to her, the negotiating session had "not settled anything yet."<sup>8</sup>

Both food service workers and management publicly expressed a desire to end the walkout, but neither side was willing to offer further concessions. Each side felt that it had made its case and that the next move belonged to the other. Each side also admitted its anger. George Prillaman said that people whom he had never seen before threatened his life when he refused to produce the payroll records;<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Brooks said that workers had expected to "work everything out" during the Monday session.<sup>10</sup> Under the circumstances, neither side pushed to arrange for future meetings. It was the foodworkers' last official meeting with George Prillaman.

The workers and their closest allies did continue to get together, however, making preparations for a walkout that might last more than just a few days. During the

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

<sup>8</sup> Greensboro Daily News, 25 February 1969.

<sup>9</sup> George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

weekend, through what they believed to be normal university reservation procedures, the BSM had acquired permission to use Manning Hall, the former headquarters--now vacant while undergoing renovation--of UNC's law school.<sup>11</sup> On Tuesday, 25 February, food service workers arranged (together with the BSM, SSOC, and the campus YMCA) to prepare food at their homes and at Chapel Hill's Community Church and to serve the food in Manning Hall to boycotters of Lenoir Hall's services next door. State statute prohibited price competition with the university's food service, but it did allow organizers to solicit contributions and exempted them (as it did church and civic groups) from state health regulations. The acquisition of Manning Hall was thus a crucial move. Not only was it a base of operations for strikers and their followers, it also gave them some economic leverage. Campus sympathizers could boycott the university's food service and contribute instead directly to foodworkers who were no longer making even the minimum university wage.

By the middle of the week, strike supporters moved to organize in other ways. Attempting to counter the mixture of surprise and confusion with which most UNC greeted the Sunday walkout, the BSM and SSOC set up

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<sup>11</sup>The administration questioned the validity of the permission given to the BSM. Officials did not deny, however, that a functionary in the reservation office ("some unidentified girl," according to Claiborne Jones, Raleigh News and Observer, 11 March 1969) had granted use of Manning Hall to black students.

picket lines outside Lenoir. They talked to Lenoir patrons and passed out handbills listing the grievances of the workers and advertising the alternative lunches and dinners at Manning. Elsewhere on campus and in dorms, the BSM and SSOC coordinated distribution of more leaflets and posters. They also went downtown to begin collecting donations for the workers.

Reverend Bill Coats telephoned leaders of the North Carolina Teamsters Union and asked for their help in putting a stop to campus food deliveries. Coats was told that since foodworkers and most truck drivers were non-union, the best that should be expected was that individual truck drivers might honor the UNC walkout. Toward that end, Coats, along with several dozen students and several professors, set up picket lines at the loading area of Lenoir. For a couple of days they succeeded in persuading some early-morning drivers to turn away. But Prillaman, still in charge of day-to-day food service operations, was able to offset Coats's move by calling distributors and rescheduling deliveries to unannounced times, thus forcing Coats by the week's end to cancel the tactic as "mostly non-productive."<sup>12</sup> Prillaman also hired student part-time help at the \$1.60 minimum to keep the Lenoir food service operating. Boasting that close to

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<sup>12</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 27 February 1969.

"normal numbers" of students were eating in Lenoir in spite of the boycott, Prillaman said that with so few workers to pay, "I'm actually making money."<sup>13</sup>

The Administration's Early Perspective  
on Workers, Students, and Race

Although during the first days of the strike, negotiations were left primarily to Prillaman, Branch, and Haskell, one can assume that Joseph Eagles, vice chancellor for business and finance, closely monitored the lower-level administrators. Eagles himself issued a statement on Thursday, 27 February, which outlined in some detail university and state personnel policies toward non-academic workers. His most publicized assertion was that full-time permanent workers already were making, if sick leave and vacation benefits were added in, more than the \$1.80 minimum which employees had requested. Eagles reiterated Haskell's pledge to review the status of temporary workers after ninety days of employment (admitting that such review had not always been practiced in the past), and he agreed that before seasonal layoffs, workers should be given a notice of two weeks. To the demand that individual worker payroll records be opened for scrutiny, Eagles answered that the university was committed to "protect" its workers and therefore would

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<sup>13</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 26 February 1969.



prohibit such public inspection.<sup>14</sup> Eagles's announcement left unanswered many questions about actual working conditions in the food service. Dissatisfied employees felt that the statement clarified nothing except that the administration had no intention of negotiating in good faith.

The chancellor meanwhile issued no public statement to indicate that he was concerned about the workers' problems. His influence (and that of his superior, President William Friday) in the determination of administrative policy during the first days of the foodworker strike and boycott is difficult to determine. One can assume that Chancellor Sitterson was reluctant, as chief executive officer on campus, to inject himself into a lower-level labor dispute, but he must have been kept informed through staff assistant Claiborne Jones and Vice-Chancellor Eagles about transactions with the workers. However they reached decisions, the UNC administrators steadfastly refused to invite striking employees, as a group, to discuss further the resolution of grievances.

On 25 February (by coincidence, only two days after the strike began), a U.S. district court overturned a North Carolina law which forbade the formation of unions by state employees. But the same decision, UNC administrators could

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<sup>14</sup>Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., statement issued 27 February 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike: Non-Academic Workers; also see newspaper accounts.

legitimately declare, let stand the right of state agencies to refuse to bargain collectively with state-employee associations.<sup>15</sup> In effect, said law professor Daniel Pollitt, the court decision allowed unions to be formed but outlawed them from doing "what unions do."<sup>16</sup> Bargaining was therefore "more a matter of economic power than state law," according to lawyer Adam Stein.<sup>17</sup> With considerable economic power at its disposal, the UNC administration was under no compulsion to negotiate with an informal aggregation of striking workers.

In addition, the administration was unwilling to meet with workers because the employees wanted to be accompanied by members of the Black Student Movement. The foodworkers insisted that they were capable of representing themselves, but they wanted BSM members present to monitor the bargaining. Administrators feared that assent to the workers' request would be tantamount to recognition of the BSM as an official spokesman for worker interests. Cognizant of their own recent controversy with black students, administrators were not willing to give the BSM a new and potent forum. The reluctance of higher-level administrators to initiate either more

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<sup>15</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 27 February 1969; Durham Sun, 26 February 1969.

<sup>16</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

<sup>17</sup>Adam Stein, interview by author, 27 November 1974, SOHPC.

negotiations or a thorough investigation of grievances was consistent with the cautious way in which they had for months treated what they saw as excessive demands by constituents.

The administration, then, was more concerned with disruption than with grievances. Mary Hamilton, administrative assistant to Claiborne Jones, later described what seemed to be the prevailing opinion in South Building: that the foodworkers "were not the class of blacks who would ever" have walked off their jobs "without being prodded" by rebellious students. That view meant in theory that the administration could recognize the legitimacy of foodworker grievances without having to recognize the strike itself as a legitimate tactic or having to recognize black students as worker representatives. If in fact, as Mary Hamilton averred, some administrators doubted that workers even "knew they had grievances, until it was pointed out to them,"<sup>18</sup> then one can see how the administration viewed the strike as essentially a student uprising.

A glimpse of Chancellor Sitterson's perspective can be found in his 27 February reply to a Duke University history professor who had written him about the "sheer revolution" being advocated by Duke student radicals.

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<sup>18</sup>Mary Hamilton, interview by D'Ann Campbell, 18 November 1974, SOHPC.

Sitterson agreed with that professor's characterization of events and commented that " . . . unfortunately, the traditions of American universities sometimes give them [the radicals] far more influence than either their numbers or the merits of their position would justify."<sup>19</sup> Without saying so explicitly, Sitterson probably also agreed with an interpretation offered by Congressman L. H. Fountain, who wrote that tolerance was "one of America's greatest virtues," except in the face of agitators "drunk" with the thought of power; in such case, tolerance was a "terrifying weakness."<sup>20</sup>

Race seems to have further complicated the labor and student issues. According to Mary Hamilton, some South Building administrators would like to have been "living before the War Between the States." She interpreted their intransigence as historically consistent with the white South's "massive resistance" to demands by "upstart" blacks.<sup>21</sup> In any case, the strike presented UNC officials with a novel situation; they had to deal not just with workers and students, but with workers and students who saw themselves as part of a black movement.

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<sup>19</sup>Chancellor Sitterson to William E. Scott, 27 February 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on BSM.

<sup>20</sup>Congressman L. H. Fountain to President William Friday and Chancellor Carlyle Sitterson, 25 February 1969, Chancellors' Records, BSM file.

<sup>21</sup>Mary Hamilton interview, 18 November 1974.



In sum, the administration's perception of employee grievances seems to have been clouded at the level of food service management by the feeling that the strike was an illegitimate way for workers to voice complaint and at a higher administrative level by the conviction that students had involved themselves illegitimately in issues of university superintendence.

A Student Perspective:  
The Dilemma of Government and Justice

That first week, students all over campus bickered about whether the foodworkers had the right to walk out on their jobs. Members of the BSM and SSOC had been quick to support the strike; they were joined during the week by other student picketers. Many other students, however, continued to eat at Lenoir in spite of the boycott. Generalizations about the attitudes of over ten thousand students can be only partially accurate, but inasmuch as the student government represented and guided student sentiment, a look at its actions is instructive.

On Saturday, 22 February, anticipating the next day's walkout, seventy-five members of the Black Student Movement had signed a petition to student body president Kenneth Day. They said that they were withdrawing from participation in UNC's judiciary system on the grounds that blacks were not represented. (The court system had disciplinary powers over student violations of the school's

onor code.) During the next week, UNC student leaders refused to recognize a separate judiciary for black students, but they did promise to give blacks representation in the existing court system. On Thursday night, 27 February, in a statement more directly related to the strike, the student legislature supported the boycott of Lenoir Hall and passed a resolution which, borrowing language from the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board implementation order fourteen years before, urged the UNC administration to induce Prillaman and Haskell to "move with all deliberate speed" toward resolving the grievances of the foodworkers.<sup>22</sup>

The strike was an important labor issue, said the legislators. It was not a "left-wing confrontation" instigated by radical whites and it was "not a BSM plot to perpetrate a revolution," according to Richie Leonard, speaker pro tempore.<sup>23</sup> The strike was provoked by injustices committed by the university against black women workers, and indicated "just another way the university was not treating people properly," said another representative, Charles Jeffress.<sup>24</sup> The legislative resolution thus chastised the administration for its negligence and appeared to urge widespread campus support for the foodworkers' strike.

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<sup>22</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 28 February 1969.

<sup>23</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 1 March 1969.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Jeffress interview, 17 April 1974.

But the legislature's support of the strike, upon closer examination, was rather weak. In fact, rather than seeing themselves as adversaries of the administration, the campus student leaders were wrestling that week with a situation analogous to the one in which the university administration found itself. The student legislature and the university administration were both faced with demands they could not ignore--demands for a separate judiciary by black students and demands for better treatment by university non-academic workers. Each found itself accused of perpetuating past institutional injustices toward black students and workers. But neither legislature nor administration was willing to give in to what it saw as peremptory demands challenging the traditional ways by which decisions were reached and policies implemented. What each could do, in its own way, with a plethora of promises and perhaps the best of intentions, was "move with all deliberate speed" toward piecemeal eradication of injustice and gradual restructuring of administrative responsibility.

#### The Stalemate Continues

As the days passed, impatient observers saw the stand-off between strikers and administrators as evidence that efforts at strike settlement were moving all-too-deliberately. Some of the mediators pushing onto the scene thought that the administration's irresolution was

the result of a simple problem in communication. On Wednesday, fourteen faculty members sent a petition to South Building, attesting to the merit of the foodworkers' demands. "We feel certain that once the higher-level of authorities in the University have been made fully aware of the extent of the problem, they will act," said one of the signers.<sup>25</sup>

In another attempt to keep the upper levels informed, YMCA secretary Jean Luker compiled a detailed list of foodworker complaints. On Friday, Anne E. Queen, the Y's director and also the chairman of the Chapel Hill Human Relations Commission, conveyed the list to her long-time friend Carlyle Sitterson. Except for the demand for a \$1.80 minimum wage, the grievances closely resembled those of the previous October and were the same ones that workers had itemized for Haskell, Branch, and Prillaman in the first days of the walkout (and which had been published unofficially all week in newspapers, posters, and handbills). Nevertheless, to Anne Queen, Sitterson seemed to learn for the first time on Friday, 28 February, of the workers' particular allegations against the food service management. She remembered that the chancellor was "deeply concerned." He accepted her offer to arrange

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<sup>25</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 27 February 1969.



a meeting between workers and administrators to be held during the following week.<sup>26</sup>

The chancellor then asked his assistant Claiborne Jones to run a spot check on the workers' records to determine if their charges were valid. Jones in turn asked his assistant Mary Hamilton to look at the records. Later, Jones told Hamilton to probe no further; he had received verification directly from Prillaman that there were no irregularities. But by then, Hamilton remembered, she had already uncovered evidence of erasures and changes on worker pay records.<sup>27</sup> Late Friday afternoon, Claiborne Jones acknowledged publicly that further investigation of food service payroll accounts would in fact be necessary.

The administration cast off its nonchalance in other ways. James A. Branch admitted outright for the first time that the food service had been in financial difficulty for some time. Branch said that snack-bar services in the new student union would be contracted to a private company, and added that he expected to receive bids immediately from contractors interested in operating the entire food service.<sup>28</sup> Branch did not surmise how the

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<sup>26</sup> Anne E. Queen, interview by Lee Harris, 12 June 1974, SOHPC; Jean C. Luker, interview by author, 30 January 1975, SOHPC; J. Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Hamilton interview, 18 November 1974.

<sup>28</sup> Durham Sun, 28 February 1969; Chapel Hill Weekly, 2 March 1969.

intent to lease might influence the university's response to the foodworkers' demands. Instead, and in spite of a few concessions, the first week ended with the administration holding to its original position that grievances could be worked out most easily if workers first returned to their jobs and then discussed their complaints with personnel officers in "private individual conference."<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, Prillaman maintained that the Lenoir boycott was not hurting business. On Friday, 28 February, eligible workers finally did receive their long-awaited annual raise. In each paycheck envelope was enclosed a note from personnel director Fred Haskell, telling workers that their jobs would not be held open indefinitely. As much of the campus's attention turned to the weekend's Janis Joplin concert, the Duke-Carolina basketball game, and an unusually heavy snowstorm, the Chapel Hill Weekly supported Prillaman's contention that many workers had grown tired of the strike and were anxious to return to work.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Fred B. Haskell, statement to food service employees, 28 February 1969, Business Records, file on Food Services.

<sup>30</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 5 March 1969.

## CHAPTER VI

### WEEK TWO: TACTICS CHANGE

On Monday the third of March, in spite of Haskell's exhortations, Prillaman's expectations, and a Daily Tar Heel report that in addition to the ninety-day review of temporary status the administration had arranged for workers to get two weekends off each month, fewer than a dozen workers returned to their jobs.<sup>1</sup> One hundred and thirty remained out, and many joined the picket lines outside Lenoir Hall. In the afternoon, both workers and Prillaman (still the university's chief negotiator) announced that they were going to discuss their differences, but the attempt to get together dissolved into charges and counter-charges. A formal meeting never took place.

Monday marked a change in tactics by organizers of the Lenoir Hall boycott. Rather than just picketing outside and distributing leaflets and soliciting contributions inside, SSOC and BSM members moved slowly through the Lenoir serving lines. Protracting the process by taking only glasses of water and sitting one to a table, protesters did not intend to eat but were content, as SSOC

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<sup>1</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 4 March 1969.

member Scott Bradley was to say, "to make life a little uncomfortable" for those who did.<sup>2</sup> Business continued, but the tactics met hostile resistance from some non-boycotting students. Nearby, campus policemen took photographs, but besides asking for students to remain calm, they did not intervene. Most area newspapers on Tuesday noted the lack of widespread support for the strike and boycott.

The slowdown continued on Tuesday. At suppertime, opposing sides became more stubborn. With a crowd gathering--wanting entertainment, according to Bradley--the stall-in led to angry shouting and shoving. SSOC member Andy Rose was pushed, supposedly by a football player; Rose pushed back, and then was slightly injured when the footballer hit him. Later, Al Smarr, a third-year law student, began pushing through the line with two women students and an ex-Marine friend. SSOC member Joel Polin grabbed Smarr; Smarr swung at Polin, and then someone from behind hit Polin in the head with a glass sugar shaker, opening a cut that required ten stitches. Meanwhile, someone poured ammonia on a radiator. As the fumes spread, there were scuffles over whether to open the windows. Campus security chief Arthur Beaumont stood by with a few campus policemen and a member of the State Bureau of Investigation who was posing as a student. The security force did not have

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<sup>2</sup>Scott Bradley interview, 30 October 1974.



sufficient manpower to stop the scuffling, so by radio Beaumont called downtown to put the Chapel Hill police on alert.<sup>3</sup>

Preston Dobbins meanwhile had become concerned that the foodworkers' cause was about to "slip slowly down the drain." Despairing that administrative complacency would eventually "starve us out," Dobbins later recalled that with the black students' commitment to support the foodworkers had come the responsibility to bring the issue "to a point where it couldn't be ignored any longer."<sup>4</sup> He wanted to change the level of confrontation, he said, by doing something that would focus attention on Lenoir Hall and would show without violence the strike's seriousness of purpose. After carefully considering different ways to dramatize the strike, Dobbins called a meeting of the BSM. He remembered being forceful, not democratic, about his views. After discussion and some dissension, the BSM supported Dobbins's plan, but before implementing it, they decided to add to their numbers by recruiting help from the pool hall in downtown Chapel Hill.

At 6:40 P.M. on Tuesday, just before closing time at the north end of Lenoir Hall, a group of several dozen blacks gathered with their customary walking sticks.

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<sup>3</sup>Description of events from Arthur Beaumont interview, 17 November 1974; Scott Bradley interview, 30 October 1974; and area newspaper accounts.

<sup>4</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

Preston Dobbins stood on a table and announced that people should "get out or come be with us."<sup>5</sup> (George Prillaman, who was there, later said that Dobbins also threatened to cut people's throats.)<sup>6</sup> Then, with a request that SSOC members "move over so we know who you are,"<sup>7</sup> the blacks moved south through the room, turning over all the tables. While everyone else watched transfixed, and the campus police stood ready to protect Prillaman and non-striking workers from assault, the blacks moved back north, turning over chairs. They kept going out the exit and returned to their Manning Hall headquarters.

Within minutes, twenty Chapel Hill policemen responded to Chief Beaumont's call to town police chief William Blake. The police arrived as students and workers were cleaning the kitchen and straightening the tables and chairs in the dining hall. The policemen supervised the closing and locking of Lenoir, stood guard outside awhile, and then went back to their regular duties downtown.

A short time earlier, President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson had been in Raleigh, lobbying the legislative Joint Appropriations Committee for additional funds-- Friday on behalf of the Consolidated University, Sitterson

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979.

<sup>7</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 5 March 1969.

for the Chapel Hill campus. Neither Sitterson nor Friday requested emergency approval of a raise for non-academic workers. Chances were still good that Governor Scott's budget proposal--which would give raises to all state workers and increase the minimum rate to \$1.80 an hour--would be approved by the General Assembly and effective on the first of July.

On the night of the Lenoir Hall table turning, Governor Scott was addressing a North Carolina State University Founders' Day ceremonial in Raleigh. Buoyed by the "flood of mail" he had received since his stern February message to college presidents, the governor told the ninety legislators and others in his audience that he deplored the activity of those students who, without "intestinal fortitude," were bent on disruption. Students instead should "light the lamp of knowledge," Scott said.<sup>8</sup> He and Chancellor Sitterson, who was attending a play that night with his wife, learned of the Lenoir Hall incident about the time of the eleven o'clock evening news.

#### Aftermath: Organization and Representation

Earlier on Tuesday, BSM member Reggie Hawkins had called his father in Charlotte. The former gubernatorial candidate made the three-hour drive to Chapel Hill

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<sup>8</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 5 March 1969.

accompanied by black attorney Julius Chambers and Adam Stein, a partner of Chambers in the firm which had represented Charlotte policemen and firemen in the case resulting in the legalization of public-employee unions. Arriving at Manning after the table turning on Tuesday night, they encountered a "volatile situation" in which there was some confusion about "who speaks for whom."<sup>9</sup> During discussions that sometimes got out of order, the group debated several issues. First, the black students had administered what Ashley Davis later called their "personal touch"<sup>10</sup> to Lenoir Hall without the prior approval of the foodworkers. Employees felt somewhat betrayed, and feared that their own cause might have been subverted. Convinced during discussions, however, that the commitment of the black students was genuine, the foodworkers closed the rift between themselves and the BSM. Still, "we hope there won't be any more of that," stated Elizabeth Brooks in reference to the BSM's action.<sup>11</sup>

The foodworkers also discussed that night how to strengthen their own ranks. They had talked about the formation of a union in previous days but had not yet acted. Although encouraged to do so by the lawyers, the foodworkers were distrustful of that advice; "at the time,

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<sup>9</sup>Adam Stein interview, 27 November 1974.

<sup>10</sup>Ashley Davis interview, 12 April 1974.

<sup>11</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1974.



we didn't know them from anybody else," Elizabeth Brooks said later.<sup>12</sup> In the end, however, the employees were convinced of the need to organize more formally. They created the UNC Non-Academic Employees Union and chose as officers four Pine Room workers: Mary Smith was president; Elizabeth Brooks, vice president; Sarah Parker, secretary; and Amy Lyons, treasurer. The workers' association then set a priority on their requests to the administration, concluding that their main needs were the \$1.80 minimum wage, the appointment of a black supervisor, and the receipt of time-and-a-half for overtime work. Other issues, they said, could be resolved after they returned to work.

Representation was another matter discussed by the Manning Hall group. The need for attorneys was an unfamiliar one to Elizabeth Brooks, who recalled that foodworkers "didn't know there was anything they could represent us for, because we didn't feel like we had done anything wrong."<sup>13</sup> Hence there was no formal agreement that Chambers and Stein would represent the foodworkers--an omission which would cause some confusion later on. Although the foodworkers did not connect their legal needs to those of the BSM, the black students realized that because of the table turning, arrest warrants would likely

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

issued against them. So Chambers and Stein did agree to represent the black students should this be necessary.

### Publicity, and More

By Wednesday morning, BSM expectations of publicity were fulfilled. Journalists around the state interpreted the table-turning episode as evidence of violent intentions by UNC black students. At least in the short run, more attention was focused on the students than on the workers' cause which the students professed to be supporting. Still unanswered was the question whether that popular view of events would persist.

Administrators at the highest level--President Friday, Chancellor Sitterson, Claiborne Jones, Joseph Eagles, and others--met on Wednesday morning in South Building. They were aware that the boycotters had hoped to force the closing of Lenoir Hall. The administrators did not wish to grant protesters that victory but they decided in the interest of calm on campus to keep Lenoir closed until noon on Thursday. The reopening would come shortly before the meeting which Anne Queen was arranging for Thursday afternoon between administrators and workers. President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson notified the governor's office of their decision.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 7 March 1969; Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974; William C. Friday, interview by D'Ann Campbell, 5 December 1974, SOHPC.

The administration's willingness to discuss grievances with a group of foodworkers indicated a quiet withdrawal from management's earlier insistence on meeting only with individual workers. The change may have represented an acknowledgement of the recent court decision which recognized state employee unions; it may have shown that high-level administrators felt that they were more competent than lower-level management to deal with the worker group; it may have meant that administrative investigations since the previous week had led to new proposals for settlement; or it may have simply been a response to growing public pressure to act. The change in attitude did not mean, however, that the administration intended to (or could, under law) negotiate a contract with the foodworkers' union. Neither did the change mean that the administration would meet with the employees as long as the meeting could be construed as recognition of the BSM as a legitimate bargaining agent for the foodworkers. This consideration was especially pertinent since the Tuesday night table-turning incident.

After the administrators met, Claiborne Jones talked with a small group of white students who had requested to see him. Jones asked one of them, Richie Leonard, to convey the administrators' decision about closing Lenoir to a rally planned for that afternoon.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Burton B. Goldstein, Jr., and Joseph B. Shedd, "The food service employees' strike," a written summary of events during the strike.

At 1:00 P.M., over one thousand people--by far the largest crowd of the strike--gathered at the south end of Lenoir Hall. Leonard announced that Lenoir would remain closed for the time being. The crowd cheered and then turned its attention to other speakers: Mary Smith, Elizabeth Brooks, Preston Dobbins, professor Chick Goldsmid, and Howard Fuller.

Fuller's presence gave the rally added importance for journalists. Since he had come to North Carolina in 1965 from the Midwest, Fuller had become something of a cause célèbre. While teaching in UNC's School of Social Work, he had been criticized by Governor Dan Moore, Congressman James Gardner, and other notable state figures for his political activities outside the classroom. Although President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson had publicly defended Fuller, he resigned from UNC to devote himself full time to anti-poverty programs, which included in 1968 the organization of a statewide reaction to the "Orangeburg Massacre" and the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.. More recently, Fuller had formed the Malcolm X School of Liberation in Durham and had been in Allen Building with Duke blacks during their February occupation.

At UNC's afternoon rally on 5 March, Fuller fired a verbal salvo at the attending white students, telling them that they were the "real niggers on campus," and that they were "chumps . . . white Uncle Toms" if they did not



support the workers' cause.<sup>16</sup> Fuller received applause for his observations but some people took umbrage at remarks by rally speakers. From somewhere in the crowd came a barrage of snowballs. If aimed at members of the BSM, they hit their targets. Infuriated, the blacks tried but failed to locate the perpetrators. At another point during the rally, a technician from the university's language lab effectively quieted all speakers by cutting the microphone cable. He then became the first person arrested during the strike when BSM members chased him to Dey Hall, where he locked himself in a classroom until police came to rescue and arrest him.

Meanwhile, Governor Scott proved that he had been paying attention to events in Chapel Hill. At almost the same time as the UNC rally, Scott was at Elon College about thirty miles away, participating in a Founders' Day celebration. Upon receiving his honorary doctorate of law, Scott began as he had in Raleigh the night before, by urging well-meaning students to "march where there's poverty and ignorance." Then referring more pointedly to Chapel Hill, Scott deplored student "acts of violence" and spoke of the "right of the majority to be served meals in an orderly manner," adding that he had instructed UNC administrators to take "whatever steps necessary" to reopen Lenoir Hall.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 6 March 1969.

<sup>17</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 6 March 1969.

Upset with the administrators' hesitation, the governor summoned President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson to Raleigh to clarify his message that Lenoir Hall must be opened immediately, not at noon on Thursday. Friday and Sitterson urged consideration of the security advantages of opening in the daylight rather than in the darkness, but they finally acceded to the governor's demand. The administrators and the governor's staff also discussed whether or not the highway patrol would be needed. Neither Friday nor Sitterson thought that the patrol was necessary to insure order since there was "no physical danger," according to Sitterson, that would justify its presence. Some members of the governor's staff sharply disagreed. Nonetheless, the two university officials left with the impression that they had convinced the governor that the state patrol would not be needed.<sup>18</sup>

Back on campus that Wednesday, Chancellor Sitterson prepared a seven o'clock statement that would announce the next morning's opening of Lenoir Hall and the "direct discussions" to be held in the afternoon between administrators and foodworkers. His statement reminded workers of agreements on the annual raise and the ninety-day review of job status; it disclosed that an independent auditing

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<sup>18</sup> William Friday interview, 5 December 1974; Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974; Carlyle Sitterson interview by author, 19 September 1979.

staff from Joseph Eagles's office was checking worker overtime records and that classification specialists from the state personnel office were striving to match employee job descriptions with "work actually done."<sup>19</sup>

But as Sitterson got ready to break his official silence in a way that would seem favorable to impatient strike supporters, Governor Scott made another entry in the administrative ledger. Scott's press secretary announced from Raleigh that in keeping with the memo of 20 February, the governor had instructed four National Guard units to stand by in Durham and had sent five squads of riot-trained highway patrolmen to Chapel Hill (where they were stationed less than two miles from the UNC campus). Sitterson found the presence of the patrol "astonishing,"<sup>20</sup> he said later. First, on the timing of Lenoir's reopening, then on the manner of enforcement, UNC administrators had had their convictions apparently ratified, then summarily--and to them, embarrassingly--overruled by the governor.

Unlike John T. Caldwell, the North Carolina State University chancellor who received a standing ovation on Wednesday when he told a convocation of six thousand students that he would tolerate no campus disruption, Chancellor Sitterson found his Wednesday night statement

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<sup>19</sup>Chancellor Sitterson statement, released 5 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

<sup>20</sup>Quotation from Carlyle Sitterson interview, 19 September 1979.

most ignored. News of Lenoir Hall's reopening and the arrival of the highway patrol had turned campus attention away from the administration and focused it on the governor. The UNC Graduate Student Association sent Scott a telegram asking him to "resist the use of military force" and urging him instead to push for "immediate and sincere negotiations" between administrators and workers.<sup>21</sup> SSOC also met on Wednesday night. After pledging at first to keep Lenoir Hall closed, they decided that no advantage was to be gained by direct confrontation with police. Nearly everyone was anxious about what might happen the next day.

#### What Did Happen

The table-turning incident, coupled with the governor's response, mobilized many UNC students and faculty members who were heretofore inactive. Before daybreak on Thursday, several hundred people gathered outside Lenoir Hall to picket delivery trucks. One black demonstrator was slightly injured when hit by one of the trucks. Protesters made no attempt, however, to block entrances to the dining room. Fifty state patrolmen and twenty Chapel Hill policemen were there standing guard and handing out leaflets to passing patrons, reminding them of the 1965 statute which prohibited obstruction of public buildings. Business was brisk, said George Prillaman;

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<sup>21</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 6 March 1969.



many students, including football players who arrived en masse, were unimpressed by heckling picketers who said that the food was contaminated with "Scottococcus."<sup>22</sup> Later in the day, after someone released stink bombs inside, Prillaman requested that police keep out students not intending to eat. Some demonstrators asserted that the patrol arbitrarily prevented men with long hair from entering the dining hall, but there were no special confrontations.

On Thursday morning in the Morehead Planetarium faculty lounge, Chancellor Sitterson explained to university deans, department chairmen, and directors that he had disagreed with the governor with respect to the morning opening of Lenoir Hall. Sitterson said that the Chapel Hill police chief, not he, had asked the governor for the reinforcement of the highway patrol. Governor Scott had accommodated Chief Blake's request without further consultation with campus authorities.

Sitterson admitted privately to the assembled group that "injustices had been pointed up" in the foodworkers' situation as early as the previous October, but he said that progress was being made to rectify the grievances of non-academic employees. Circumstances were complicated by the involvement of minority students. Sitterson

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<sup>22</sup>Durham Sun, 6 March 1969.

concluded by advocating an "orderly, forceful, and rational approach to our problems."<sup>23</sup> Later on Thursday, 245 faculty members and graduate instructors signed a petition to Governor Scott, saying that the presence of the patrol hindered the "educational process" of the university.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, Anne Queen, who feared that the patrol's presence jeopardized the planned meeting between workers and administrators, was still busy making arrangements. The question of who would be allowed to participate remained difficult to answer. Queen and Claiborne Jones had decided that the meeting would include only representatives from the higher-level administration (Jones and Eagles but not Prillaman), a member of the Human Relations Committee (Queen), and workers. Black students would be excluded. Late Thursday morning, black students balked at the agreement. Jack McLean in particular, Anne Queen remembered, asked her what right she had to sit in on the meeting. Finally, after discussions about the "new necessities," Queen convened the meeting in Howell Hall between the delegations from South Building and Manning Hall. Honoring her "commitment to Jack," Queen and several BSM members then departed, leaving workers and administrators alone together.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Handwritten outline of remarks, 6 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike; account also in Raleigh News and Observer, 7 March 1969, by a reporter who sneaked in.

<sup>24</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 7 March 1969.

<sup>25</sup>Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

The conference between the group of a few dozen workers and the two administrators lasted several hours. Afterwards, Claiborne Jones stated that the session--"mostly designed for understanding each other"--had been "pleasant . . . [and] successful." Noting that discussions were to continue on the following Wednesday, Jones expressed his hope that the General Assembly would approve the 1 July salary increase which would boost the employees' minimum wage to above \$1.80.<sup>26</sup>

The workers' evaluation of the meeting contrasted sharply with that of the chancellor's assistant. Elizabeth Brooks said that the administrators

. . . were just telling us how the university was run, and . . . how . . . they could not make a move until the legislature met . . . you know, a whole lot of the same things that we had heard. . . . They . . . made you feel real low and just like you really didn't know what you were talking about.

Administrators clearly intended to "take their own time"<sup>27</sup> about instituting remedies. Why should workers go back to work when they had won only more promises? Why should they wait six days for another meeting, or until July for a raise? Even in those instances when both sides recognized an injustice to workers, Elizabeth Brooks said that the corrective measures proposed by the administration were not forthright. In fact, she said that except for an

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<sup>26</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 7 March 1969.

<sup>27</sup>Above quotations from Elizabeth Brooks interview, 22 October 1974.

agreement to stop addressing workers by their first names, the Thursday meeting with Jones and Eagles accomplished "just about nothing."<sup>28</sup>

### As the World Turns

While workers and administrators dickered, Apollo 9 astronauts announced from outer space that they had successfully walked outside their orbiting capsule; the United States's preparation for a July moon landing was right on schedule. From Washington, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird warned the North Vietnamese that bad faith in Paris bargaining sessions ran the risk of American military retaliation in Southeast Asia. From Raleigh, state Senate minority leader Harry Bagnal and House minority leader Charles Taylor warned Chancellor Sitterson that if he was not going to punish the students responsible for Tuesday night's table turning, "then the legislature will have to [do it]."<sup>29</sup>

Without notifying their Republican colleagues and without waiting for Sitterson's reply, the two legislators released their letter to the press. The effect of the widely-publicized note--with its criticism of UNC administrators, disruptive students, and implicitly, the legitimacy of the foodworkers' grievances--was that the side show

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<sup>28</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 7 March 1969.

<sup>29</sup>Harry Bagnal and Charles Taylor to Chancellor Sitterson, 6 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike; as reported by newspapers, the note also criticized Governor Scott.



of political arm-wrestling threatened now to become the main attraction in a new drama, with politicians fighting for center-stage and with foodworkers shunted aside, relegated to the role of almost invisible walk-ons from the shadows offstage.

If foodworkers wanted a visible platform but could not by themselves hold one, the UNC administration by contrast would have preferred from the first to remain out of sight, but could not avoid being thrust uncomfortably into the limelight. By temperament and experience, both William Friday and Carlyle Sitterson seem to have felt more at ease and more effective when lobbying behind the scenes. Now there was nowhere to hide, especially for Sitterson, who was accountable for affairs on the Chapel Hill campus.

For months, the chancellor had been defending positions against various demands. He had been accused by some of not going far enough toward reform; by others, of going too far. In February, from an enclave of university life formerly left to itself, came the open challenge of the cafeteria workers, and with it, defiance from invigorated student activists. While trying to cope patiently with the situation, hoping to isolate misguided students, Sitterson's judgment had been disregarded by the governor. Sitterson may have been able to take some consolation from letters such as one he received stating

that "we are standing behind you--right or wrong,"<sup>30</sup> but to many observers, the governor's action had reduced the flexibility of academic authorities and cast them in "the role of witless fuddy-duddies."<sup>31</sup>

From Sitterson's perspective, considering his many constraints, decisive action was extremely difficult. UNC depended on public support to function; it was expected by its constituents to be an efficient, forward-looking business enterprise and to be an organization responsive to widely divergent political persuasions. As chancellor, Sitterson had to oversee those functions and at the same time consider what traditionally was the university's primary function: neither business nor politics, but academics. Already on Thursday morning in Morehead Building, Sitterson had turned to the academic realm for intellectual and moral support. How much political support the faculty could provide, however, was not yet certain.

#### Customary Connections Between Faculty and Administration

Traditionally, within a loose overall administrative network, academic departments in the university defended their prerogatives. UNC's central administration coordinated interdepartmental necessities but usually acquiesced

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<sup>30</sup>George Watts Hill to Chancellor Sitterson, 6 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

<sup>31</sup>Editorial, Greensboro Daily News, 7 March 1969.

in decisions reached by senior departmental professors. The university structure was "typical of a stable organization," said sociology professor Henry A. Landsberger, "set up in different fiefdoms over which there was relatively little supervision."<sup>32</sup>

Between administrators and the most experienced faculty members there was an attitude of understanding and mutual trust. A conservative administration reflected the temper of the faculty; many administrators, including Sitterson, came from the academic ranks. Administrators and faculty honored each other's spheres of influence: faculty members, by concentrating on classroom teaching and research; administrators, by manipulating political and business arrangements so that there was a minimum of interference from outside the university in what was fundamentally an academic enterprise. Internal controversy, when it arose, usually found senior faculty members and administrators standing together, sometimes meting out discipline to or upholding the rights of an outspoken young instructor. Never particularly cohesive, the faculty came closest to involving itself as a group in public skirmishes when it perceived, as during the speaker-ban controversy, that shortsighted politicians were intruding upon the university's sacred academic ground.

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<sup>32</sup>Henry A. Landsberger, interview by Steve Miller, 3 December 1974, SOHPC.



Even into the late 1960s, when the issues of race and war vibrated through the entire country, faculty involvement in broad political issues was modest. Most professors accepted the assumption that dissatisfaction with a particular problem did not carry with it an implied criticism of the whole system. That disruption was an unacceptable method for effecting change was a collateral assumption. Thus in 1968, scattered UNC faculty support for black gubernatorial candidate Reginald Hawkins or anti-war presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy was within the bounds of an academic tradition that could be liberal in its political ideas beyond the university while remaining instinctively conservative within. Faculty committees, such as the one headed by Dickson Phillips on the status of minorities and the one headed by Eugen Merzbacher on the need for curriculum change, sometimes pressured the administration toward reform, but did so through acknowledged channels without conveying a need for emergency action.

If the senior faculty members and administrators commonly viewed the university, in the words of one observer, "as one big family working together for the common good,"<sup>33</sup> then within that family tradition, faculty and administrators tended to treat non-academic workers paternalistically, with a friendly appreciation and a firm expectation of courteous

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<sup>33</sup>Burton (Buck) Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.



service. To most faculty members, the first ten days of the strike represented little more than a meal-time inconvenience.

Some faculty members, according to political science professor Alden E. Lind's assessment, considered the foodworkers as "spooks"<sup>34</sup> whose grievances were not to be taken seriously, but a group of well-respected AAUP faculty members did recognize early that the foodworkers had problems. Those professors responded to the walkout by holding a series of lunch-time meetings to "exchange information" which they then passed directly to Chancellor Sitterson. Although the faculty group was important in keeping the administration better informed--Sitterson was always "very responsive,"<sup>35</sup> according to AAUP president Daniel Pollitt--their contributions did not result in forceful administrative action.

Even these faculty members who advocated a strike resolution satisfactory to the foodworkers wanted, said Henry Landsberger, to "remedy the wrongs without extreme measures."<sup>36</sup> For most faculty members who donated money to the foodworkers' benefit fund, their efforts arose from other-than-radical motivations, since the faculty

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<sup>34</sup>Alden E. Lind, interview by Steve Miller, 8 October 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>35</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

<sup>36</sup>Henry Landsberger interview, 3 December 1974.

committee in charge of soliciting contributions intended to alleviate the hardships caused by the strike rather than to support the strike itself. Sympathetic to foodworkers who may have been unwilling or afraid to cross picket lines, the faculty committee appealed to humanitarian, not partisan, motives. The overlay of conservative instinct with liberal idea was further illustrated by cardiologist Daniel T. Young who, though strongly sympathetic to the grievances of the foodworkers, admitted that he was also spurred by self-interest: he wanted to prevent the employee strike from spreading to the hospital where it would disrupt services where he worked.<sup>37</sup>

There were, of course, exceptions among the generally undemonstrative faculty members. One group with a different tradition from the rest of the faculty was the New University Conference. Said to be the SSOC equivalent among graduate instructors and untenured faculty, the NUC vigorously supported the strike from its inception. Richard Roman, a sociology instructor, was one notable example of this radical style of faculty protest. Roman was a "fiery speaker,"<sup>38</sup> said one of his colleagues; he was "willing to pull down the university,"<sup>39</sup> said another. Except for the

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<sup>37</sup>Daniel T. Young, interview by Steve Miller, December 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>38</sup>Lawrence D. Kessler, interview by Steve Miller, 20 November 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>39</sup>Henry Landsberger interview, 3 December 1974.

overt activists, however, the faculty members felt that as long as there was no threat to what was called the integrity of the university,"<sup>40</sup> they would let the administration resolve the strike. During that time, the faculty and the administration generally reinforced in one another the position that labor and racial unrest should be treated circumspectly, by a combination of piecemeal measures and temporizing rejoinders.

### The Faculty Responds to New Issues

Although faculty members disapproved of the student behavior in Lenoir Hall on Tuesday night, they reacted more dramatically to Governor Scott's subsequent conduct. The peremptory summons which Scott delivered to President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson on Wednesday signaled a change in the traditional ways of doing university business. Frederic N. Cleaveland, chairman of the faculty and long-time acquaintance of both Friday and Sitterson, declared later that the "manner in which the meeting was called and the governor's conduct during the meeting was totally . . . [inconsistent with the] prior relationship" between a chief executive and university officials.<sup>41</sup> Together with his order to send in the highway patrol, the governor's behavior had

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<sup>40</sup> A phrase commonly used; see Durham Morning Herald, 21 February 1969 and Chapel Hill Weekly, 26 February 1969, for example.

<sup>41</sup> Frederic N. Cleaveland, interview by Bill Finger and Steve Miller, 9 November 1974, SOHPC.



had an effect on campus, said Cleaveland, that was "traumatic."<sup>42</sup> The issue was no longer merely one in which student disrupters threatened the majority's right to be served meals. Many on campus now perceived a greater menace to the majority's rights to academic freedom. Whereas preservation of tradition had previously led conservative faculty members to defer the strike's resolution to administrators, now defense of academic integrity became a reason for more faculty members to assert themselves. Over two hundred of them, for instance, signed the 6 March petition to Governor Scott, condemning his political and military interference with university life.

Notwithstanding the faculty's overall support of the administration, there was a growing undercurrent of frustration caused by the inability of campus officials to resolve the strike. If Sitterson had moved earlier, recalled political science professor Lewis Lipsitz, then the university "might have avoided the intensity of the conflict."<sup>43</sup> Others, like Henry Landsberger, sensed the need for a strong administrative manager, one who could at least make a forceful symbolic act against the governor's intrusion and for the resolution of foodworker grievances.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Lewis Lipsitz, interview with Buck Goldstein by oral history class, 17 October 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>44</sup>Henry Landsberger interview, 3 December 1974.



Instead (and despite the ongoing communication between the chancellor and some professors), there were "important segments of the faculty," according to faculty chairman Fred Cleaveland, who still did not know how or even whether the administration was responding to the demands of the governor and the foodworkers. And the administration, said Cleaveland, did not know the extent to which "important members of the faculty . . . felt very strongly that . . . the needs of the food service workers needed somehow to be dealt with."<sup>45</sup>

The Faculty Council normally provided a forum for discussion and a stimulus to communication between the chancellor and the faculty. The assembly of one hundred and twenty faculty representatives usually met once a month with the chancellor presiding. A regular meeting was scheduled for Friday, 7 March, but as convention time approached, the chancellor was out of town attending the conference basketball tournament in Charlotte. His assistant Claiborne Jones also was not available, so Fred Cleaveland, who was responsible for determining the agenda, decided to postpone the meeting. Arrangements were made instead for the entire faculty to meet on the following Tuesday, 11 March. Sitterson, upon the advice of Cleaveland and other respected faculty members, would then make his first public address since the strike had started.

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<sup>45</sup>Frederic Cleaveland interview, 9 November 1974.

The need for immediate faculty action seemed sufficiently great, however, to prompt Alden Lind to convene a Friday meeting anyway. Two hundred and fifty people, including one hundred and forty full-time faculty members, answered Lind's call in Murphey Hall. Elizabeth Brooks, an invited guest along with Preston Dobbins, said that workers would appreciate the support of a general faculty strike. She also said that the workers, dissatisfied as they were with the previous day's meeting with Claiborne Jones and Joseph Eagles, had added three new demands to their list: employees should not be charged for meals, cooks' salaries should be raised, and workers should be paid for time missed during the strike. Preston Dobbins then spoke; he chastised the faculty for their timid petitions. He reminded them not to "use your personal dislike of the BSM as a crutch, because you are not dealing with us. You are dealing with a hundred and fifty people out of work because of atrocious conditions on their jobs."<sup>46</sup>

After cross-examining Dobbins and Elizabeth Brooks, most faculty members in attendance were sympathetic to the foodworkers' cause but they had a difficult and lengthy time deciding on the proper tack to take. Dick Roman gave a speech that, according to Lou Lipsitz, attacked the faculty's integrity and left "people's hair standing up

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<sup>46</sup>Tape recording of meeting, 7 March 1969, in possession of Elizabeth Brooks.

on back of their necks."<sup>47</sup> Roman called for an immediate teachers' strike. Unless sufficient numbers actually participated, however, the tactic would be "self-destructive in practice," according to history instructor Larry Kessler.<sup>48</sup> Alden Lind agreed that the few who were willing to strike would be fired and the university soon returned to an hegemony of "terradactyls."<sup>49</sup> Anthropology professor Steven Polgar suggested that administrative reprisals might be avoided if faculty members merely "rescheduled" their class appointments, but the group on 7 March finally decided to defer action until after the chancellor had responded to the full faculty on the following Tuesday. In the late afternoon, by a vote of 70-9, a dwindling assembly resolved that the foodworker grievances should receive "equitable solutions."<sup>50</sup> It hardly represented a forceful or urgent faculty message to the administration.

#### Students Also Wring Their Hands

The arrival of the patrol on campus shocked UNC students, although less steeped in the tradition of academic freedom, they were perhaps less appalled than the faculty. Student activists, who were not particularly concerned about

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<sup>47</sup>Lewis Lipsitz interview, 17 October 1974.

<sup>48</sup>Lawrence Kessler interview, 20 November 1974.

<sup>49</sup>Alden Lind interview, 8 October 1974.

<sup>50</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 8 March 1969;  
Durham Morning Herald, 8 March 1969.



what the faculty was doing, set about arranging more of what Scott Bradley called "disorganized organization."<sup>51</sup> They picketed both Lenoir Hall and South Building. They also called a meeting in Great Hall of the new student union; only ten minutes after beginning, the five hundred attending were routed by a bomb threat. In the ensuing confusion, some suggested reconvening in Lenoir and challenging the patrol. But another bomb threat there prompted students and police to trade accusations and forced the students finally to organize their picketing and money-raising activities elsewhere.

A group of student government leaders meanwhile were pushing their efforts at mediation. Student body president Kenneth Day and representatives Richie Leonard and John McDowell were sympathetic to the needs of the foodworkers. The mien of the government group, as well as their putative status as leaders, gave them an access to South Building which, though not denied to the more boisterous student groups, was abjured by them. Day, Leonard, and McDowell met with Claiborne Jones on Friday morning. Jones told them that the administration could move no faster to resolve worker grievances. Interference from the governor and the need for legislative approval of the \$1.80 minimum wage imposed severe restraints.

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<sup>51</sup>Scott Bradley interview, 30 October 1974.



Aware that much of the power to deal with the immediate situation had shifted to the state's executive office, the group of student leaders went to Raleigh for a Friday afternoon appointment with Governor Scott. On the way, the students considered raising the issue of academic freedom with Scott, but they decided that he would think freedom was threatened more by radical-student violence than by the action of the state patrol. Finding the governor as expected, dissatisfied with the UNC administration's response to student disruption, the group tried to convince Scott of the primary need to resolve the foodworker grievances. But they discovered that Governor Scott was leaving settlement of that issue to campus authorities.<sup>52</sup> Organizing support for their cause was for both students and faculty members a confusing and frustrating undertaking.

#### The Administration Still in a Quandary

The administration persevered by degrees in its quiet investigation of the workers' complaints. On Friday, Claiborne Jones released a statement that state classification specialists would be on campus Monday to talk to both striking and non-striking employees. From the UNC accounting office came the announcement that their food service audit, incomplete so far, had found that between forty and fifty

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<sup>52</sup> Account of student leaders from summary by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd.

workers were due overtime pay. The increase in the minimum wage, the administration maintained, was still in the hands of the General Assembly.

Legislative--i.e. political--interference was anathema to campus educators; legislative support, however, was the lifeblood of the university. In the case of the \$1.80 wage, campus administrators did not push for emergency state assistance to meet the workers' demand; such help could come only through extraordinary procedures. Administrators hoped to appease workers by pointing out the prospect of eventual General Assembly approval of the \$1.80 minimum. That way, with relations between Chapel Hill and Raleigh already strained, university authorities would not have to trade in precious political chips trying to get state officials to meet the demand right away.

Chancellor Sitterson had acknowledged in his executive session with deans and department chairmen on Thursday morning that improprieties had been found in the operation of the food service. Sitterson could have publicly announced what he had conceded privately, but after the foodworkers rejected the administrative package of remedial measures on Thursday afternoon, Sitterson must have realized that an admission of injustice unsupported by tangible concessions would sound hollow to impatient partisans of the workers. He did not want to provoke a showdown with those demanding instant redress. Also,

by admitting culpability, he might leave himself open to the charge of abetting what one newspaper called the "group of anarchists . . . determined to destroy the universities."<sup>53</sup> Sitterson had felt state political lightning already, so he stayed low and went to the basketball tournament.

For the moment, the likelihood lessened of a showdown between the state and the students. Even hard-line legislators found themselves slightly embarrassed by the manner in which minority leaders Bagnal and Taylor had criticized Sitterson's handling of the crisis. On Friday, the state senate backed off from a resolution calling for a tough stand against disruption on the grounds that the resolution might appear to be aimed specifically at Chapel Hill and thereby "aggravate a sensitive situation."<sup>54</sup> Even Governor Scott evidently thought a showdown unnecessary, at least for a while; he advised the five hundred National Guardsmen standing by in Durham that they could return home for the weekend.

#### A Look Back

The weekend was comparatively calm around Lenoir. On Sunday morning, the Chapel Hill Weekly reminded readers of some amusing scenes from the previous week on campus:

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<sup>53</sup>Editorial, Durham Morning Herald, 8 March 1969.

<sup>54</sup>Durham Sun, 7 March 1969.

reporters charging to a pep rally for the basketball team, thinking it was a gathering of strike supporters; highway patrolmen, sometimes the target of the epithet "pigs," pointing to each other and marching as students called the cadence; a resolution someone offered to "reschedule" faculty salaries; and a suggestion to form a John Wayne Society for apolitical violence.<sup>55</sup>

Other evidence showed Sunday readers that UNC was not alone among colleges struggling with student, racial, and employee problems. At Duke, blacks and administrators were still trying to work out a modus vivendi. At UNC at Charlotte and at North Carolina A & T University, black students continued to protest unfair treatment. At colleges across the country--from San Francisco State to Wisconsin to Sarah Lawrence--administrators contended with their students' overt dissatisfaction with university policy toward non-academic employees and local residents.

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<sup>55</sup> Chapel Hill Weekly, 9 March 1969.



## CHAPTER VII

### MORE DISPERSION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Those who went downtown about noon on Sunday noticed that on both sides of Franklin Street, for two blocks, people stood in silent vigil. Organized by SSOC and student government leaders to call the town's attention to the foodworkers' cause, the tactic was a familiar one, used heretofore by Chapel Hill protesters against the Vietnam war. Behind the scenes, however, there was little silence. On Saturday, Alden Lind had called Fred Cleaveland and had "never heard him so depressed and utterly without options." Cleaveland was worried about the administration's misapprehension of the extent to which older, established faculty members were concerned about the redress of employee grievances. To Lind, the administration was still treating workers as "non-humans"; he complained about Sitterson's "inexplicable muteness" and the chancellor's "typical southern way" of managing the crisis: "if you sit on your haunches long enough, the problem will finally . . . dry up and blow away." Both Lind and Cleaveland were disappointed

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<sup>1</sup> Alden Lind interview, 8 October 1974.

with the meager results of the informal faculty meeting on Friday. Their commiseration turned into a call for action. Lind telephoned colleague Lou Lipsitz and together they called another twenty professors to meet on Sunday, 9 March, at Lind's home.

The Sunday afternoon gathering included respected faculty members from various departments and political persuasions--"top-notch people," according to Lind.<sup>2</sup> The group organized itself to push reluctant administrators and faculty members into action beneficial to the foodworkers. The group hoped to exert at the same time a stabilizing influence on those in the university community who advocated radical action. On Saturday, for instance, graduate teaching assistants at UNC had decided to go ahead with a rescheduling of class appointments. By Sunday, President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson had formally warned all teachers that failure to meet their assigned classes would, according to trustee policy since 1959, be interpreted as a "neglect of duty and breach of contractual relationship" with the university.<sup>3</sup> On Sunday evening, individuals from Alden Lind's ad-hoc group met again, this time on campus with graduate students, whom they successfully dissuaded.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>William C. Friday and the chancellors of the four Consolidated University campuses, statement 9 March 1969, reaffirming Board of Trustee policy set 25 May 1959, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike. Although not stated, the clear implication was that administrators considered a "rescheduling of classes" to be only a semantic avoidance of a strike.

from what Lind called the "meaningless gesture" of striking.<sup>4</sup>

Law professor Dan Pollitt was one who debated that night with outspoken foodworker supporters who argued that visible and determined advocates among white academics were crucial to the cause of the non-academic employees. If workers were willing to risk losing their jobs, then whites should be willing to do the same, said radicals, who considered only secondarily the indications that their actions might in fact divert attention away from the employees and make conservatives even less sympathetic to the foodworker cause. Agitation was more important to them than concern about obscuring central issues or losing the allegiance of the timid.

Pollitt's Sunday audience was skeptical when he pointed out that the foodworkers already had Chambers and Stein as legal representatives. To prove his point, Pollitt called Julius Chambers in Charlotte, at about 10:00 P.M., to ask if he had been working on the foodworker case. Chambers said yes, whereupon Pollitt advised him to give some public evidence to that effect.<sup>5</sup> Later that night, Chambers sent to Chancellor Sitterson a telegram declaring his intention to represent campus non-academic workers and asserting that the university was in violation

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<sup>4</sup>Alden Lind interview, 8 October 1974.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979; summary by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd.

of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1966 for not paying the statutory minimum for overtime work and was in violation of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 for its discriminatory hiring practices.<sup>6</sup> Chambers officially notified the foodworkers by sending their president, Mary Smith, the same telegram.<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Brooks admitted later that the workers had been slow in "getting back" with the lawyers since the open-ended arrangements of Tuesday, 4 March. Preston Dobbins, however, had maintained contact with the attorneys throughout. Under Dobbins's continual pressure to secure legal help, especially to straighten out questions about overtime pay, the employees finally, as Elizabeth Brooks said, "sensed maybe he was right."<sup>8</sup>

Chancellor Sitterson, when he received the telegram from Chambers on Monday morning, discussed its contents with President Friday and Claiborne Jones, who also had got telegrams. On Monday afternoon, Friday and Sitterson notified Chambers that the university had referred the matter to North Carolina Attorney General Robert B. Morgan in Raleigh.<sup>9</sup> What the two administrators did not say was

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<sup>6</sup>Julius L. Chambers to J. Carlyle Sitterson, telegram received 10:30 A.M., 10 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

<sup>7</sup>Julius Chambers, telegram 10 March 1969, in possession of Mary Smith.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

<sup>9</sup>Telegram from J. Carlyle Sitterson and William C. C. Friday to Julius Chambers, 3:35 P.M., 10 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.



that the univeristy was thereby taking on as counsel a man who was also chairman of the board of trustees of East Carolina University, a growing academic rival to UNC for pieces of the state's financial pie.

### Jousting Precedes the Chancellor's Speech

On Monday morning, members of the BSM stepped up their activities; they toured Saunders and Murphey Halls, interrupted classes in session, and told teachers and students that they should be out helping the foodworkers. "To do nothing is to be nothing," the BSM pointedly advised the campus over a loudspeaker they had set up in Manning Hall.<sup>10</sup> That same morning, striking workers refused to meet with state personnel director Claude E. Caldwell and his job-classifcation team. Publicly, the workers asked why they should meet with Caldwell when the previous October he had rebuffed them in Raleigh. Privately, according to Daniel Pollitt, the foodworkers gave a blunter reason for their refusal, saying simply that "they didn't trust those honkies."<sup>11</sup>

Inside South Building on Monday morning, attorney Adam Stein met with the chancellor's assistant, Claiborne Jones. In Stein's subsequent report to the public, he said that Jones had agreed that the university had treated

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<sup>10</sup>Durham Sun, 10 March 1969.

<sup>11</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

its workers "like niggers" and that George Prillaman was not fit to manage the food service. Rather than negotiate, however, Jones had advised Stein to resolve substantive foodworker issues with the attorney general. The campus administration had bungled negotiations and abrogated responsibility for its employees, said Stein; nonetheless, he advised students, workers, and faculty to "give Morgan a chance."<sup>12</sup>

Backers of the foodworkers continued their picketing outside South Building on Monday. At a noon rally in nearby Polk Place, speeches were given, and obscenities were heard. In the afternoon, SSOC and BSM members prepared a "boycott bulletin" that called for another rally on Tuesday and accused state "politicos" of "playing their costly games with the internal affairs of our university."<sup>13</sup> From Lenoir Hall came a report that three thousand people were served without incident. Perhaps this bit of upbeat news from the management indicated that students had tired of the "baloney-and-Truade"<sup>14</sup> lunches and the chicken-and-french-fries suppers at Manning; perhaps some were bothered by health department reports that the Manning Hall food was "subject to all kinds of

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<sup>12</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 12 March 1969; Durham Morning Herald, 11 March 1969; Adam Stein interview, 27 November 1974.

<sup>13</sup>Durham Sun, 11 March 1969.

<sup>14</sup>Daniel Pollitt described the lunches in his interview, 4 September 1979.

food poisoning."<sup>15</sup> If management's announcement meant that UNC student support for the boycott was waning, however, that inference would have been difficult to prove.

Because skeptical strikers had refused on Monday to discuss their job classifications with Claude Caldwell, the state personnel officials moved on Tuesday, at the suggestion of a faculty member, from Gerrard Hall to Manning Hall. They hoped that strikers would be more amenable on their home turf. At first, however, as Caldwell waited in the Manning Hall basement, strikers stayed upstairs with the BSM. Later, several workers did relent and talk with the state job analysts, but the foodworkers remained upset with campus administrators. Elizabeth Brooks announced that she had received from Claiborne Jones a summary of their 6 March negotiating session. Not only was his account inaccurate, it was also degrading, she said, pointing out that the administration referred to employees only as "personnel," never as "people."<sup>16</sup>

#### A Separate Group of Non-Academic Workers Holds to Tradition

While strikers grumbled and waited for the chancellor to speak publicly, a separate group of non-academic employees

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<sup>15</sup> Raleigh News and Observer, 11 March 1969, attributes quotation to H. Dobson, sanitation engineer for the district health department.

<sup>16</sup> Durham Sun, 11 March 1969.

met to discuss with UNC personnel director Fred Haskell demands which it had earlier submitted to the administration. The organization was the UNC Workers' Association, formed on 26 February and composed of janitors and maids who had continued to work during the cafeteria strike. Roscoe McCrimmon, president of the association, announced after a Monday negotiating meeting that administrators and workers had held "substantive talks." McCrimmon further observed that the foodworkers might have been more effective had they joined with maintenance employees before deciding to strike.<sup>17</sup>

McCrimmon may have been correct in his analysis. Janitors and maids had grievances as real as those of the foodworkers. Workers commonly complained of carrying heavy loads, having few weekends off, enjoying little chance of promotion, and being underpaid. Because many foodworkers also knew other campus workers, there existed a basis for widespread understanding of the problems each had in dealing with management. Black students on campus had been concerned about the grievances of maintenance workers and could have provided organizational support for both foodworkers and janitors. In addition, the nature of maintenance jobs gave faculty members and white students the chance to know individual janitors well and to know their

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<sup>17</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 11 March 1969; Daily Tar Heel, 11 March 1969.



grievances as thoroughly as those of the foodworkers. Potentially, then, the faculty and student body might have been as supportive of janitors and maids as they were of the foodworkers.

But janitors and maids were widely dispersed across the campus; they were not clustered in a central location as the foodworkers were in Lenoir. Also, the nature of individual maintenance work, in contrast to that of the foodworkers, did not depend on functioning as a group while on the job. Maintenance employees did not have to contend with management continually overseeing their work and thereby serving as a cause and focus for worker complaints. And from inside the ranks of maintenance workers there did not emerge the same style of vigorous leadership as emerged from the food service women in the Pine Room. Important ingredients that led to the food workers coalescence as an activist group thus were missing from other non-academic employee groups at UNC. Furthermore, as conditions in the cafeteria worsened prior to the strike, the immediate predicament absorbed the attention of foodworkers and black students; problems of coordinating their plans were difficult enough without having to organize other non-academic workers. Janitors and maids were therefore left out of the decision to strike, in part because they were not as well organized internally nor as inclined to activism as the foodworkers, and in part because they were given little opportunity to join the cause.

Other non-academic employees might nevertheless have joined in sympathy with the foodworkers' walkout after it began. Indeed, said foodworker Elizabeth Brooks later, "we asked them to strike."<sup>18</sup> But the same elements that made job experiences different before the strike prevented close communication between maintenance workers and foodworkers during the strike. Perhaps the dilatory administrative response to foodworkers showed janitors and maids the advantage of holding on even tighter to their jobs. Rather than being handicapped by the situation, however, maintenance employees found the times all the more propitious for a redress of their particular grievances. Inspired by the foodworkers but separate from them, janitors and maids soon formed their own organization and submitted a list of their needs to the administration. They discovered that the administration was remarkably willing to talk.

Since the janitors had not struck and had not enlisted the aid of radical students, the administration could use the janitors' organization to demonstrate publicly how, in contrast, the foodworkers had overstepped the traditional boundaries of propriety. By balancing its intransigence to foodworkers with concessions to janitors, the administration might impress upon foodworkers the efficacy of submitting grievances through proper channels

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<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

and at the same time reinforce its image of benevolence--meting out justice to its non-academic workers with the implicit admonition that as long as workers behaved properly, they would be treated fairly.

Tension between striking and non-striking foodworkers was even more evident than that between cafeteria and maintenance employees. Foodworkers who remained on the job at Lenoir Hall did so against strong pressure by strikers. The non-strikers generally were elderly men and women with long experience in the food service. Through the years, some seemed to have curried relatively more favor with management than the strikers; they were therefore reluctant to risk their jobs by striking, especially considering the paltry benefits the tactic so far had reaped.

Although it is difficult to know accurately the motives of individual workers, even some strikers were caught between a desire to strike and a desire to work in spite of the strike. Arthur Foushee, a respected cook in Lenoir, understood the grievances but felt personally unaffected by them; he wanted to work but would not cross the picket line to do so. Other workers stayed away because of direct intimidation. One of Lenoir Hall's other cooks, having promised strikers that he would not cross their picket line, came to work at 4:30 A.M. to avoid passing the five o'clock picketers. According to Elizabeth

Brooks, UNC black students, after learning what the man had done, found him at his home and told him that they "wouldn't be responsible for what happened to him."<sup>19</sup> From then on, the cook did not work and was officially listed as a striker even though he did not participate in any strike activities.

#### Another Defense of Tradition

Although a noticeable array of students and faculty were dispirited by the UNC administration's handling of the foodworker situation, the crisis educed solid support for the administration from one notable group of faculty members. On Monday, 10 March, the former dean of UNC's law school, Henry P. Brandis, Jr., circulated a petition asserting that "to the extent that a labor dispute is involved, we believe that the University is moving in good faith to reach just solutions." Brandis's statement went on to condemn the "small minorities of students and teachers urged . . . by individuals from outside," and it warned against the "real danger that they [such minorities] will goad the people of the state into destroying freedom of expression for all of us."

Fifteen members of the Institute of Government faculty and nineteen of the Law School faculty signed the petition, which later on Monday was read in Raleigh to the

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



General Assembly by legislators who were UNC trustees. After applause, the document was entered into the journal of each house by a unanimous vote.<sup>20</sup> Campus administrators must have been grateful for the dissemination statewide of such an outspoken affirmation of what they felt was a steadfast position: a combination of good-faith negotiations with workers, a non-conciliatory stand against radicals, and a wariness of political incursion from elements beyond the university community.

#### Sitterson Speaks

On Tuesday afternoon, 11 March, Chancellor Sitterson finally did talk to the public. Two thousand people jammed into Memorial Hall, site of the scheduled General Faculty meeting. Sitterson began by saying that once given the opportunity to speak to the community about the foodworker situation, he had "eagerly accepted." His "firm intention," he said, was that "every legitimate grievance be dealt with justly and promptly." In reviewing his acquaintance with the problem, he recalled the October 1968 memo from the workers of Lenoir Dining Hall. His staff had considered the employees' list of suggestions and in response had issued certain "authorizations and instructions" to the food service management. As of 11 March, conceded the chancellor, those

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<sup>20</sup>Durham Sun, 10 March 1969; Raleigh News and Observer, 11 March 1969, refers to the inclusion of the petition in the journal of the General Assembly.

October commandments had "not been carried out completely."

Citing the strike specifically, Sitterson said that he had requested personnel director Fred Haskell and auxiliary services director J. A. Branch to meet with the workers on 24 February. He noted that workers had subsequently refused those administrators' invitation to discuss grievances individually. Sitterson claimed that he had learned of the specific grievances through the Chapel Hill Human Relations Commission on 28 February, but that "intensive efforts" to meet with workers were thwarted for a time by the BSM's interference. In the interim, he had asked auditors and state classification specialists to investigate the employees' complaints.

Sitterson then recapitulated the 6 March negotiating session between cafeteria workers and his representatives Claiborne Jones and Joseph Eagles. Retracing seventeen grievances, point by point, Sitterson acknowledged that "errors in calculation may have occurred" with respect to overtime pay due to workers. Sitterson said that workers had asked for the first time on 6 March that the \$1.80 minimum wage be applied only to permanent employees, not to all; state personnel officials might therefore be able to accommodate the demand by upgrading some of the workers' job classifications. In reference to the use of courtesy titles by supervisors, Sitterson restated university policy, noting that the university did not need "at any level, any

person unable or unwilling to treat workers with courtesy, respect, and decency." About other aspects of the workers' grievances, Sitterson's statements gave little new information, except for his mention that "extensive changes" were anticipated in the management of the food service.

The chancellor then plunged into what he regarded as the "larger question" of preserving the "long and deep traditions" of the university. He spoke of "free inquiry, right of dissent, elevation of the intellect, and the enrichment of human spirit." The "search for truth," he said, required "study, reflection, and continuous dialogue." And "any group who resorts to force is not interested in truth but the imposition of its will." Sitterson called upon his audience to "tolerate the imperfections of man," but noted that North Carolina law and UNC Board of Trustee by-law did not tolerate either interference with the use of public buildings or neglect of teaching duties. In referring to the use of tolerance and force, Sitterson did not mention the governor or the police. The fundamental issue was "orderly governance," said Sitterson. All groups--students, faculty, administrators, and trustees--must regard themselves as "custodians" of the "precious public trust" which was the university in Chapel Hill, a "great and venerable institution."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Text of Chancellor Sitterson's remarks, 11 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike; see also newspaper accounts.

Sitterson then left the stage and auditorium without waiting for questions.

After Sitterson departed, Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks spoke for the workers. They appreciated the conciliatory tone of the chancellor's remarks since it was the first public admission that management was in some way responsible for the foodworkers' problems, but the two women questioned the administration's intention to move beyond talk. In light of the authorities' past unwillingness to negotiate, the employees doubted that just or prompt administrative action would follow.<sup>22</sup>

After the foodworkers spoke, the faculty set about acting, as best it could. In spite of confusion about voting procedure in such a large meeting (only one-fifth of those present were faculty members eligible to vote), the faculty managed to pass two resolutions introduced by Daniel Pollitt on behalf of the AAUP. One resolved that the university should support the foodworkers' association and bargain with its chosen representative; the other called upon the Faculty Council (as distinct from the General Faculty) to authorize a nine-member committee to investigate the needs of campus non-academic workers. Several of the faculty members present had intended to, but finally did not, introduce resolutions to censure the conduct of George

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<sup>22</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 12 March 1969.



Prillaman, Fred Haskell, and UNC news bureau chief Pete Ivey, an official whom they accused of distorting news releases to insinuate a tie between strike supporters and communists.<sup>23</sup>

#### More Reaction

Even though the chancellor had hinted broadly that many of the foodworkers' complaints were indeed justified, attorney Adam Stein amplified the foodworkers' feeling that Sitterson's talk was anti-climactic and largely inconsequential. Returning from Raleigh where earlier in the day he had talked with deputy attorney general Harry McGalliard, Stein met with graduate students and instructors in Alumni Hall after the mass gathering in Memorial Hall. He noted that Sitterson had responded to many of the foodworker grievances merely by stating university policy. That approach, said Stein, avoided dealing with the fundamental need to make sure that such policy was just and that it was implemented forcefully and equitably rather than ignored. Furthermore, asked Stein, why expect an administration which "hasn't done anything" on its own in more than two weeks and which has turned negotiations over to the state, now to fulfill a promise of prompt action?

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<sup>23</sup>Minutes of 11 March 1969 meeting of General Faculty, by Clifford Lyons, secretary of the faculty, 10 July 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike; also see newspaper accounts.

Stein added that Attorney General Morgan's office was investigating the university's violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act regarding overtime pay, and he estimated that nearly \$80,000 in back pay was due the foodworkers. Some of the attending instructors, because of their dissatisfaction with Sitterson's speech, revived the proposal to reschedule class meetings, but Stein advised them not to follow through on the idea. The important thing, counseled Stein, was to give the attorney general a chance at remedy. In contrast to UNC administrators, Morgan was an "efficient operator" who might well think it "politically wise to simply come in here and clean up the mess."<sup>24</sup>

Observers might have quibbled over what Stein meant by "mess," but most of them would have agreed that sorting out the issues was still difficult. The Durham Sun wondered as late as 11 March, "which--if any--of the complaints of the food-service employees have any validity."<sup>25</sup> By Thursday, the Durham Morning Herald was attempting to keep a clear perspective by defining the UNC strike as two separate issues: "the claims of the workers are one thing; the operation of the university is another."<sup>26</sup> That view was advocated by most faculty members and presumably by

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<sup>24</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 12 March 1969.

<sup>25</sup>Durham Sun, 11 March 1969.

<sup>26</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 13 March 1969.

administrators also; it acknowledged the validity of some of the workers' grievances while remaining adamant about preventing disruption of the normal educational process. State political authorities, however, remained essentially unconcerned with employee grievances whatever the validity; they concentrated instead on the issue of radical disruption. On Tuesday, legislators began moving a bill through the General Assembly which would stiffen penalties for sit-ins; on Wednesday, they introduced anti-riot legislation.

#### More Apprehension

As in earlier episodes, legislators and others in the state reacted not just to problems at UNC but to activities elsewhere as well. In Durham on Tuesday night, Howard Fuller organized a rally to support the decision by some black students to withdraw from Duke University and to enter the Malcolm X School of Liberation. When the downtown march got out of control and store windows were broken, forty-seven people were arrested, including persons-- in a state car assigned to Howard Fuller's use--for fire-bombing the forest behind Duke President Douglas Knight's house. By Wednesday, 12 March, Durham was under a 7:00-5:00 curfew; Governor Scott had ordered in the National Guard and had admitted that he had asked the board of the North Carolina Fund to cut off Fuller's funds.

Tuesday's events gave Wednesday an air of ominous uncertainty. At UNC, the plan for direct discussions

between workers and administrators had been obviated by each group's having taken on legal counsel. Instead, in Hill Hall, Chancellor Sitterson answered questions from a group of about seven hundred faculty members in an executive session. Although some of the questions were sharp and some of Sitterson's answers vague about particulars, the chancellor received "vigorous applause" when he concluded. Afterwards, Elizabeth Brooks was given a chance to respond to faculty questions. She gave details of the employees' complaints and said that the \$1.80 minimum wage was the principal unresolved demand.

Then among themselves, faculty members deliberated over a resolution calling for the ouster of George Prillaman and Pete Ivey. Dickson Phillips, dean of the Law School, said that since those officials had not had the chance to defend themselves, he could not share in his colleagues' pleasure at the "click of the guillotine." The faculty also discussed Henry Brandis's Monday petition. Freedom of expression, neglect of duty, use of force--all were issues ventilated during that debate. The faculty was, however, unable to act conclusively on the resolutions they considered, except to pledge continued contributions to the employee benefit fund.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Quotations from minutes of 12 March 1969 meeting of the General Faculty, 10 July 1969, Chancellors' Records; also see Larry Kessler interview, 20 November 1974; and newspaper reports.



Meanwhile, campus tension was augmented by an ultimatum from the administration to the Black Student Movement. Pressure had been building on Chancellor Sitterson in recent days to quiet the loudspeaker system set up by black students in Manning Hall. The blare of music and announcements like "don't eat with the pigs in the pigpen"<sup>28</sup> had especially distempered those faculty members whose offices and classrooms were nearby. Even foodworker supporters, such as Henry Landsberger, were upset at the black students' "playing around the edges of disrupting the university."<sup>29</sup>

Wednesday afternoon, on orders from Chancellor Sitterson, Joseph Eagles told Allen S. Waters, university director of operations and engineering, to ask the police to "take whatever action may be necessary" to silence the Manning Hall loudspeaker. Waters, in the company of riot-equipped policemen, delivered the message to black students in Manning. Preston Dobbins balked at the order; he wanted it in writing and personally from Chancellor Sitterson. He never got either, but he finally complied with the command.<sup>30</sup> In one last verbal blast, with the loudspeaker aimed so that South Building administrators could hear,

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<sup>28</sup>Ashley Davis interview, 12 April 1974.

<sup>29</sup>Henry Landsberger interview, 3 December 1974.

<sup>30</sup>Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., to Allen S. Waters, 12 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike; see also notes on communication from Waters, loc. cit..

Dobbins warned that just because the BSM was acquiescing once, "Don't think you have won a victory."<sup>31</sup>

If a victory had been won, the administration seemed in no mood to celebrate or push for another. Those in Manning Hall--mainly foodworkers, BSM, and SSOC members--continued to organize the serving of home-cooked and church-cooked meals. During the day, people gathered at Manning from around campus to eat and hear news of recent strike developments; their contributions, when added to faculty and downtown solicitations and then distributed by foodworkers themselves according to job experience and family need, raised about thirty-five dollars a week for each non-working employee.<sup>32</sup> At night, foodworker partisans stayed inside Manning to prevent a suspected lockout by authorities, but the occupiers allowed regular visits inside by campus police to check on conditions.

Almost a week had passed since campus security chief Arthur Beaumont had promised that "some action" would be taken against the individuals responsible for the table turning at Lenoir. In spite of the presence of an SBI agent (at the request of the university), fixing responsibility for the incident was "not so simple." Rumors had spread

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<sup>31</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 13 March 1969.

<sup>32</sup>Exact amounts raised and distributed are difficult to confirm. Several strikers said that they got considerably more than \$35 a week. Henry Landsberger spoke of some friction between faculty members and strike supporters about plans for distributing the money among workers.

the previous Friday that warrants were being drawn up downtown,<sup>33</sup> but still no arrests had been made. The noise from the Manning Hall loudspeaker was now silenced. Murmuring from outsiders about an unsanitary "soul food service" had motivated occupiers to keep disorder inside to a minimum. Thus although the situation was tense on Wednesday, 12 March, there was also reason to believe Sitterson's assurance to the faculty in Hill Hall that officials did not plan to oust Manning Hall occupants from their lair.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 8 March 1969; quotations from Greensboro Daily News, 9 March 1969.

<sup>34</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 16 March 1969; summary by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TAKING STOCK

For two and a half weeks, the foodworkers' strike had engaged various groups on campus in an unprecedented conflict. They fought over a confusing array of issues. During encounters, the position taken by one group was often misapprehended by another. Communication was made more difficult because each group's internal make-up was not fixed and its stand not necessarily agreed upon by its own members. Even for cohesive groups, public statement was not always consistent with action or private thought. It is perhaps helpful, therefore, to step back from the narrative and take a look at the motivations and strategies of the groups drawn into the events of the strike.

#### Among the Workers

At the same time that Chancellor Sitterson spoke to the faculty on Wednesday, 12 March, Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks emphasized to a public meeting in Memorial Hall their disappointment in Sitterson's Tuesday speech. Not satisfied with promises, the employees said that they were no considering bolstering their bargaining position by affiliating with a national



labor union. The foodworkers already had discussed such a possibility informally and at different times with Pete Brandon, Otis Lyte, and Howard Fuller. According to one later report, the strikers had, through Fuller, asked the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to help them, "both because they needed a strike fund and union expertise, and because they needed the presence of a union to make it clear this was a workers' struggle, not a case of student disruption."<sup>1</sup>

AFSCME, however, turned down the request. The union had just launched an organizing drive in the South under Jim Pierce, AFSCME's southern director since late 1968. Besides the expense, AFSCME faced both the difficulty of reconciling UNC black students to the idea of a workers' union and the difficulty of bargaining with a state-supported university which could still legally decline a union contract.<sup>2</sup> The foodworkers' announced consideration on Wednesday therefore seems to have been more an indication of their frustration than a serious expectation of affiliation with a broader organizing effort.

The employees' frustration arose from the difficulty they had in understanding why negotiations kept shifting to various administrative levels. Foodworkers tended not to differentiate between such levels. Workers recognized,

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<sup>1</sup>Tornquist, "Organizing Labor in North Carolina," p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

of course, that Joseph Eagles was a different person in a different position from George Prillaman, and they learned that the governor acted differently from the chancellor, but during the strike, workers generally thought of administrators as a single group of decision makers that could, if it wanted to, resolve worker grievances. In Mary Smith's view, "the whole system, if they had worked together,"<sup>3</sup> could have quickly settled the employees' complaints.

Striking workers thus regarded the administrative system as their adversary. In their view, management talked about proper channels for remedy but never helped employees to use such procedures. Official irresponsibility had forced employees to walk off their jobs; calculated unresponsiveness then forced them to continue a strike they had never intended to prolong. For administrators to argue among themselves about who in the hierarchy was accountable for what was interpreted by workers simply as a tactic of evasion, as proof that authorities did not want to resolve employee grievances. In the workers' minds, all administrators had discredited themselves--from Prillaman through Haskell, Branch, Eagles, Jones, Sitterson, and Friday to the state personnel office and the state's elected politicians. No one administrator had earned the respect of the workers, and none received special deference from them because of his position in the administrative structure.

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<sup>3</sup>Mary Smith interview, 9 October 1974.

In many ways, the workers' image of administrative authority was a reflection of the workers' perception of themselves. The gradual formation of Pine Room foodworkers into a unified group prior to the walkout had not been a quick or simple process. And after the strike began, there surfaced new problems in group definition. Although the Pine Room employees expected to and did enlarge their numbers by recruiting from other cafeterias, the relationship between strikers and those foodworkers who were more reluctant to risk their jobs was not always cordial and posed a problem in group identity. The uncoordinated tactics between striking foodworkers and non-striking maintenance workers presented another obstacle. Still another was the prospect of relinquishing important negotiating decisions to outsiders, whether attorneys or union officials. Faced with limits on expansion of their support, the strikers tried to make their relatively small following cohesive.

Yet among strikers themselves there were difficulties. Decisions about how to enlist added support, who was to speak, to picket, to cook, or to solicit money were not always easily reached. On top of that, jealousies seem to have circulated among strikers about the preemptive assumption of power by Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks. Foodworker Sarah Parker's son Freddie, himself a high school student and a part-time employee in the Pine Room at the time of the strike, said that his mother somehow got "weaved out"



of a leadership position among the strikers,<sup>4</sup> although Elizabeth Brooks recalled that her colleague voluntarily withdrew from active participation because of a "nervous" condition.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the texture of trouble in coordinating their own activities, however, the strikers "did a very good job of controlling internal dissension," acknowledged Freddie Parker.<sup>6</sup> During the first two and one-half weeks of the strike, the foodworker voice that spoke to the public was remarkably consistent and committed to its cause.

#### Ally I: The Black Student Movement

Although foodworkers largely determined for themselves the terms of the strike settlement, the Black Student Movement helped them make those decisions. Left to rely on local support for their cause, the foodworkers counted on the black students to provide a "structure and a limited kind of know-how."<sup>7</sup> The BSM had some experience in applying organized pressure on authorities. Black students, more than workers at least, knew something about raising money, publicizing issues, who and where higher-level administrators were, which faculty members were likely to be most

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<sup>4</sup>Freddie L. Parker, interview by Beverly Jones, 18 October 1974, SOHPC.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 18 September 1979.

<sup>6</sup>Freddie Parker interview, 18 October 1974.

<sup>7</sup>Wallace Peppers interview, 28 October 1974.



generous with time and energy, and which white students would offer assistance. The BSM helped arrange the collection and distribution of donated money, and provided the transportation and baby-sitting services necessary for workers whose family lives were completely altered during the weeks of the strike.

The BSM offered the foodworkers more than just practical aid. The black students shared with the workers the "deeper bond" of race.<sup>8</sup> Although the employees' grievances demanded only one specifically racial redress, the feeling that their plight was attributable to racial differences with management was strongly implied. The employees' racial consciousness was tied incontrovertibly to their friendship with black students and contributed to their subsequent political alliance. To the BSM, the cause of the foodworkers was attractive because it presented race as an issue both ideal and real; it was an opportunity to achieve something for themselves and their race which in the larger society was too complex easily to attain.

The racial bond between black students and foodworkers overcame differences between the two groups in class and style. Whatever the economic family backgrounds of the black students, once at UNC they could have considered themselves a black intellectual elite, but they consciously sought another identification. Association with the

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

employees in the UNC cafeteria services gave the black students a chance to transcend class distinction and, in Preston Dobbins's words, "to not be isolated and not to forget our roots."<sup>9</sup> The workers too were aware of class differences between the black students and themselves; they overlooked the distinction and capitalized instead on the organizational skills wrought from what Elizabeth Brooks supposed was the higher "education level" of the students.<sup>10</sup>

Still, there remained differences in style underneath the image of unified black leadership. Freshman BSM member Ashley Davis later said that compared with black students, the foodworkers tended to be more "formalized" in their requests to administrators and more "optimistic" for a favorable response.<sup>11</sup> The BSM--with their demands, walking canes, berets, amulets, and army coats--purposely cultivated an image that was "wild and erratic,"<sup>12</sup> according to Preston Dobbins. During the strike, the workers feared that independent action by black students, if not violent itself, would provoke violent reaction by authorities. The table-turning incident, as an example, at first seemed to indispose foodworkers almost as much as others on campus, and the fears

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<sup>9</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 4 December 1974.

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1974.

<sup>11</sup>Ashley Davis interview, 12 April 1974.

<sup>12</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

of the employees did not slacken with the presence of the state patrol.

Workers and black students recognized together, however, that the administration, even if it did not intend to knock heads physically, did intend, as Preston Dobbins said, to "tie us up with ambiguities."<sup>13</sup> Workers did not themselves use intimidation but they perceived that it could be used as an effective weapon to dramatize their cause. Administrative officials claimed that they were sympathetic to foodworker problems and opposed only to interference by an alliance of students and employees; the foodworkers maintained that the administration was even less compliant when faced by foodworkers alone. The workers thus encouraged the rowdy image of the UNC black students specifically because it complemented their own cautious style. But if black students meant to protect workers by threatening their common adversaries, part of the price--which foodworkers did notice "once or twice," according to Elizabeth Brooks<sup>14</sup>--was that the strategy obscured for administrators the distinctive needs of the employees.

Preston Dobbins appreciated that university intransigence arose in part from its desire not to be "forced to do anything," especially by black students.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.



But, said Dobbins, "anybody that could think" would know that the foodworkers had valid grievances. Reason therefore had failed; understandable complaints met with unreasonable administrative response. For Dobbins and the BSM, to do nothing was to capitulate. For the group to act reasonably and predictably was to fail also. Therefore, for Dobbins, the BSM's irrational image was a "necessary tactic." The table turning was a dramatic example of the tactic. It did no physical harm to people and did only minor damage to property. True, it galvanized much public disapproval of radical student behavior, but the publicity of the incident and the arrival of the state patrol at least forced the administration out of what Dobbins called its "waiting game."<sup>15</sup>

The public image of a BSM unified behind Preston Dobbins remained intact during the strike. Dobbins claimed that really he was not wild and erratic. Awareness of his public image sometimes caused him "to chuckle,"<sup>16</sup> but his purpose stayed serious as he carefully weighed alternatives before he acted. While acknowledging that white support was important, Dobbins was absorbed with insuring the commitment of black students to the foodworkers. BSM member Wallace Peppers remembered that when Dobbins asked

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<sup>15</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



for cooperation, he "never promised a democracy." Nonetheless, BSM members apprehended that a central policy was needed and they looked to Dobbins for leadership. They recognized Dobbins's organizing experience and his ability to speak with authority within the BSM and also in public. To Peppers, Dobbins was "fiery," but the BSM was not.<sup>17</sup> Peppers, an admitted follower, said that he became an active supporter of the strike because it gave daily routine an exciting new interest. He sensed the possibility of actually achieving a social goal. And besides, he said, his friends were doing it.

Maintaining organized support among the BSM was not an easy task for Dobbins, however. He said that some BSM members were disinclined to risk expulsion or arrest for their activities. Others--a "strong contingent"<sup>18</sup>--advocated ever more radical action; many of those were opposed to sharing strike activities with whites at all. Although Dobbins portrayed himself as a mediator among BSM factions, Elizabeth Brooks recalled that Dobbins was one of those who pushed to keep the strike an all-black affair. Dobbins, Jack McLean, Reggie Hawkins, and Eric Clay seem to have formed an informal central committee during the strike. With Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks, that group usually decided about boycott activities and negotiating positions.

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<sup>17</sup>Wallace Peppers interview, 28 October 1974.

<sup>18</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

The rest of the black students and foodworkers could then modify, but would usually ratify, those decisions. Elizabeth Brooks remembered, however, that arguments among black students were frequent, and that sometimes others overruled Dobbins.<sup>19</sup>

At times, the black students met and acted separately from the foodworkers. There always existed the chance that their coalition would not hold, that lack of coordination-- a "human problem" not particular to "our group," according to Freddie Parker<sup>20</sup>--would cause the BSM and foodworkers to repudiate each other's purposes and tactics. But through the first two and a half weeks of the strike, the black students showed substantial respect for the needs and wishes of the employees. Together the groups held firm, never drastically altering their original demands and still expecting answers from administrators who they supposed could also act decisively as a group.

#### Ally II: White Students

In looking back, Preston Dobbins confessed that black students may have been naive in presuming that the foodworker walkout would bring an outpouring of support from various white groups at UNC. At the beginning, SSOC and NUC coordinated with the BSM the distribution of

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<sup>19</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

<sup>20</sup>Freddie Parker interview, 18 October 1974.

literature across campus. The three groups also organized the boycott of Lenoir. But their early efforts at picketing and proselytizing did not recruit enough other backing to make the boycott as effective as they had hoped. The stall-in during the second week was begun cooperatively by BSM and SSOC; the BSM's turning of the tables on 4 March was partly motivated by the need to tell doubters that white supporters (principally SSOC members) had the unequivocal approval of black students and foodworkers.

When the state patrol arrived on 6 March, the new issue of campus freedom caused more students and faculty members to follow the lead of the radical campus activists, a cadre of which remained outspoken rabble-rousers for the foodworkers' cause.<sup>21</sup> The members of the radical group were through regular meetings kept informed of the thoughts of the inner circle of black strike leadership. Like the blacks, the white student activists viewed administrative maneuvering as calculated evasion and saw no more reason to trust the UNC administration after Chancellor Sitterson's 11 March speech than before. Despite Adam Stein's plea for patience, the commodity was in short supply; negotiations with the attorney general seemed to mean only that the campus authorities were sacrificing the workers to the state obstructionists.

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<sup>21</sup>SSOC was without one of its leaders during the strike. George Vlasits, convicted of assaulting a police officer during the November 1968 non-election party, had begun serving a 30-day active sentence on 24 February 1969.

From the perspective of SSOC sympathizers, action was more important than access to either administrators or foodworkers. Scott Bradley's personal theory was that "everything helps." Toward that end, he said, "a lot of people were doing a lot of different things."<sup>22</sup> They supplied bodies and signs for the picket lines, helped with incidentals of the alternative food service in Manning, organized rallies, published the Protean Radish, ran off leaflets at the YMCA mimeograph machine, and solicited monetary contributions through bake sales and art shows; some even shined shoes downtown. SSOC members were generally referred to as radicals, since their avowed objective was a thorough overhauling of political institutions. But if they plotted and hoped for the coming of revolution, their actions did not lead to violence except on 4 March, when only their own members suffered injury. SSOC members were visible--and to administrators, defiant--supporters of the foodworkers; they concentrated on organizing campus whites while being purposely deferential to the wishes of blacks.

Another group of whites, an informal collection of student government leaders, had aims during the strike which were somewhat similar to those of SSOC. The members of the government group (who visited the governor on 7 March

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<sup>22</sup>Scott Bradley interview, 30 October 1974.



and who regularly called on South Building officials) were slower to become aware of but eventually as convinced of the validity of the foodworker demands as the more radical student groups. They participated in many of the same strike activities as SSOC and BSM. Nonetheless, their style and political objectives gave them an image quite different from that of the refractory radicals. The government group was impatient with administrative malingerers, but they did not openly flout authority; they were, in fact, somewhat sympathetic with the "almost impossible job" that Chancellor Sitterson faced. Themselves representative of student authority as traditionally constituted, the group's political goal during the strike was, according to Buck Goldstein, to achieve a settlement favorable to the foodworkers which at the same time "could be bought by the average student and the state at large."<sup>23</sup>

Tactically, the government group decided that the administration would act forthrightly only if officials perceived the strike as essentially a localized labor dispute. To mix in issues of racial justice, student power, and academic freedom would only make settlement too complex for administrators to consider. Therefore the group attempted to satisfy administrators that the foodworker grievances were separate from other issues of student

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<sup>23</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 October 1974.

concern. Another tack taken by the group was to persuade administrators that widespread UNC student support existed for meeting the demands of the employees. By convincing authorities that strike supporters comprised more than a small group of troublemakers, the government group hoped to lessen the chances of an administrative crackdown on the isolated BSM, SSOC, and foodworker camp.

Anne Queen, who herself had built the bridgehead from foodworkers to administrators, admired the student group's mediation efforts as evidence of the "genuine involvement of the better students" on campus.<sup>24</sup> Part of what the group learned during the strike, however, was that good students or not, they had very little power over the terms of the strike settlement. And making use of their access to the various opposing groups was not a simple task.

First, the group felt as Richie Leonard said, that the strike was just another indication that the university mistreated everyone, including students. Thus the government group argued in a way against themselves when they tried to separate the foodworker issue from other student concerns. In addition, though they communicated with various groups, they were not comfortable with any. There was no overt hostility between them and other groups,

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<sup>24</sup>Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

but there was an underlying tension which may have arisen from the government group's uncomfortableness with its own public image and with the discrepancy between the imagined and actual power of its members. In the presence of administrators and politicians, the students' indignation with what the authorities had so far achieved was probably close to the surface; in the presence of radical whites and blacks, the student leaders felt frustrated with what strike activists had so far achieved. Unable to identify themselves with either side, the leaders were perceived by both officials and radicals to be adversaries as much as allies. The leaders consequently felt some embarrassment about their lack of a clear mandate and their insistence on the probity of debate. Wanting to take a stand, they stood between, able to participate only indirectly.

Still, the student group did what its members felt best equipped to do: build bridges between students and the state. By Wednesday, 12 March, after the ominous events in Durham the night before, the group trusted evidence of the governor's rising popularity and the legislature's hardening mood more than they trusted Sitterson's assurances that the strike would eventually be resolved and that Manning Hall would not be forcibly evacuated. With the YMCA as their institutional "life-support system"<sup>25</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.

Anne Queen as their mentor, the group began careful preparations to go again to Raleigh on Thursday, this time to meet with legislators they thought might be swayed to their point of view by intelligent student conversation and, in some cases, according to Anne Queen, by student Melinda Lawrence's "lovely southern accent."<sup>26</sup>

### The Faculty Keeps Trying

Through Wednesday, 12 March, the issue which the faculty came closest to agreeing on among themselves was the threat to academic freedom posed by the confrontation between the governor and the radical students and manifested by the presence of the state patrol. Faculty anxiety about "their" university was not translated, however, either directly or via campus administrators, into effective political pressure on state authorities. To some campus observers, evidence of the faculty's political impotence may have come as a shock, but preservation of campus integrity meant that academicians historically did not need to sully their hands enlisting state political support for the institution. That the faculty, as of 6 March, had been unable to mobilize instantaneous political wallop should have been a surprise to no one.

Moreover, the faculty's bargaining position beyond

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<sup>26</sup> Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.



the university was weak because of a faulty piece of popular logic. To those elsewhere in the state, UNC faculty dissatisfaction with the governor's action seemed often to be interpreted as faculty sympathy for continued campus disruption. That was true, however, of only a small minority of teachers. Furthermore, the faculty's position may have been weakened from the inside by, ironically, just the opposite of the public's logic. Some faculty members must have felt at least privately reassured by the police presence exactly because it would maintain order and prevent further disruption. Thus in spite of strong feelings, the faculty never moved harmoniously and forcefully beyond their 6 March petition against the governor's interference.

Divisions also remained among the faculty regarding the issue of foodworker demands. By Wednesday, 12 March, some signers of the Brandis petition still would have objected to the manner by which the employee grievances had been presented, even if they had to acknowledge that the workers had some valid complaints about the operation of the food service. Other faculty members, certainly the NUC and a sizable number of graduate teaching assistants, had been consistently and vociferously supportive of the foodworker demands, even to the point of going on strike themselves. In between the conservative and radical responses was a large reservoir of faculty sentiment roughly represented by members of Alden Lind's ad-hoc committee.

The ad-hoc group--like the radical faculty and white student supporters, motivated by a mix of altruism, guilt, and self-interest--wanted to push for speedier administrative resolution of foodworker grievances. The ad-hoc group, however, tended to dissociate itself from the radicals and resemble the conservatives when it came to the means of registering dissent. The moderate group's most apparent contributions to strike activities were the boycott of Lenoir and the raising of money for employees; they had no intention of going on strike themselves. Interestingly, there seemed to be little debate about whether the administration and the board of trustees should be able to limit freedom of faculty expression by threat of dismissal. The faculty conceded the administration that power in principle. The question was whether sufficient numbers could be organized to make the practical application of that power impossible.

Most of the ad-hoc group's attention was focused on working behind the scenes. Their main tasks there were to keep the peace between factions of the faculty, as Daniel Young remembered,<sup>27</sup> and "not noisily" to raise hell with administrators, as Alden Lind recalled.<sup>28</sup> The faculty needed to remind those in South Building, said Lind, of

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<sup>27</sup>Daniel Young interview, December 1974.

<sup>28</sup>Alden Lind interview, 8 October 1974.

their obligation to preserve the integrity of the university. The issue was one already being considered by the administrators. What was distinctive, however, by the time of the 12 March faculty meeting in Hill Hall, was the steady erosion of the general faculty's willingness to give tacit assent to the course of action being followed by the campus administration.

### The Administrators

In the beginning, UNC administrators had no blueprint for responding to the unprecedented employee walkout. The top-level administrators therefore adopted an initial policy of wait-and-see. They felt that employee grievances could be differentiated from the run of student complaints which had barraged them for months. Student needs had already been investigated and responded to; substantively, there was nothing new in their demands. As for the food service, it too had already been investigated (although the focus prior to the strike was on solvency more than on employee complaints). At least at the chancellor's level, settlement seemed best left to those closer and more familiar with the everyday food service operation. Policy makers thus deferred to lower-level management to coax employees back to work and thereby to eliminate what was seen as a convenient excuse for student protest against high-level campus officials.

The administration underestimated, however, both



the determination of the foodworkers to function as a group and the strength of the bond between foodworkers and black students. Unable to separate workers from students, authorities became even more convinced during the first week of the strike that the employees were only pawns in a game of disruption organized by radical students. In addition, administrators continued to underestimate the extent of employee grievances. Reluctant to bypass normal channels of supervision, administrators allowed traditional sources of information, particularly George Prillaman, to belittle the gravity of foodworker problems. Thus at the top level, officials were persuaded not only that the walkout was perpetrated by students but also that employee grievances were not serious enough to justify aggressive corrective measures.

By the second week, the administration was beginning to moderate its insistence that employees use normal channels of individual grievance appeal. Anne Queen's intervention, along with some in-house financial inquiry, revealed the inadequacy of the administration's own channels of communication. Subsequently, George Prillaman was, to use his own word, "muzzled,"<sup>29</sup> and negotiations were handled by higher-level administrators like Joseph Eagles and Claiborne Jones. But by 6 March, administrative non-action had helped solidify the bond between foodworkers and students and had made them

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<sup>29</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979.



more obstinate about demanding full settlement of their grievances. The administrators in turn, especially after the scuffling and table turning on 4 March, continued to see students as primarily responsible for the continuation of the strike. While the chancellor personally may have been more sympathetic than before to the needs of the foodworkers, his attention was focused on the issue of student disruption rather than on the details of employee complaints. By the time of the 6 March bargaining session, therefore, the administration seems to have viewed the strike essentially from the same philosophical reference point as it had at the beginning, and with the same hope of eventually winning a war of attrition with the protesters.

Also absorbing the chancellor's attention by 6 March was the participation of another activist, Robert Scott. As governor and ex-officio chairman of the UNC Board of Trustees, Scott had legitimate power to mobilize the state patrol and National Guard and could claim the power to reopen Lenoir Hall. Governor Scott, Sitterson remembered later, complained that the chancellor had not communicated adequately with him.<sup>30</sup> Actually the channels of authority prescribed that Sitterson report to the Consolidated University president, William Friday, who in turn reported to the governor. Friday remembered,

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<sup>30</sup> Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974.

however, that he was "not in frequent communication" with the governor during the strike<sup>31</sup>--the 5 March visit to the governor's office by the president and the chancellor being one salient exception.

Between President Friday and Chancellor Sitterson there was more frequent communication and a higher degree of confidence than between either one and the governor. Responsible for three (soon to be five) other UNC campuses, Friday surely had been influential in the selection of the chancellor for the Chapel Hill campus in the first place. During the strike, from his off-campus Chapel Hill office, Friday was "in constant conversation" with Sitterson, not as a supervisor to a subordinate but as a long-time administrative partner, trying to "bring all the strength I could to the chancellor and his processes."

The governor's action on 5 and 6 March demoralized UNC's top administrators. President Friday, in a later assessment, stopped short of saying that the governor had actually undermined the academic integrity of the university. There was at the time of the strike, Friday remembered, "genuine public anxiety" that colleges generally were abetting social disruption; it was "politically viable to attack universities." In North Carolina, "some thoughtful people . . . thought that the university was completely

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<sup>31</sup>William Friday interview, 5 December 1974.

out of hand." Obviously disagreeing with that conclusion, Friday explained that educators and politicians operate in "two different worlds," with divergent views of the university as an institution. Politicians, in responding to public pressure, tend to take an immediate view, while educators concern themselves with the long-term perpetuation of the institution. At no time during the strike did a politician's perception of the public's feelings justify for either Friday or Sitterson the governor's militant action. The president and the chancellor and most other UNC educators did not trust politicians to lead the university; they feared that the governor's heavy hand might turn a delicate situation into an explosive one.

Whatever his misgivings about the governor's action, William Friday resolved to keep the lines of communication open between the university and the state. As he recognized, part of what was at stake was UNC's economically competitive position with other state-supported colleges and regional universities. The economic question had political ramifications. UNC at Chapel Hill had always been regarded as the most dynamic campus in the state; activity there invited public exposure. The concomitant risk was that cumulative negative feelings in the public at large (whether justified or just imagined) would eventually diminish support for the Chapel Hill campus. "People get tired of worrying about you," said Friday, and "loyalties shift."



Determined not to let that happen, Friday seems to have encouraged parties outside the university to see the virtue in the campus administration's patient handling of the strike. Inside the university, Friday gave Sitterson advice informally, more as a colleague than as a superior "military-oriented" officer.<sup>32</sup> Friday also kept his office open to various campus faculty members and students who sought his help during the strike. Said student Buck Goldstein, an audience with Friday always left one encouraged that the president's "heart was in the right place."<sup>33</sup>

In some internal university affairs, however, Friday recognized that a balance between reason and force was more effective than reason by itself. Citing what he later called his own "great respect for the law," Friday sternly reminded students on 19 February of the state law prohibiting seizure of public buildings. However sincere his support for the university's academic integrity, President Friday acquiesced in, rather than publicly denounced, the governor's legally-backed threat of force as exemplified by the state patrol. Friday also maintained, when he threatened UNC teachers with dismissal on 19 March, that one's freedom of expression was limited by one's duty, which in the teachers' case was defined by the UNC Board

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., including above quotations.

<sup>33</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.



of Trustees.

The strike, as Friday said later, demanded a "new way of dealing with a new situation." Throughout his activity during that time, President Friday avoided the appearance of undermining the chancellor's prerogative to act as the campus's chief executive officer. Friday said that he never got on the "front end" of negotiations with the workers, for instance.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the president seems to have guarded his independence from either state or campus authorities. He purposely never got on the front end of the turmoil either. As one long-time acquaintance said, Friday was "smart enough not to get to where he's to blame for anything. . . . sort of like the fellow that says 'let's you and him fight.'"<sup>35</sup>

#### Focus on the chancellor

The point man on campus was Chancellor Carlyle Sitterson. Like President Friday at the Consolidated University level, Sitterson seems to have wanted to reserve for himself the power to supervise the campus's overall functioning. To deal specifically with the foodworker problem, Sitterson followed normal procedures in delegating responsibility to his staff assistant Claiborne Jones and to Vice-Chancellor Joseph Eagles, whose official purview

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<sup>34</sup>William Friday interview, 5 December 1974.

<sup>35</sup>Ralph Scott interview, 22 April 1974.

included the food services anyway. From an outside view, Sitterson, Jones, and Eagles functioned as a group; without records of their private conversations, one cannot know exactly what advice Sitterson got or what instruction he gave in return. Some people on campus who kept informed about administrative deliberations suggest that Jones and Eagles took an unsympathetic view of employee and racial grievances, whereas Sitterson--once informed through alternative channels--tended to be more sympathetic.<sup>36</sup> Sitterson recalled in a later account, however, no significant differences between his advisors and himself. What he said about his relationship with President Friday would seem as applicable to his association with Jones and Eagles: "Generally speaking, if there is communication on a particular issue . . . [then] informed, well-meaning people will come to the same conclusion."<sup>37</sup>

During the strike, the foodworker situation was discussed in a series of early-morning meetings in Vice-Chancellor Eagles's office in South Building. Besides Claiborne Jones, auxiliary services director James Branch usually attended; sometimes faculty members such as Fred Cleaveland were there; sometimes security chief Arthur Beaumont, personnel director Fred Haskell, and members of

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<sup>36</sup>Daniel Pollitt was one who suggested this; Mary Hamilton and George Prillaman were others.

<sup>37</sup>Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974.

the student government also sat in. Often the chancellor stopped by those meetings and when he did not, he was kept informed by reports from Jones and Eagles. Such channels of communication were regarded as normal and largely informal; what specific direction the meetings gave to university policy can only be inferred from subsequent administrative action. Although far-ranging in scope, the purpose of such meetings was primarily to focus on policy specific to non-academic workers.

The administration's composite wait-and-see attitude at the beginning of the strike had resulted in only casual investigation of foodworker grievances. The pace of the probe began to accelerate during the second and third weeks, although many foodworker partisans thought that administrative remedies were intentionally haphazard and misdirected. How much faster the administration could have acted cannot be easily determined since inquiry did not proceed of its own accord but rather as a response to pressures applied by interested strike participants. By 12 March, the chancellor had acknowledged the validity of many of the employee complaints. But, Sitterson protested, conclusive evidence to that effect came from time-consuming investigation, not from radical invective. The university, to the extent of its power, would correct proven abuses in due process (due process so far had isolated but not fired George Prillaman). Some foodworker demands, particularly



the \$1.80 minimum, however justified, still remained beyond university power to implement.

What policy advice Chancellor Sitterson received about other issues concurrent with the foodworkers' demands is unclear. Certainly President Friday's counsel about student and state issues was readily available, but Sitterson seems to have shunned some formal channels at his disposal. He did not attend the Faculty Council meeting originally scheduled for 7 March (although he did, by 12 March, speak both to the public and the faculty). Sitterson does not seem to have relied formally on the chancellor's cabinet (normally a weekly gathering of administrative heads) nor on the faculty advisory committee (a prestigious group of elected faculty members whose convention was at his discretion), even though he did communicate frequently and informally with individuals from those groups. He did not talk directly with foodworkers, nor with what he termed "unapproachable"<sup>38</sup> radical students. Thus in dealing with an extraordinary situation, Chancellor Sitterson relied on a collection of both normal and special administrative procedures.

After 6 March, in spite of their anger at the governor's intrusion, Sitterson and other UNC administrators did not respond by acting forcefully themselves. They were reluctant because even if they too wanted to punish radical

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.



students for interfering with university governance, campus officials were not willing to take the risk that a violent confrontation between radicals and police might also involve moderate students, faculty members, and female foodworkers. Moreover, if campus administrators wanted to defend their own supervisory prerogatives, they would need to differentiate their brand of leadership from that demonstrated by the governor. If the administration joined with the state in acting aggressively toward dissidents, even if such action worked (however success might be defined), the governor would be the one receiving credit for the success; the administration's ability to act creditably on its own in other situations would not be strengthened. Faced with what it saw as a no-win predicament, the administration took its stand against state political interference by doing what appeared to many outsiders as nothing at all.

When the chancellor went out of town on 7 March and then entrusted foodworker negotiations to Attorney General Robert Morgan, many campus observers became convinced that Sitterson was not doing his job. A prevailing image was that of a chancellor who had lost control of events and was now subservient to the whims of the governor. Some accused Sitterson of willful obstructionism; others saw him as simply incompetent. Perhaps more accurate was an analysis by political science professor Lou Lipsitz, who

viewed UNC administrative (and faculty) action as indicative of a pervasive "liberal failure" in the country, whereby "men of good will did not see that the terms of political discussion had changed and that their sense of timing no longer was sufficient to satisfy people."<sup>39</sup> Professors like Henry Landsberger and Alden Lind held similar views; they wished that Sitterson had seized the initiative to control the campus situation: he should have publicly recognized non-academic employee needs, admitted the limits of local redress, and challenged the state to provide assistance instead of soldiers. But by Wednesday, 12 March, Sitterson continued, according to student Buck Goldstein, to play the "southern gentleman."<sup>40</sup>

#### A strategy to preserve the university

Although no overriding plan to resolve the crisis was apparent by the strike's third week, one can surmise that the administration may have intended to use passive resistance to its advantage. Principally, the administrators could point out to foodworkers that the governor's preemptive behavior was proof that external exigencies--including state personnel regulations and General Assembly benevolence, or the lack of it--had defeated the attempt by the university administration to redress the foodworker grievances. By

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<sup>39</sup> Lewis Lipsitz interview, 17 October 1974.

<sup>40</sup> Buck Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.

extending the same line of reasoning, the administration could claim that not only resolution of grievances, but also supervision of the foodworkers, was ultimately more the state's responsibility than the administration's. In effect, the administration could claim (though they were more likely to admit this conclusion privately than publicly) that the foodworkers were more state than university employees.

The development of such an administrative attitude accelerated by the third week. By then, campus officials realized that the laborious process of in-house investigation would not achieve a resolution satisfactory to the foodworkers. The administration also knew that many of the employee grievances had validity in the first place. Consequently, if the administrators could shift the responsibility for negotiations to the state, they could assuage some guilt and avert some embarrassment arising from their own mismanagement of the campus food service.

Once relatively free of its responsibility for non-academic constituents, the campus administration could more easily show public sympathy for the foodworkers' plight, even to the point of becoming a mediator in talks between representatives of the state and the foodworkers. If negotiations broke down, then the state, not the university, might bear the onus of failure; if negotiations were successful, the university not only would have foodworkers

back at their jobs but would also have help from the state in assuming the financial burden of higher wages, which campus administrators could then say that they had advocated.

The strategy of disclaiming primary responsibility was also attractive because administrators could then concentrate their energies on the preservation of the university's academic integrity. They could pacify faculty and students by encouraging the feeling that UNC was a special institution which could not be run like a military organization or a state highway department. Injustices were more easily exposed and corrected through an open and dynamic (if occasionally irritating) campus process. UNC was a liberal institution in the best sense, administrators could emphasize, where in the traditional exchange of ideas, reason was paramount but dissent was allowed because it gave proof that freedom of expression was alive and well.

If on the one hand administrators intended to preserve university integrity by allying with disheartened academics against the governor's interposition, on the other hand they were ready to join with conservative state forces in pledging a hard line against internal disruption by campus radicals. In keeping with the latter intent, the UNC chancellor warned faculty instructors against rescheduling classes, ordered the BSM to shut down their Manning Hall loudspeaker, and explained his position in



talks to faculty and students. Even if he had been forced into the open, Sitterson's emergence indicated that he intended to assert himself as chief guardian of the university's overall academic function. If the governor, the legislature, and student radicals would just be patient, and the negotiators diligent, perhaps through the continued "application of reason"--what the Chapel Hill Weekly called the "messy but wisest alternative"<sup>41</sup>--the strike might eventually come to a peaceful conclusion satisfactory to all.

Such would have been the best possible outcome of the administration's strategy. By relinquishing bargaining rights to the state, the administration might turn what appeared to be a retreat into a reassertion of power. By pitting campus radicals and state conservatives against each other, the administration might independently secure its position in the middle (or "muddle," as some observers may have said) of the road to strike resolution. But by 12 March, the hope for a particular scenario held no guarantee of its actual occurrence. In a strike that was as volatile as ever, action by any of the participants might again trap and immobilize the administration.

By asking the attorney general for help, the UNC administration involved itself in a worrisome new relationship. Robert Morgan, who represented UNC in negotiations

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<sup>41</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 12 March 1969.

with the foodworkers' counsel, had the job of reconciling a complicated set of university, state, and federal labor regulations. Morgan was in the position of defending the policies of the Chapel Hill administration, but if he found that the allegations of attorneys Chambers and Stein were justified--that UNC had indeed overstepped its authority in dealing with its workers--then Morgan would be in a position to embarrass the university. The state could hold the university legally, as well as morally and financially, culpable for past transgressions and responsible for future corrective measures. Thus in arbitrating between worker and public agency interests, Attorney General Morgan was as much an enforcer of state regulations as an attorney for the UNC administration.

The university, therefore, besides having its standing in legal arbitration undermined by increasingly substantial evidence of its mistreatment of the foodworkers, had in addition, as client of the state, no guarantee that political considerations would not further erode its position. After all, Robert Morgan and Governor Scott were political compatriots. Each had been recently elected with strong backing from interests in the eastern part of the state, each had direct loyalties to state universities other than Chapel Hill, and each was under pressure from what attorney Adam Stein called the "honchos in the state

that run things--banks, boards, legislature"<sup>42</sup>--to enforce vigorously laws against disruption on college campuses. In addition, according to law professor Daniel Pollitt's speculation, news commentators such as Jesse Helms, WRAL-TV executive vice president and a frequent critic of UNC administrators, probably influenced the governor's staff<sup>43</sup> and the attorney general's staff, at least one of whom was already "anti-labor and anti-black." Those people, said Adam Stein, seemed "perfectly happy at turmoil which would discredit UNC."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Adam Stein interview, 27 November 1974.

<sup>43</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.

<sup>44</sup>Adam Stein interview, 27 November 1974.

## CHAPTER IX

### AGAIN THE STIR OF EVENTS

Early Thursday morning on 13 March, Governor Robert Scott ordered the highway patrol to clear Manning Hall and arrest the UNC students responsible for the Lenoir Hall table turning on 4 March. William Blake, the Chapel Hill police chief, remembered talking with the governor over the phone at about 7:00 A.M. and trying to explain why he had not already served the week-old arrest warrants. Said Blake, students would be "out there marching and we go pulling them out of line and we were liable to have a confrontation we couldn't stop." Blake assured the governor that "we were going to take care of it," but the governor's only response, as Chief Blake recalled, was that "you've just taken too much time. It ought to have been done before now."

Blake did not want to relinquish the warrants to the highway patrol because he feared that they would try to effect the arrests and then leave an explosive situation for the local police to handle. After convincing the governor to delay Manning's evacuation until the afternoon, Blake resolved to go himself, alone and unarmed, to arrest



the seven students charged with disorderly conduct. "The reason I went by myself," recounted Blake, "was I felt like I wouldn't get any resistance. There'd be no glory in jumping on one policeman."

At about 1:00 P.M., Blake left his gun in Lenoir Hall with George Prillaman and SBI officials, and went next door to Manning Hall. There, rumors of the closing and service of the warrants had preceded Blake; he remembered students inside shaking sticks, trying to intimidate him. There was no problem, he said, except that he saw none of the students whom he had come to arrest. Other students went out and found the ones he wanted. Peacefully, the students came to Blake; they asked if they could go to the police station on their own. Chief Blake granted the request because they "had complied and given up" without resistance.<sup>1</sup>

The UNC administration had learned of the evacuation order about 8:30 that morning, when Governor Scott called Claiborne Jones and notified him that he was prepared to send in the National Guard to close Manning Hall. Jones told the governor that the university had plans to close the building as soon as state personnel director Claude Caldwell completed his interviews there with workers--expected by Friday. Chancellor Sitterson learned of Jones's

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<sup>1</sup>William D. Blake, interview by author, 9 October 1974, includes above quotations, SOHPC; see also account in Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary.

conversation with the governor at 9:00 A.M..<sup>2</sup> Some years later, Sitterson recalled only that it had been time anyway, "pro forma," for construction crews to resume renovation work at Manning. How the administration planned to remove Manning's occupants is unclear.<sup>3</sup> To have planned a removal, forcible or not, conflicted with Sitterson's assurances to the faculty in Hill Hall the day before. In any case, the governor seems to have forced the issue early on Thursday, 13 March, and the administration, perhaps privately thankful for the help but publicly disquieted at the timing, acquiesced in his command.

After hearing of the governor's plan, Chancellor Sitterson set in motion his own initiative. By memo, he instructed operations director Allen Waters to use "whatever methods you deem best" to vacate Manning Hall. Occupants should be given no more than thirty minutes notice. Should they refuse to leave, Sitterson directed Waters to "take such action as is required."<sup>4</sup> Having told the governor that the university had already planned to vacate Manning Hall, the administration through its chief executive officer seems to have handed a low-level operations officer the

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<sup>2</sup>Claiborne S. Jones, memoranda, 13 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike, UNC Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Carlyle Sitterson interview, 19 September 1979; in his summary of a phone call to Chief Blake, Claiborne Jones mentions the service of the warrants but not any local plans for vacating Manning Hall (note #2 above).

<sup>4</sup>Chancellor Sitterson to Allen S. Waters, 13 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

responsibility for deciding what methods of enforcement should be used. Top-level administrators must have hoped that the evacuation would go smoothly, but with the governor's intentions known and the intentions of the Manning Hall occupants not known, the potential for violence was high. The record reveals no administrative plans for preventing or responding to any kind of riot.

In the afternoon, shortly after Chief Blake served his warrants and while extra highway patrolmen began to mobilize nearby, students and foodworkers were still inside Manning Hall. Elizabeth Brooks remembered being told by black students that workers need not leave; black students wanted to stay, she said, but they did not force workers to stay with them. Employees were decisive about wanting to leave, however, and so they did.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Reverend Bill Coats advised white students to abandon the building; they heeded his counsel, and left.<sup>6</sup>

The black students, with Howard Fuller, wrestled with their decision about whether to leave. Only two days before, Fuller had been accused of inciting disturbances in Durham; a few weeks before that, he had urged Duke black students not to give up Allen Building voluntarily. Preston Dobbins later remembered that in Manning, black students

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<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

<sup>6</sup>Summary by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd; also Greensboro Daily News, 14 March 1969, and Raleigh News and Observer, 14 March 1969.

"thought of all kinds of schemes" but decided with Fuller that realistically there was "no chance of coming out on the winning end" if they stayed in the building.<sup>7</sup> "They had already made their case,"<sup>8</sup> Fuller would later recall about the black students. To have tried to hold Manning against armed evacuation procedures not only would have been self-destructive, it would have indicated that black students had interests different from those of the foodworkers.

At 1:45 P.M., about fifteen minutes after white students had filed out, black students also left Manning. A few minutes later, seventy-five highway patrolmen arrived in military formation. They were garbed in riot gear--helmets and masks, with clubs and some shotguns. They began to herd students away from Manning. Some in the student crowd angrily taunted the police with shouts of "pigs, go home"; others were just confused and scared as police cordoned off a quadrangle outside Manning. The commotion grew when students emptied from nearby classroom buildings for the two o'clock change of classes. Buck Goldstein said that "on-lookers suddenly were no longer on-lookers";<sup>9</sup> the police made no distinctions among students. The BSM

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<sup>7</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

<sup>8</sup>Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller) interview by author and Joe Knight, 2 December 1974, summary in SOHPC.

<sup>9</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 April 1974.



struggled to maintain a semblance of order by marshalling the crowd away from the police--at least out of bottle and rock-throwing range. Several professors were also out front helping, on the theory, said Daniel Young, "that the troops would be less likely to shoot old grey-headed professors than they would to shoot students."<sup>10</sup>

For several minutes the mass of students--estimated at between 1500 and 2000--crowded into Polk Place, in the middle of the campus. Then following the lead of some SSOC members, the throng surged toward nearby South Building, with the apparent intention of tearing "the whole god-damn thing down."<sup>11</sup> Some faculty members known to be supporters of the foodworkers rushed ahead and hastily arranged a forum on the steps of South Building which stalled the movement of the crowd. Gathering attention to themselves, Dick Roman, Chick Goldsmid, Dan Pollitt, Lou Lipsitz, Chuck Wright, and Bill Coats urged the students to restrain themselves. The state should settle the strike rather than break it, Coats conceded, but the strike remained primarily a workers' struggle. Should students make themselves the principal issue, there was the clear danger of provoking the police into a violent clash detrimental to all.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Daniel Young interview, December 1974.

<sup>11</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1974.

<sup>12</sup>North Carolina Anvil, 15 March 1969; Durham Morning Herald, 14 March 1969.

Inside South Building, some student government leaders were talking with Chancellor Sitterson in a meeting unintentionally coincidental with the clearing of Manning Hall. The crowd outside made the students inside feel extremely uncomfortable. They found themselves, as Charles Jeffress reported, in a "very compromising situation."<sup>13</sup> Even after the students took leave of the chancellor, he remained in his office and did not speak to the mass outside. Through faculty members Daniel Young and Carroll Hollis, however, he sent word that he would address the student body the next afternoon at 3:30.

Expectations of violence were not realized that afternoon. If students meant to occupy South Building, they changed their minds. If some worried that they would be tear-gassed, knocked around, or shot by the highway patrol, they survived the day without physical scars. In actuality, after the speeches outside South Building, students began to consider practical matters, such as finding an alternate site for the "liberation food service." The possibility of another forced evacuation, compliance with health regulations, the need for free expression--all were issues during several hours of confusion and debate before the Baptist Student Union's offer to be the new strike headquarters was accepted.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Jeffress interview, 17 April 1974.

<sup>14</sup>Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974; also Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary.

The seven students arrested--Preston Dobbins, Jack McLean, Ashley Davis, Thomas Jones, Jesse Nettles, Adolph Reed, and white student Charles Hafter--divided themselves between the cars of Reginald Hawkins, Sr., and law professor Michael Katz, and drove to the Chapel Hill police station, where each posted a \$100 bond and was released. Back on campus, picketing at Lenoir Hall intensified, and at an 8:00 P.M. rally at the student union, Preston Dobbins castigated the governor for his action and vowed to "bring the university to its knees."<sup>15</sup> The workers, having seen George Prillaman laugh at them as they left Manning Hall, were all the more determined. Employees had "never asked for trouble," said Elizabeth Brooks, adding that "after all the years we have worked for this state, it's hard to believe how far they will go before granting us a few simple demands. Why won't they pay us when they pay guards to stay on campus?"<sup>16</sup>

Such questions were among the many that Adam Stein and partner James Ferguson discussed with Attorney General Morgan's staff in an all-day series of meetings on Thursday. No news of progress in those negotiations reached Chapel Hill. What did come was an explanation from Governor Scott's

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<sup>15</sup>Summary by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd. Black students later said that Hawkins happened to be in town because Sitterson had given him advance notice of the impending evacuation and arrests.

<sup>16</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 14 March 1969; Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith interview, 18 September 1979.

office of his reasons for ordering Manning Hall cleared. Probably he agreed with what the Durham Sun that day had called the need to put an end to "pussy-footing, to pampering, and to coddling" of disruptive students.<sup>17</sup>

But in tone and substance, Scott stuck to particulars, pointing out that students involved in the 4 March Lenoir incident needed to be arrested, that the messages broadcast from the Manning loudspeaker had been profane and disruptive, that the Manning food service had violated health regulations, and that students in Manning had had in their possession firearms and other dangerous weapons.

A little after two o'clock that afternoon, Arthur Beaumont and Allen Waters, with police, SBI officers, and newsmen following, had searched and locked Manning Hall. As they left, they tacked to an outside door a university statement that the building was closed for renovation. In the search of Manning, no firearms were found. Some years later, Preston Dobbins acknowledged that the BSM had in fact kept a gun in Manning (in spite of its being "foolish as hell"),<sup>18</sup> but on that March afternoon in 1969, twenty faculty members, including Fred Cleaveland, Carroll Hollis, and Dan Pollitt, were impressed enough by the peaceful behavior of the BSM to sign a statement commending black

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<sup>17</sup>Durham Sun, 13 March 1969.

<sup>18</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.



students and foodworkers--along with the university chancellor and president but not the governor--for their collective success in averting violence.

#### Recovering from Thursday

On Friday, the state woke to news that in contrast to Chapel Hill, the previous day at North Carolina A & T University had not been peaceful. At that predominantly black school in Greensboro, students had boycotted the privately-run campus food service in support of striking employees. A demonstration by twenty-five hundred people ended in a confrontation with police; tear gas, gunfire, injuries, and eighteen arrests followed. At UNC on Friday, however, several hundred picketers focused their attention on South Building rather than on events in Greensboro.

Also on Friday morning--after student body president Ken Day, at the insistence of others in his coterie, had made arrangements with President Friday the night before--a small group of student government leaders met in Raleigh with the executive committee of the UNC Board of Trustees. Student Charles Jeffress remembered telling the committee that Chancellor Sitterson should speed the redress of foodworker grievances, but, said Jeffress, "the trustees didn't really listen, most of them. They certainly didn't look us in the eye. No questions were asked afterwards . . .

most felt like we were an intrusion into their meeting."<sup>19</sup>

After the student group left to resume their efforts across town to persuade legislators of the justice of the foodworkers' cause, the executive committee endorsed Governor Scott's budget recommendation that non-academic employees in state institutions of higher education be given raises averaging 10 percent, effective July first. But the committee took a less conciliatory stand against academic dissidents. The governor vilified UNC and said, according to the Chapel Hill Weekly, what "every redneck, linthead, woolhat, branchhead boy in North Carolina" wanted to hear.<sup>20</sup> The executive committee then adopted, with William Friday's concurrence, a policy calling for the expulsion of students and faculty members who disrupted the normal "educational process."<sup>21</sup>

In Chapel Hill at Memorial Hall on Friday afternoon, Chancellor Sitterson began his promised address to students by complimenting them, and particularly black students, for their dignified "manner" during Thursday's evacuation of Manning. He confessed a "deep sense of sadness" about the presence of outside police and internal tensions on campus. With obvious emotion, he noted that "we are all in this

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<sup>19</sup>Charles Jeffress interview, 17 April 1974.

<sup>20</sup>Editorial, Chapel Hill Weekly, 13 April 1969.

<sup>21</sup>Executive committee resolution, adopted 14 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Demonstrations.

together." Sitterson admitted for the first time to students and workers that "injustices" actually had been committed in the operation of the food service, though none, he said, had been done with his prior knowledge.

Specifically, the chancellor announced that auditors had found 168 cases of overtime due workers since February 1968. The total amount owed to employees was about \$2000, with the possibility of more being owed as auditors searched records back to February 1967, when the university had first come under the jurisdiction of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Sitterson said that efforts and progress continually were being made to resolve job-classification problems and to institute forty-hour, five-day work weeks for employees. He indicated that Doris Stephens had been invited back to work (she had been fired without sufficient notice prior to the walkout), and that supervisors would be hired without regard to color. As he had on Tuesday, Sitterson moved away from the food-worker issue and into a monologue on freedom and responsibility. He told the assembled students to follow the lead of their representatives who that morning had reaffirmed to the trustee executive committee their belief in dissent without disruption.<sup>22</sup> Sitterson did not mention what the

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<sup>22</sup>Text from Durham Morning Herald, 15 March 1969; Raleigh News and Observer, 15 March 1969; Daily Tar Heel, 15 March 1969; also see outline of remarks, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

committee had pledged to do to those who chose a different course. As on Tuesday, the chancellor left the stage without answering questions.

With Ken Day chairing the meeting of two thousand students, Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith responded to the absent chancellor's remarks. They valued his compliments about the behavior of blacks, but pointed out that the administration had negotiated with workers only after blacks had turned over the tables in Lenoir Hall. Forceful action by students therefore appeared more effective than good manners. The foodworkers acknowledged that Sitterson had indeed made concessions to their demands, but they asserted that his allowances were still vague and incomplete. The employees wanted assurances of the \$1.80 minimum wage, Prillaman's ouster, and a black supervisor.

At four o'clock, Sitterson began to address a closed General Faculty meeting in Hill Hall. There, nearly one hundred students who had followed him from Memorial Hall started shouting and banging outside, demanding to be let in. Vigorous disagreement ensued among the faculty over whether students should be allowed inside. Finally, after what Daniel Pollitt called a "really emotional scene,"<sup>23</sup> a faculty under duress invited students to participate. With what Anne Queen admired as the "mature leadership" of Fred

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<sup>23</sup>Daniel Pollitt interview, 4 September 1979.



Cleaveland,<sup>24</sup> the faculty subsequently managed to pass several resolutions. In one, they commended the BSM, the foodworkers, Chancellor Sitterson, President Friday, William Blake, and Howard Fuller for their "responsible action" on Thursday. In another, the faculty adopted a modified Brandis resolution against campus disruption. After the meeting of the General Faculty, the Faculty Council convened and formally set up a committee on non-academic affairs.<sup>25</sup>

### Editorial Assays

As the week closed, tensions across the state began to subside. Durham's curfew was rescinded and the National Guard withdrawn. In Greensboro, all demands of the striking employees of the ARA Slater catering service were reported to have been met. Even on the other side of the country, protracted disputes at San Francisco State and at Berkeley seemed finally to have been settled. In Chapel Hill, people felt fortunate that violence on the UNC campus had been narrowly averted. Nonetheless, most appraisals of the UNC strike situation showed misgivings about the future. Foodworkers could see scant evidence of progress in bargaining; they were unable to find out whether their counsel had reached definite agreements with state authorities.

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<sup>24</sup> Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of General Faculty and Faculty Council meetings, by Clifford Lyons, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike, subhead Faculty Meetings.

Certainly a neat resolution of the strike seemed unlikely if the foodworkers remained obstinate about the minimum wage and the removal of George Prillaman.

The North Carolina Anvil, an early supporter of the foodworkers, saw settlement still jeopardized by administrative bungling. Lumping university and state officials together, the Anvil saw their behavior as analogous to the national administration's conduct of the Vietnam war. In each case administrators were at best stumbling along with little control over events and few policy guidelines; at worst, purposely misrepresenting the main issues and provoking dissidents to acts which would then justify harsh governmental responses having widespread popular appeal.<sup>26</sup>

The Chapel Hill Weekly, however, differentiated between university and state administrators; it was more sanguine about the conduct of the former and more worried about the governor's behavior and the General Assembly's consideration of "nut bills" to quell student unrest. The Weekly analyzed Governor Scott's interposition as a political ploy for the purpose of easing tension in the legislative debate over his proposed tax on tobacco.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>North Carolina Anvil, 15 March 1969.

<sup>27</sup>W. H. Scarborough, Chapel Hill Weekly, 16 March 1969.

In the Greensboro Daily News, William Snider said that Duke's black students had infected the state with the "virus of turmoil." Seeing the difficulty of pacifying black students as being similar to stopping the spread of disease, Snider feared (as Henry Brandis had) that in the continuing confrontation between "advocates of order and disorder," freedom would be the ultimate victim.<sup>28</sup> In the state's capital, the News and Observer also found little reason to praise either radical students or Governor Scott's "blind and dangerous . . . high-handedness."<sup>29</sup>

In the Durham Morning Herald, Ann Colarusso said that to the governor and the General Assembly, too much "bigness and concentration of intellectuals" existed in Chapel Hill. Governor Scott's support of a new medical school at East Carolina University and the legislature's predilection for silencing dissidents and restricting the number of out-of-state graduate students gave credence to the suspicion that state authorities wanted to strip the Chapel Hill campus of its traditional influence in the state. Then tying politics directly to the family, she advised North Carolinians who were upset with student unrest to consider that "parents who can't control a seven-year-old

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<sup>28</sup>William Snider, Greensboro Daily News, 16 March 1969.

<sup>29</sup>Editorial, Raleigh News and Observer, 15 March 1969.

shouldn't be surprised when a stranger (the administration) can't [control] a seventeen-year-old."<sup>30</sup>

### Family Politics

The link between family and politics was not just a journalist's artifice. Throughout the strike, Anne Queen had eaten at the workers' alternative food service. On Saturday night, she went for supper to the Baptist Student Union, where the Manning food service had been relocated. She sat at a table which included Mary Smith, among others. Queen recalled that "I sort of have a habit of asking people where they're from." She asked Mary Smith where she was from and Mary Smith replied that originally she came from a community in Alamance County known as Pleasant Grove. After dinner, Anne Queen went home and called her good friend Ralph H. Scott, a rural landowner in Alamance County. She asked him if he knew that Mary Smith was from Pleasant Grove. Surprised, he said, "Oh, you don't mean so . . . I bet my brother delivered her."

Ralph Scott's brother had been a physician in a clinic in Alamance County. Another of Ralph Scott's brothers, Kerr Scott, had been a U.S. senator, governor of North Carolina, and father of Robert, the current governor of the state. Ralph Scott was himself a state senator from Haw River, and chairman of the Senate Finance

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<sup>30</sup> Ann Colarusso, Durham Morning Herald, 16 March 1969.



Committee and member of the Advisory Budget Commission. Anne Queen telephoned Mary Smith and told her what Senator Scott had said. Mary Smith said that the senator had been correct: his brother had delivered her.

On Sunday, as Anne Queen remembered, Senator Scott called her and asked if an article by Bob Stephens in the Greensboro newspaper had "any truth" to it. She told him that it was the most accurate report of the strike she had seen. Scott said, "Well, if that's the truth, these workers have every right to strike . . . And if I'd known that, I'd have had her [Mary Smith] and [Governor] Bob [Scott] together a long time ago."

Later that morning, Senator Scott went to church. His nephew the governor was not there, but the governor's wife was. The senator asked Mrs. Scott to tell her husband that Mary Smith was from Pleasant Grove and that he and the workers should get together.<sup>31</sup> Sunday night, Senator Scott called Mary Smith at her home because, he said later, "I felt like I could talk to her."<sup>32</sup> During their conversation, Mary Smith assured the senator that the foodworkers were primarily interested in the quality rather than in the color of their supervisors, and that the foodworkers were strongly opposed to violence and the

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<sup>31</sup>Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974, includes above quotations.

<sup>32</sup>Durham Sun, 18 March 1969.

destruction of state property. Speaking about the governor, Senator Scott advised Mary Smith to "bear in mind his side of the thing . . . he's being hammered from both sides." Said the senator, "Ya'll need to understand each other's problems." He suggested that she call the governor for an appointment. "Don't get yourself a whole busload of folks, just get a carful . . . , [go to Raleigh] and tell him what your problems are."<sup>33</sup> Mary Smith agreed to try. Without saying so, Senator Scott was doing what no other public official had succeeded in doing. He was dealing with the foodworker issue separate from all the other issues with which it had become entangled.

#### More Uncertainty

On Monday morning, a vigil began which had been organized over the weekend by Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd, the president of the YMCA. Between speeches in Polk Place by Bill Coats, Lou Lipsitz, Charles Wright, Fred Cleaveland, Elizabeth Brooks, and Preston Dobbins, students sang folksongs. They were fortified by the announcement that student Charles McGowan had arranged for Joan Baez to give a benefit concert on campus Tuesday night. Even state legislators Jim Beatty and Skipper Bowles stopped by to see how things were going. Though Preston Dobbins

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<sup>33</sup>Ralph Scott interview, 22 April 1974; letter from Ralph H. Scott to Mary Smith, 18 March 1969, in her possession.

warned that a "long hard fight"<sup>34</sup> still lay ahead, the prevailing mood, in beautiful weather, was described as "generally light and spirited."<sup>35</sup>

In the afternoon, news came that cast a shadow over the proceedings. The foodworkers announced that they had just received the overtime checks promised to them by Sitterson the previous Friday. They were not satisfied with the amounts paid. Again accusing the administration of bad faith (the largest overtime check was thirteen dollars), the disappointed workers waited to discuss the matter with their attorneys, who were then in Raleigh meeting with the attorney general's staff. Meanwhile, Claiborne Jones said that the payments were accurate according to the books, but he admitted that the books were not necessarily an unerring means for determining actual amounts owed. If the employees had questions, said Jones, they could pose them directly to auditors on Tuesday.

Also on Monday afternoon, English professor Charles Wright distributed the Document, a summarized chronicle of strike events. Wright stated that the three main unresolved issues were the \$1.80 minimum, adequate grievance procedures, and employee working conditions in case a private firm

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<sup>34</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 18 March 1969.

<sup>35</sup>Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary.

assumed management of the food service.<sup>36</sup> Although the latter point (which the faculty had asked Chancellor Sitterson about in executive session) suggested that the full implications of a switch to private cafeteria management deserved everyone's attention, the issue received little special notice on campus. Rumors of such a change had circulated for some time and had been substantially confirmed in various announcements by administrators. Most foodworkers, however, were so absorbed with correcting past grievances that they assumed that future dealings with private management (especially if accompanied by the right of collective bargaining) could only be more fruitful than the past.

While the campus waited to learn what negotiators *Troops* in Raleigh had achieved, Governor Scott said in a news conference that he had originally sent the highway patrol at the request of the Chapel Hill police. Since that time--the day after the table turning--administrators had planned to evacuate Manning Hall but continually refused to carry out the project. Scott admitted his impatience with university vacillation and said that he had acted on 13 March because of his "constitutional duty" to protect the "right to education" and to give "firmness" to a deteriorating situation. He had not cleared his order with campus

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<sup>36</sup>Document, 17 March 1969, as reported in Daily Tar Heel, 18 March 1969.



administrators beforehand, but he hoped that his move to vacate Manning Hall had strengthened the university.<sup>37</sup>

Senator Ralph Scott, in a Monday interview broadcast over UNC's educational television station, said that he and the General Assembly supported his nephew "one-hundred percent." If the governor had not acted, said Senator Scott, then the legislature would have. The senator did not mention his communication with Mary Smith, but in a general comment about the foodworkers, he noted that "many of their complaints are just."<sup>38</sup>

The next day, the senator--"strictly on my own," he said, and without a promise of success--disclosed a plan to push through a 10-percent raise, effective immediately, for state non-academic employees. The Advisory Budget Commission would have to be consulted, but the governor and the State Personnel Board could authorize the increase without the full approval of the General Assembly. As for the foodworkers in Chapel Hill, Senator Scott said publicly that "they've been promised a lot they've never gotten . . . They need some concrete results to get them back to work."<sup>39</sup> On the UNC campus, Chancellor Sitterson indicated that he approved of Senator Scott's proposal. State personnel

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<sup>37</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 18 March 1969; Greensboro Daily News, 18 March 1969; Chapel Hill Weekly, 19 March 1969.

<sup>38</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 18 March 1969.

<sup>39</sup>Durham Sun, 18 March 1969.

director Claude Caldwell said that his office was amenable, and he indicated to Claiborne Jones that based on the interviews done the previous week, all job reclassifications for foodworkers would be either lateral or up; no classification grades would be lowered.<sup>40</sup>

On Tuesday came other hints of progress. Besides the highway patrol beginning its withdrawal from campus, Chancellor Sitterson released a statement that George Prillaman was being reassigned to a position in the university accounting department, where he would be "revising food-service records systems."<sup>41</sup> (Prillaman was reported to have said that after enduring nearly a month under "seige, . . . a job stocking boilers" would have been a promotion.)<sup>42</sup> In a letter to a faculty member that same day, Chancellor Sitterson noted that the "most serious part of the [food service] operation is our inability under present State Classification and Personnel Restrictions to command expert managerial talent . . ."<sup>43</sup> Apparently the administration had considered Prillaman as he considered his workers: not good enough but the best available.

In spite of the new developments, the foodworkers

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<sup>40</sup>Document, 19 March 1969.

<sup>41</sup>Durham Morning Herald, 19 March 1969.

<sup>42</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 19 March 1969.

<sup>43</sup>Chancellor Sitterson to Richard Smyth, 18 March 1969, Chancellors' Records, file on Strike.

were not particularly encouraged. Speaking to a sparse gathering inside Gerrard Hall, where rain had forced Tuesday afternoon's vigil, Elizabeth Brooks said that workers had not heard from their attorneys all day and feared that negotiations were not going well. She noted further than workers were anything but happy about Prillaman's reassignment, since he had been put in charge of correcting the very system he had fouled up in the first place (Claiborne Jones countered by saying that Prillaman would have "no decision-making responsibility"<sup>44</sup> in his new job). Elizabeth Brooks promised a major announcement that night at the Joan Baez concert.

More than two thousand people attended the concert. Their admission money increased the employee benefit fund by \$5000. Speaking before the performance began, Elizabeth Brooks called for a general strike by students and teaching assistants to begin at nine o'clock the following morning. Not all students were ready to oblige her request, however. Student government leaders, for instance, were caught off-guard. Upset that they had not been involved in making plans, the group--describing themselves as "increasingly skeptical about their capacity to lead"<sup>45</sup>--met near midnight on Tuesday and decided to withhold their support from the student strike.

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<sup>44</sup>Document, 19 March 1969, in Mary Smith's possession.

<sup>45</sup>Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary.

On Wednesday, scattered BSM and SSOC picketers in front of classroom buildings were only partly successful in persuading other students to stay away from their courses. Later in the day, Charles Jeffress and Buck Goldstein convinced their group to meet again. They decided that their refusal to support the BSM and SSOC in the student strike might force the radical groups to undertake even more drastic tactics. Unwilling to risk the return of the state patrol, especially now that agreement in Raleigh on the workers' \$1.80 minimum seemed close, eleven student leaders subsequently but unenthusiastically issued a statement urging all UNC students to support the general strike.<sup>46</sup>

No one on campus seemed to know quite what was going on in Raleigh that Wednesday. Even Adam Stein, meeting with students that night in Gerrard Hall, was not sure where the state would find the money for the \$1.80 minimum wage. The state had the resources, if it were willing to uncover them, said Stein. Once the wage arrangement was worked out, settlement of the strike would quickly follow. Stein had reached tentative agreements on most other issues, he said, although back overtime pay was still a nettlesome problem. State auditors were disregarding federal regulations which prescribed how overtime hours were to be counted and indemnities paid. If the overtime issue were not resolved

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.



to his and the workers' satisfaction, Stein said that the workers would sue the state.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, Mary Smith cashed in on her connection with the Scott family. She called the governor's office and asked for an appointment. Senator Scott had made sure that her request would not be refused. On Thursday, while the student strike continued at UNC with little increase in support, Mary Smith, Elizabeth Brooks, and Lenoir Hall worker Raymond Cooley went with their lawyers to Raleigh. There they met for over an hour with Governor Scott and various people from the Advisory Budget Commission and the state personnel office. According to the foodworkers, the meeting was perfunctory. The governor, Mary Smith said, "didn't talk that much; he listened to us." His attitude toward the salary raise, she said, was that "it was a just reason."<sup>48</sup> Back in Chapel Hill after the visit, Elizabeth Brooks told Anne Queen that "for the first time, we have hope."<sup>49</sup>

By Thursday evening, workers and black students were optimistic, but their white supporters were impatient. Charles Jeffress later would look back and say that the blacks had "much more of a sense of what was going on

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<sup>47</sup>Daily Tar Heel, 19 March 1969; Durham Morning Herald, 20 March 1969.

<sup>48</sup>Mary Smith interview, 9 October 1974.

<sup>49</sup>Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

and what needed to happen than the white students did."<sup>50</sup> At the time, Jeffress and his cohorts in their frustration joined SSOC at a Thursday meeting and made "elaborate plans"--including the use of two-way radios and provisions for delivery of food--to occupy South Building if the strike was not settled by noon on Friday. Even though the BSM did not attend the meeting, the plans, said Scott Bradley, had "black approval." Certainly the plans did not have administrative approval, but sit-in organizers assumed that the chancellor would soon find out "what was happening."<sup>51</sup> The would-be occupiers figured that the police would be called to clear them out; they were willing to take that risk.

#### Settlement at Last

About noon on Friday, a crowd of over one thousand began to gather in Polk Place. Most, including television cameramen and reporters, were there to hear the announcement of the strike's resolution. But noon passed and no word of settlement came. It was learned that the rally would have to be delayed until 1:30. Sam Austell of SSOC "started going around giving people the word to assemble at the point where we were going to take off from to sit in South Building."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Charles Jeffress interview, 17 April 1974.

<sup>51</sup>Scott Bradley interview, 30 October 1974.

<sup>52</sup>Charles Jeffress interview, 17 April 1974.

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Inside the YMCA, Anne Queen received a call from Ralph Scott in Raleigh, telling her that an agreement had been reached and that the governor and the workers' attorney were meeting to work out a press release. Queen sought out Preston Dobbins to tell him what she had learned. He already knew. Neither was Mary Smith surprised at the news; she had been assured of settlement the night before in a phone call from the governor's office. Some student government leaders were still nervously readying themselves to take over South Building when Fred Cleaveland told them about the settlement. Taking the microphone, Preston Dobbins introduced Amy Lyons, treasurer of the foodworkers' association. Very softly she said, "We have learned from our lawyer that our governor has met our demands for a wage increase, and the strike is now ended."<sup>53</sup>

In the speeches that followed, Preston Dobbins denounced those who had not supported the strike and warned that "this is not the end." His remarks were echoed by Lou Lipsitz, who criticized the handling of the strike at the top levels of the administration and included among the university's "unfinished business" the resolution of the BSM's December demands and improvement of faculty-student relations. Howard Fuller also was there. He applauded the black women foodworkers for putting their "lives on the line."

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<sup>53</sup>Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary; Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

He praised as well the BSM for shaking off "Uncle Tomism," and the white students for following black leadership and for doing something besides "going on panty raids. . . . Power concedes nothing without a demand," he added.<sup>54</sup>

In the immediate aftermath, it was learned that as of the first of April, the foodworkers and over five thousand other state employees would make at least \$1.80 an hour. In all but the lowest salary scale, additional raises would come on 1 July, if the General Assembly approved Governor Scott's budget proposal.<sup>55</sup> At UNC, some foodworker issues were still to be resolved--overtime back pay, a forty-hour week, weekends off, a black supervisor, job classification, and prospective working conditions under private management. But for the moment, those other issues were forgotten. Next week, for the first time in a month, UNC cafeteria workers would be back behind their serving counters.

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<sup>54</sup>Buck Goldstein and Joe Shedd summary; Daily Tar Heel, 22 March 1969.

<sup>55</sup>Greensboro Daily News, 22 March 1969; Raleigh News and Observer, 22 March 1969.



## CHAPTER X

### EPILOGUE

#### The Foodworkers

I hate that it had to all come up and out in the open like that and last so long.

Mary Smith

The strike left foodworkers "worn out" and glad to be back at work, said Mary Smith, who gained neither supervisory status nor a salary raise from the walkout. The month had been difficult at home as well as on campus. Strike activities had kept the foodworkers away from home even more than their regular jobs had. Mary Smith's husband sympathized with her grievances on the job (he too had worked for the university), but with a two-year-old daughter and five other children, he needed her help at home. Similarly, Elizabeth Brooks remembered that her husband talked "a little bad" about her during the strike. In spite of his doubts, however, he had more interest in the strike than he would admit, she said. Once apprised of the issues, the families of both Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks encouraged the women to persevere in doing what Elizabeth Brooks called "what we had to do."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Smith interviews, 14 April 1974, 9 October 1974; Elizabeth Brooks interviews, 13 September 1979, 22 October 1974.

Financial support was as important as moral encouragement in enabling the foodworkers to hold out during the month of the strike. The employee benefit fund gave an income to all strikers, and some employees said that their salary was even better during the walkout than before.<sup>2</sup> No one was fired as a result of the strike, and permanent food service employees could take added satisfaction in knowing that the minimum wage was increased for other workers on campus and for such state employees as hospital aides, laboratory technicians, office workers, ferry deckhands, laundry workers, recreation assistants, and truck drivers throughout North Carolina. Henceforth, all would make at least \$3,756 a year.<sup>3</sup>

Back on the job, most of the food service employees had their job classifications upgraded by the state personnel office. Employees worked forty-hour weeks with two days off; they worked a split shift only if they wanted to; they got a review of temporary work status after ninety days; they got new name tags, and a new manager. Most of all, employees felt that they now possessed new dignity. In the weeks after the strike, the foodworkers said that they were treated with respect as the university tried earnestly to uphold the letter and the spirit of the settlement.

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<sup>2</sup>Verlie Moore and Freddie Parker were two that said their salaries were higher during the strike than before.

<sup>3</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 22 March 1969, gives details of the state financial settlement.

One issue, overtime back pay, took an especially long time to resolve. Attorney General Morgan agreed with the foodworkers' attorneys that the university had violated the Fair Labor Standards Act; litigation would therefore not be necessary to insure payment to workers. But restitution figures arrived at by UNC auditors only rekindled employee allegations about the university's bad faith. In April, administrators asked the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate. Four months later, in August, UNC President William Friday announced that based on the federal audit, the university would pay employees \$180,000 in overdue back wages (at double indemnity).<sup>4</sup>

Principal beneficiaries were those who had worked split shift in Lenoir Hall. Sophia Purefoy got \$9000 and decided to send two of her children to college; Arthur Foushee got about the same amount, plus a call from a local Cadillac salesman. Neither employee had been an avid supporter of the strike. The Pine Room workers seemed to have won the battle both for themselves and others like them. Employees who had not participated in the strike came to Elizabeth Brooks afterwards to apologize. They told her, as she remembered, "If you ever decide to do anything else, we're going to be with you."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Claiborne Jones and Joseph Eagles said in a letter to William Friday, 30 July 1969, that as a result of the audit, "no indication of a pattern or intent was found." Business Records, file on Food Services; other correspondence about the overtime issue in Chancellors' Records.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Brooks interview, 13 September 1979.

If in fact there were ever to be another food service conflict, it would not be with university management. Only a few weeks after the end of the strike, the university announced that beginning on 19 May, SAGA Food Services would assume management of the campus's meal service. The university contract with SAGA stipulated that SAGA offer employment to all "present regular, full-time production type food service employees." Pay would be at rates consistent with the university's recent financial settlement and the state's July first wage scale. The SAGA package included generous leave, insurance, and overtime benefits for workers.<sup>6</sup> The university would receive a percentage of SAGA's receipts as a fee, and the state would gain by having the commercial operation on its tax rolls.

At first, employees were pleased with news of the arrangement. SAGA employment for some lasted only two weeks, however. By the end of May, low business volume and the "simple matter of economics"<sup>7</sup> caused SAGA to lay off many temporary and part-time workers. SAGA promised to hire them back if business picked up sufficiently in the fall, but foodworkers were unwilling to trust such assurances. In case management was unable or unwilling to fulfill its

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<sup>6</sup>See SAGA contract with university, signed by Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., 12 May 1969, Business Records, file on Food Services.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., to Lawrence V. Asch, 28 May 1969, Business Records.



pledge, workers planned to keep in touch during the summer with their lawyers and union officials.

### Black Students

That was me, I really wasn't anything else. It just absorbed me entirely.

Preston Dobbins

That kind of stuff is tremendously tiresome. . . . When you come out of it . . . you say, "Man, I got grades out here on the line."

Ashley Davis

The UNC Black Student Movement was entitled to claim some credit for the compensations made by the university to the foodworkers. Even before the walkout began, the black students had decided to be a cohesive pressure group on behalf of the employees. In the process of playing out a role that included the threat of violence, the black students gained public recognition (not all of it complimentary, of course) and learned various organizational skills. After the strike, none of the black students was expelled from school, in spite of the 14 March policy adopted by the UNC trustee executive committee. So BSM members could return to their studies and work toward receiving full education credentials from the university they sought to improve.

Black students came through the strike physically unscathed, but many were exhausted and some faced other direct costs. Six of them had to stand trial for tipping the tables in Lenoir Hall. Orange County District Judge L. J. Phipps acknowledged on 9 April that he did not want

to jeopardize UNC's chances of getting funds from the state legislature. He was content therefore to accept a plea of nolo contendere from the defendants. He gave them each a Prayer for Judgment Continued, a fine of \$135 plus court costs, and a two-year sentence suspended on the condition that each of them refrain from moral turpitude or disruptive activity.<sup>8</sup>

The court settlement "could have been worse," said Preston Dobbins, who was concerned about another cost of the black students' activities. By devoting so much energy to the foodworkers, "we knew we jeopardized other things we wanted from the administration," Dobbins recalled.<sup>9</sup> BSM members still were determined to push for a black-studies program, but they did so in the spring in ways less militant than before. Besides their own fatigue and legal restraint, they perceived that the administration was more determined than ever not to rush into academic concessions. Nonetheless, campus support generated by the black students translated itself into pressure on the administration and the faculty to admit more blacks to the university, to move toward an Afro-American curriculum, and to consider other programs of special interest to blacks.

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<sup>8</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 13 April 1969; North Carolina Anvil, 12 April 1969. Charles Hafter, a white student, was tried one week later; he received the same judgment.

<sup>9</sup>Preston Dobbins interview, 5 December 1974.

Relevant curricula and black representation in official school functions were also the focus of attention in nearby public schools, and UNC's black students continued during the spring to share those community interests. Preston Dobbins was served with two restraining orders--one at Orange High School in Hillsborough, another at Chapel Hill High School--to prevent his agitation on those public school campuses. At the end of the school year, Dobbins was one of three UNC seniors receiving the Frank Porter Graham award for "outstanding and unique contribution to the University community,"<sup>10</sup> but when he and Jack McLean tried that summer to get jobs for the Upward Bound program on campus, they were turned down. As he prepared to leave Chapel Hill after his 1969 graduation, Dobbins said that he was "glad to be getting away." His commitment to "political education," however, was as strong as ever.<sup>11</sup>

#### White Students

We were exploited by black students, but we loved it. ylnca  
Buck Goldstein

UNC white students probably could claim some degree of higher consciousness as a result of the strike. At least they saw the foodworkers as people more clearly than before. To active white supporters like Buck Goldstein, strike

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<sup>10</sup>Yackety Yack, yearbook of UNC at Chapel Hill, 1969.

<sup>11</sup>Preston Dobbins interviews, 4, 5 December 1974.

involvement had the added compensation of building new and lasting friendships based on common political concern. Also gratifying for strike supporters was proof that blacks were capable of leadership and that some whites were willing to be led. Radical whites often hoped to create disruption during the strike, whereas moderate whites generally hoped to temper the firebrands. Together, however, the white supporters could find reward in the thought that they respectfully took their cues from blacks and altruistically gave extra credibility to the blacks' demands on the university.

Having no primary personal stake in the strike left its lingering frustrations, nonetheless, especially for some members of the student government group. Their activity had been a *mélange* of reactions to others' actions; it had lacked initial motivation, consistent strategy, or effective power.<sup>12</sup> They would have preferred willingly to have loaned their leadership roles to blacks but discovered to their consternation that they had not been proprietors of such roles in the first place.

Not all UNC students had been sympathetic to the foodworkers. Shortly after the strike, UNC Dean James O. Cansler told a Kiwanis Club audience that 90 percent of UNC students had been and still were content with their lot.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Joe Shedd, conclusion in summary (with Buck Goldstein).

<sup>13</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 23 March 1969.



Even Buck Goldstein acknowledged that no more than 10 percent of the UNC students had actively involved themselves in the strike.<sup>14</sup> Political science professor Lou Lipsitz, in a post-strike survey he conducted, confirmed that only a small minority of UNC students saw themselves as political activists, either on the foodworker issue or any other. Lipsitz's survey indicated, however, that there was within the UNC community a large reservoir of sympathy for the striking foodworkers. Seventy-five percent of UNC students felt that the employees were justified in striking; only about 3 percent actually opposed the strike. Since the survey used a "non-representative sample," it has to be interpreted cautiously.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, its findings give credence to the feeling among active whites that they had had during the strike what Joe Shedd called a "considerable consensus" of support.<sup>16</sup>

Lipsitz found in his survey that students who had been active in the foodworkers' strike were likely to be active in other political causes. Not surprisingly, then, strike supporters' suspicion of administrative authority was not allayed by the foodworker settlement. As student

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<sup>14</sup>Buck Goldstein interview, 17 October 1974.

<sup>15</sup>Lewis Lipsitz, "Political Dissatisfactions and University Issues: Student and Faculty Attitudes at the University of North Carolina," December 1970; see also Lewis Lipsitz interview, 17 October 1974.

<sup>16</sup>Joe Shedd conclusion, in summary.

activists turned to other issues of university governance and curriculum, they were still animated by national issues of war and race and were still unconvinced that the campus administration was equipped to deal with future student demands. In addition, active students felt that state politicians were dangerously near to closing off all paths to campus reform.

Although most students no doubt were pleased with the amelioration of employee working conditions, in many ways they were the ones who paid for the improvement. The immediate increase in meal prices at Lenoir Hall left students with a bitter aftertaste. Coffee refills no longer were free. Food service operating hours were curtailed. Chase Cafeteria stayed closed for the rest of the semester; the Pine Room and Monogram Club closed on weekends. Students who sensed a different ambiance in Lenoir Hall were perhaps getting the first intimations that Lenoir's role as a campus institution had irrevocably changed.

### The Faculty

A large faculty meeting is the worst place to get anything done.

Alden Lind

From the early days of the strike, the majority of the faculty members seemed, as student Joe Shedd saw them, to be "entirely sincere in their desire to settle the

strike equitably."<sup>17</sup> Professor Alden Lind said that his colleagues were more than sincere, that there was among them a strong "reservoir of sympathy and active support" for the foodworkers.<sup>18</sup> But the experience of both white student leaders and faculty members showed that a wellspring of sympathy was not in itself especially useful to the foodworkers. Strategies for resolving the strike were essentially determined by strikers (together with black students) and by various administrators, not by either white students or faculty members.

Taken as a group, the faculty was never a forceful sponsor of the foodworkers' cause. The faculty's most unified response to the foodworker issue came in the strike's first ten days, when nearly all faculty members stayed uninvolved. Once students dramatized the foodworker issue on 4 March and once the state patrol challenged what was to the faculty their proprietary interest in academic freedom, many faculty members wanted to act. But by then the situation was complicated and tense, and the various faculty groups were unable even to agree on a definition of the issues. It was unreasonable, therefore, to expect any large faculty meeting to decide on a unified course of action.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Alden Lind interview, 8 October 1974.

The faculty acted, said Joe Shedd, in ways similar to those of his own student "leader" group. In each case, whites seem to have been primarily motivated not by the employees' grievous working conditions (which had been known but long ignored) but rather by the continual "threats of worse things to come."<sup>19</sup> Whatever their incentives, the faculty nonetheless did seem to exert what Shedd called a "moderating influence" on the activities of workers, students, administrators, and politicians.

Although general faculty meetings were cumbersome and relatively ineffectual, such a conclusion does not imply that smaller faculty groups or individuals were unimportant in determining the ways by which the strike's central participants worked through their confrontation. A crucial contribution of the sundry faculty groups was their service as channels of communication. Faculty members (not all of whom were sympathetic to the foodworkers) were central to the exchange of information in numerous unorganized settings as well as in more-formal gatherings. Without the efforts by faculty mediators, the strike could conceivably have come to a quicker (and perhaps more violent) end than it did. The mediators, however, saw themselves as preventing the protraction of the striker-administrator impasse.

The faculty also made a significant monetary contribution to the strike--about \$13,000. The workers

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<sup>19</sup>Joe Shedd conclusion, in summary.



needed the money and the "influential, white, high-prestige sympathy" which Henry Landsberger said lay behind it.<sup>20</sup>

By the end of the strike, even skeptical faculty members admitted that the foodworkers had had valid grievances.

Faculty members who were radical in their support of the foodworkers may thus have felt vindicated, but some--

Larry Kessler, Dick Roman, and Chick Goldsmid--learned by summertime that they had been denied merit raises in their own salaries.<sup>21</sup>

Whether or not this could be attributed to their strike activity is a matter of conjecture.

In conclusion, some UNC faculty members may have come out of the strike satisfied with their involvement in a worthwhile social cause, and some may have been satisfied with the efficacy of university procedures for thrashing out resolution to an internecine squabble, yet many were worried about future political interference. The week after the strike, 242 faculty members signed a petition to Governor Scott, urging him to rely more fully on the judgment of campus administrators.<sup>22</sup> The strike demonstrated less the effectiveness of faculty action, however, than the divisive effect on the faculty of a

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<sup>20</sup>Henry Landsberger interview, 3 December 1974.

<sup>21</sup>North Carolina Anvil, 2 August 1969.

<sup>22</sup>Raleigh News and Observer, 28 March 1969.

volatile political issue. Five years later, Anne Queen talked about the strains the strike had put on faculty "factions": "Out of this conflict came some breaks in relationships that may have never been healed yet."<sup>23</sup>

### The Administration

. . . one dramatic episode in a vastly changing campus.

former chancellor Carlyle Sitterson

The strike was symptomatic of a larger long-term structural change in UNC-Chapel Hill from rather quiet sedentary days when the administration was not important.

sociology professor Henry Landsberger

There was no power in any place in the university; that was the teaching of the strike to me.

attorney Adam Stein

During a period when the nation and the South were experiencing dramatic social changes, the public university in Chapel Hill shared, not surprisingly, in what Carlyle Sitterson called afterwards the "emotional trauma" of the times. Sitterson felt that his responsibility during the foodworker strike had been to keep the university functioning with a minimum of disruption. Public evidence of the sincerity of his commitment to an equitable strike settlement came slowly during that time. From within the university-- still a "highly personal institution," according to Sitterson-- information about the validity of the foodworkers' needs only gradually reached him. Although Sitterson's restrained

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<sup>23</sup> Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

diplomacy was never outwardly inflammatory, he personally was unable to effect a quick strike settlement. Many observers criticized his leadership as inadequate to times of rapid social change. Nonetheless, in Sitterson's mind and in his words, there was "no way" he could have been more personally involved in the strike settlement than he was.

Sitterson said that after the strike he hoped to erase the scars of the conflict. In the non-academic departments of the university, he personally talked to supervisors about the need to change their "minds and habits" and to deal respectfully with employees.<sup>24</sup>

A higher wage rate and other administrative concessions helped him to abate employee dissatisfaction with university management. In August, by "voluntarily" paying foodworkers \$180,000 in back wages, the university took another large (and exorbitant, to some observers) step toward reparation of past injustices to employees.

Whatever humanitarian interests the administrators had in foodworker problems, a compelling parallel interest was in ridding themselves of a troublesome business responsibility. In April, J. A. Branch, a man of considerable experience and knowledge, wrote to Vice-Chancellor Eagles that "I learn something new every day about dining hall operations. The only trouble is I frequently have to

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<sup>24</sup>Carlyle Sitterson interview, 10 December 1974, includes above quotations.

unlearn that which I learned the day before."<sup>25</sup> Achievement of an efficient overall business organization at UNC demanded the excision of operations so difficult to manage. For the ten months preceding 30 April 1969, dining hall expenditures exceeded receipts by nearly \$200,000.<sup>26</sup> By turning control of its meal services over to SAGA in May, the university business office hoped to be able subsequently to tighten its own organization, clear internal channels of communication, and keep its other economic enterprises productive. The university could not afford to be sentimental about Lenoir Hall, even though it had traditionally been a community center for the campus. Neither could the university afford to be sentimental about George Prillaman, who resigned in May to manage the food services at Carnegie-Mellon University. He was still in the throes, he said later, of a three-month depression following the humiliating strike experience and numerous threats on his life.<sup>27</sup>

For administrators outside the business sphere of university operations, the controlling motive in the weeks after the strike seems to have been to get the academic house in order. For the most part, that meant reinstitution

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<sup>25</sup>James A. Branch to Joseph C. Eagles, Jr., 11 April 1969, Business Records, file on Food Services.

<sup>26</sup>Operating report, 30 April 1969, Business Records.

<sup>27</sup>George Prillaman interview, 6 September 1979.



of normal procedures for change. The Merzbacher committee's recommendations on curriculum reform and the Phillips committee's recommendations on admissions policy reform were two examples of issues that academics and administrators would weigh. Only after careful consideration would new policies actually emerge.

Institutional academic integrity also prompted administrators to examine state political realities. The prospective shift of legislative economic support to other schools in the state was one political ramification of which UNC administrators were mindful. Furthermore, campus officials had learned that especially during internal unrest, the lines of authority in a public university were difficult to draw. Adam Stein commented, for instance, that Governor Robert Scott had used the ambiguity to come out "exactly where he wanted" after the strike. Stein said that Scott had given campus authorities the first opportunity to resolve the conflict, but then, after their failure, had exploited the chance himself to bring order to the campus and thereby receive political credit for ending the crisis and for raising the wages of state employees.<sup>28</sup>

UNC's wariness of politicians did not mean that the political process was something that swirled out beyond the campus, to be worried about only when the university's

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<sup>28</sup>Adam Stein interview, 27 November 1974.

educational island was threatened. Campus administrators were themselves public officials whose actions before, during, and after the strike were charged with their own political reality. University executive officers were politicians with their own powerful constituencies. Recognizing that, the UNC Board of Trustees moved to clarify internal lines of authority and to strengthen the hands of campus officials by giving them added safeguards against interference by either state politicians or student and faculty dissidents. In May, the board instituted a disruption policy which encouraged the president and campus chancellors to screen faculty appointments for evidence of prior disruptive activity, cleared the way for administrators to seek injunctive relief through the courts during disturbances, and prohibited officials from offering amnesty to faculty members or students who did disrupt the educational process.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, UNC at Chapel Hill reaffirmed the adequacy of its internal grievance procedures for academic and non-academic personnel.

#### Observations on the Political Process

Perhaps the coincidence of family relations and the political process, which in the Ralph Scott episode helped resolve the strike, could, as some said, "only happen in

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<sup>29</sup>Chapel Hill Weekly, 28 May 1969.

the South."<sup>30</sup> Certainly the UNC foodworkers's strike could neither have begun nor ended as it did, except in the South. *only in South*

The contrast in social status between black laborers and the white managers of the political and economic system was part of a tradition rooted particularly deep in southern history. In the South's "second Reconstruction" during the 1950s and 1960s, black activists had set new precedents of protest against exploitative political tradition. In the late sixties, the spirit of that black protest and of student discontent made the climate at UNC ripe for confrontation.

The UNC cafeteria workers, with the support of black students, openly challenged the university to close the gap between promise and reality. At the beginning of the walkout, compromise was possible. If administrators had acted forthrightly to correct the most obvious of the injustices, then the employees might have gone back to work with less than a full and immediate redress of their grievances. The university would then have been spared four weeks of disruption, near-violence, and political wrangling with workers, students, and the state.

University administrators, however, did not take advantage of that opportunity for early settlement. First, they were unprepared to correct injustice on its merit

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<sup>30</sup> Anne Queen interview, 12 June 1974.

because they had not been thorough enough in earlier investigations of the workers' allegations against food service management. Second, they were unwilling to concede that the employee strike was a legitimate method of voicing protest. The strike, which would prove the inadequacy of administrative procedures to cope with a crisis situation, initiated discussion through a means that administrators did not want to condone, whatever validity the grievances should eventually prove to have. Third, administrators perceived that the strike was induced by students interested not in compromise but rather in destroying conventional mechanisms for orderly change. Defense of the university system of governance demanded that officials avoid both the appearance and substance of capitulation to radical dissidents.

The university, through its campus administrators, therefore upheld traditional political process instead of quickly, in the name of justice, trying to work out a compromise with the group of employees. University intransigence in turn forced the foodworkers into a more rigid position and even closer collaboration with radical students. For over a week, administrators temporized, content to let the strike drift on while they activated, in their own way, procedural inquiry into food service mismanagement. Spread thinly over time, compromise would not appear to be concession.



Although not intentionally malicious, systematic negligence and malpractice had nonetheless resulted in injury to the employees' pride and pocketbooks. The system, as defined by university and state authority, had encouraged people like George Prillaman to achieve financial solvency at the expense of decent treatment of workers. Without an abrupt change in the pattern of discussion, administrators would never have given first priority to the needs of the foodworkers. The system was at fault, but that conclusion does not exonerate individual administrators who could have, if they had been willing to accept the costs, corrected most of the abuses and averted the necessity of the strike. Once the strike began, UNC administrators rallied around the rhetoric of traditional process. Individuals at the middle levels, as the political stakes were raised, relinquished accountability to those further up the administrative chain.

Until the table-turning incident and the closing of Lenoir, administrative circumspection frustrated strike supporters, but it seemed to be consistent with conservative political views in the state. Then, from outside the university boundaries as customarily understood, campus officials were bombarded with the fresh political reality of the governor's behavior. His action, overriding as it did the judgment of university officials, left the administrators caught between radical hard-liners on campus

and conservative hard-liners off campus. In trying to be politic, university officials had instead let themselves get out of step with the political times.

Gradually, the administration recovered from its floundering and tried to reassert university authority, but by then it had given up to the state much of the power to deal with the situation. The university began to acknowledge the validity of employee grievances, for instance, at a time when campus officials could give little actual remedy. Eventually the stalemate was broken, and violence luckily averted. Ironically, the same weight of tradition which had excited and then shaped the strike also provided an avenue for its resolution. Senator Ralph Scott, who as a member of the state's political and economic elite was representative of the forces which oppressed the workers, was also a rural compatriot of Mary Smith and uniquely able to translate his sympathy for her cause into a political solution. His involvement seemed adventitious, a quirk of personal relationship. In part it was, but in part it was not. During the three previous weeks, lawyers, auditors, and other specialists had dug up the raw material for a strike settlement. The political times had seasoned and were ready for the senator to initiate a final breakthrough.

Another irony was that impatient protesters, who were cynical about the bureaucratic complexities which inhibited settlement, depended on the political system for

settlement. Indeed, through Ralph Scott, workers took advantage of the most traditional aspect of southern politics--the old order of family ties and paternalism--to subvert time-consuming procedures and cut through the political tangle. In a sense, traditional politics was thus able to subvert itself and then triumph in spite of itself.

By the end of the four-week strike, noticeable changes had occurred. Principally, employees had gained, and administrators given in to, most of the demands for improvement of food service working conditions. But times also had not changed, since the system endured. Workers were beholden to conventional political channels for their relief, and the administration was able to avoid the appearance of giving in to radical student behavior. In the longer run, employees would continue to worry about conditions on the job, and administrators would worry about the political ramifications of the new precedents set by worker protest and harsh state reaction. The university, by leasing the food service to SAGA, hoped to prevent a recurrence of foodworker unrest, but it still had to face its responsibility for other employees and students. On future problems, as in the past, the university would have to work in concert with the state. Campus consolidation and racial integration, for instance, would present an

"ironically cruel" dilemma <sup>31</sup> for the Consolidated University: that of combining campus programs statewide while respecting at the same time the proud traditions of separate university campuses. The working out of such relationships would be complicated, but it would use the same elements of political process--slightly shuffled and modified by experience--as had been used during the foodworkers' strike.

That strike was thus an important event in its own right for all participants, and it was also significant as part of a larger and continuing problem in North Carolina government. To some participants, settlement had been excruciatingly slow in coming, but to other observers, the system had accommodated the protest remarkably quickly. During those four weeks in the spring of 1969, a drama of labor, race, and student unrest had been played out in Chapel Hill. Long-festered disaffections had been wrested into visibility and worked out before the eyes of all the state. Tradition had been broken, but radical movement would produce only moderate change. The pattern of tension, tedium, and ambiguity had shifted, but the flux of relationships political and personal would cause it to shift again. The strike had been settled, but the drama was not, and never will be at an end.

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<sup>31</sup>Vermont Royster, Wall Street Journal, 7 March 1969, clipping in Chancellors' Records, file on BSM.



## APPENDIX

### CHRONOLOGY

February 1968	Tet offensive in Vietnam.
31 March	President Lyndon B. Johnson withdraws as candidate for re-election.
4 April	Martin L. King, Jr., assassinated in Memphis.
5 June	Robert F. Kennedy assassinated in Los Angeles.
5 November	Election of President Richard M. Nixon and Governor Robert W. Scott.
22 November	Stokely Carmichael speaks at UNC at Chapel Hill.
11 December	UNC Black Student Movement presents Chancellor J. Carlyle Sitterson with list of 23 demands.
24 January 1969	Sitterson responds to BSM with 19-page letter.
Sunday, 23 February	Second-shift Pine Room workers walk off their jobs.
Monday, 24 Feb.	Other university foodworkers join walkout. Meeting between workers and management. UNC Board of Trustees meets.
Tuesday, 25 Feb.	Manning Hall set up as headquarters for strike and Lenoir Hall boycott.
Wednesday and Thursday, 26, 27 Feb.	Mobilization of some student and faculty support. Picketing and boycott continue.

Friday, 28 Feb. Anne Queen conveys worker grievances to Chancellor Sitterson. Administration begins investigation.

Monday, 3 March Most food service employees stay out of work. SSOC and BSM lead slowdown in Lenoir serving line.

Tuesday, 4 March Stall-in continues, scuffles among students. BSM turns over tables and chairs in Lenoir Hall. Chapel Hill police arrive, Lenoir closed. Workers and black students consult attorneys.

Wednesday, 5 March UNC administrators decide to keep Lenoir closed temporarily. Strike supporters organize campus rally in afternoon. Governor Scott pledges publicly to keep Lenoir open, summons Sitterson and President William Friday to Raleigh, mobilizes National Guard and state patrol.

Thursday, 6 March Lenoir Hall reopened in morning under guard. Sitterson explains his position to faculty group. Workers meet for three hours with chancellor's assistant Claiborne Jones and Vice Chancellor Joseph Eagles. Legislative concern about student disruption. Faculty concern about presence of patrol.

Friday, 7 March Student rally interrupted by bomb threat. Student government leaders try to mediate. Faculty Council meeting postponed, Alden Lind convenes open meeting, discussion about rescheduling classes.

Sunday, 9 March Downtown vigil. Lind calls together ad-hoc faculty group. Julius Chambers notifies university of his representation of workers.

Monday, 10 March

Strikers balk at meeting with state classification specialists.  
Picketing continues, with some class disruption.  
Attorney Adam Stein meets with Claiborne Jones and is notified that Attorney General Robert Morgan will represent university.  
Dean Henry Brandis circulates petition.  
UNC maintenance workers claim to have had substantive talks with administration.

Tuesday, 11 March

Sitterson speaks to faculty and students in Memorial Hall, reviews foodworker grievances and status of negotiations.  
Foodworkers claim administration has actually done very little.  
General Faculty meets.  
Stein meets with attorney general's staff and with campus groups afterwards.

Wednesday, 12 March

Sitterson orders BSM to shut off Manning Hall loudspeaker.  
Sitterson responds to faculty's questions in closed meeting at Hill Hall.

Thursday, 13 March

Governor Scott orders closing of Manning Hall and arrest of students for Lenoir Hall table turning.  
Confusion and tension, march on South Building.

Friday, 14 March

Picketing at Lenoir Hall and South Building.  
Sitterson tells Memorial Hall audience about injustices in food service.  
Students demand and get entrance to closed faculty meeting in Hill Hall.

Sunday, 16 March

Senator Ralph H. Scott calls foodworker Mary Smith.

Monday, 17 March

Stein continues negotiations with attorney general's staff

Tuesday, 18 March

Director George Prillaman transferred to accounting department.  
State patrol begins to leave campus.  
Workers question progress in negotiations, ask for student strike at Joan Baez benefit concert.

Wednesday, 19 March Little support for general strike.  
Bargaining continues in Raleigh.

Thursday, 20 March Strike leaders meet with governor in  
Raleigh.

Friday, 21 March Strike settlement announced, obviating  
drastic action by students.



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