

# KNIGHT

P. O. Box 38893, Houston, Texas 77088

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## THE SECOND CAMPUS

On September 17, 1981, the North Harris County College Board of Trustees announced that Kingwood would be the site of the second campus, and, on October 8, 1981, the Board appointed W. W. Thorne as Chancellor-designate and Joe Airola and Lester Burks as Presidents-designate for the NHCC system. These decisions raise a number of complex issues for those of us in the college "family," as Mr. Thorne likes to call us.

Although many faculty members have done so privately, no one has questioned publicly the feasibility of a second campus at this time. The official rationale for the Kingwood campus is NHCC's rapid growth in enrollment, but this reason ignores the fact that our current facility use is far from capacity. One need only look at the empty classrooms between 1 and 5:30 p.m. to realize the under-utilization.

Another concern is the duplication of both facilities and personnel. A second campus will need laboratory equipment, a library, a gymnasium, and perhaps industrial education and fine arts facilities. Faculty and staff are currently struggling to help our Learning Resource Center improve its inadequate holdings. Money that could be used to this end will be drained to create a second poorly stocked library.

that HPE faculty would like to see added to the present campus, again an impossibility as funds go into the new location.

The additional personnel requirements for the NHCC system will mean more bureaucrats who are paid hefty salaries for not teaching. Currently, NHCC's top bureaucrat, President Thorne earns \$65,550 and will, no doubt, be pushed into the mid \$70's when he officially becomes chancellor. Vice-President Airola and Dean Burks can expect pay in Thorne's current salary range when they become top campus executives. These salaries plus duplication of and new lower administrative positions place a large financial burden on the district.

Along with questioning the Board's second campus decision at this time, the autocratic manner in which this decision was reached must also be questioned. How little regard the President and the Board showed for the faculty and the staff at the College! No faculty and staff involvement was considered. Recently, administrators received a copy of a study on multi-campus college systems. Our Board and administration seem to have latched onto a part which states, "Teachers must have the 'freedom to teach,' and administrators, 'freedom to administer."

particular assignments. Teachers need to recognize that their primary responsibility is to teach, not to administer. Gross inefficiency and confusion result from failure to follow this principle."

However, our administrators chose to ignore a contradictory statement which followed in the same study: "The faculty is rightly interested and should participate in the planning of additional colleges." This more democratic approach has been used recently at College of the Mainland to select a new president. A screening committee consisting of board members, faculty and staff members reviewed applications and interviewed applicants. The new president, Dr. Dan Sunderman from the University of Ohio, was among the choices the screening committee recommended to the entire board of trustees for final review.

In defense of democracy in education, Larry Smith, president of the Mainland guild of TUF, has commented, "So-called authorities and institutions tend to be bureaucratic and authoritarian, and work from the top down. Normally this results in alienation, loss of morale, and reduced productivity." Here at NHCC, authoritarian decision-making has been a long-standing rule. In various meetings with faculty leaders, President Thorne has intimated that teachers can have it two ways at NHCC--either a benevolent dictatorship or a malevolent dictatorship. Recent administrative and Board action, including the total disregard of faculty opinion for the second campus, evidences this philosophy.

When the NHCC Board of Trustees designated Thorne, Airola and Burks to head the new community college system, this decision raised the question of

inbreeding in the minds of many faculty members. Certainly promotion from within is a reasonable procedure which recognizes and rewards talent within the College. However, failure to consider outside talent, to seek new and fresh ideas, lends itself to mediocrity and the Peter Principle. Curiously, early Board minutes claim that Mr. Thorne was chosen for President out of fifty-five applicants and sixteen finalists. This precedent was apparently disregarded in the recent appointments.

In talking of campus issues with guild members, a number of instructors have suggested that the second campus will be a haven of freedom removed from our current difficulties. Before we moved to this campus, Mr. Thorne once remarked that, when we did get here, we would think we'd "died and gone to heaven." As we look about, no Nirvana is present, and, clearly, nothing is changing. What threatens to happen is a perpetuation of the "good old boy" network, a dictatorship with a drawl.

The future of NHCC will be to spread thinly the available resources. Rather than devote money to improving current facilities and securing and retaining highly competent, professional faculty through adequate salary and benefits, the Board and administration will continue to build buildings. This monomania for creating monuments is further shown by the Board's active encouragement of the Tomball area to enter the district (see "Board Room Recap," November 8, 1981). One of our worst fears may yet be realized--rather than turn our attention to the true goal of a college, education, we may sink into an institution of mediocrity. If we look at current administrative and Board tactics and plans, we see that we are

not headed for Nirvana. Considering these plans and the existence of an Aldine I.S.D. football stadium and a

street with our President's name etched on them, the future is clear--building monuments.

## BOARD SNUBS UNION

Understanding that there are many issues of mutual concern needing bilateral discussion, the union has consistently sought for the past year to communicate its views to all levels of authority within the College. In most instances, College officials from the Chancellor-designate through divisional chairpersons have been quite receptive to such exchanges, in some cases initiating talks with union officers themselves. "The door to my office is always open," Chancellor-designate (then President) Thorne cordially stated in one meeting with union officers. Likewise, President-designate (then Vice-President/Dean of Instruction) Airola has shown great willingness to meet with union representatives on many occasions, at times on short notice, and divisional chairs Lovell and Harrison have at all times been eminently approachable. As union members, we should heartily commend these College officials for listening to our views: in this respect they have shown a professional attitude of fairness to an organization with which some of them find it difficult to live. Unfortunately, however, the NHCC Board of Trustees has for the past year obstructed our efforts to communicate with it. Like a socialite who frostily snubs an unworthy inferior, it has frozen out faculty members who have sought to address it as representatives of the union; it chooses instead to make policy decisions regarding the union without first-hand infor-

mation from union members.

Matters have not always stood thus. In July, 1980, a few months after the union made itself known to College officials, President Kevin Bailey requested and received permission to explain briefly to the Board the union's reason for existence and its goals. After listening imperturbably to Mr. Bailey's presentation, the members of the Board immediately, with no discussion or dissent, passed the first of its anti-union resolutions. Although an exchange of this type certainly falls short of any ideal of open and respectful discussion, it is to be preferred over no discussion at all. We would rather be rebuked than ignored.

Since that time, union members who have sought to address the Board as representatives of the union have been turned away. Union Secretary Bob Lorcander asked permission for union Vice-President Alan Hall to present the union's salary and benefits proposals to the Board at its meeting of March, 1981; he was told that Mr. Hall could speak only as a citizen under the Citizen Participation provision of the Board's charter (see the NHCC Handbook of Policies and Procedures, section 102a.06). Agreeing to this condition, Mr. Hall attended the meeting, and when his turn came to speak, he was questioned again by Board Chairman Charles Phillip about the capacity in which he intended to speak. "As a



citizen, but about union matters," he replied. He was then allowed to speak and was even granted a little additional time instead of being limited to the usual ration of five minutes. Nevertheless, after his speech Mr. Hall was reproved by Mr. Phillip for coming to the Board rather than communicating via "official channels." More recently, in September, 1981, Mr. Hall applied to speak before the Board as a representative of the union in an effort to lend perspective on some disputes over administrative responses to the union's fall recruiting drive (see The Reporter, Vol. 2, No. 1). This application was refused.

There are naturally some situations in which, relative to the norms of our society, one individual or group is perfectly entitled to refuse to hear another. In the clearest of these situations, there are straightforward legal constraints against doing so. For example, a judge may order a miscreant not to associate with his former cronies as a condition of parole, in which case it is his legal duty not to listen to them if they approach him. A legislator has the legal duty to eject anyone who proposes a bribe, for continuing to listen implies complicity. Is the Board's refusal to listen to the union a case of this type? Chancellor-designate Thorne apparently thinks so, for in the hearing last summer (in which the union pled for injunctive relief from the College's anti-union policies) he cited the state law against strikes and collective bargaining for public educators as a ground for refusing to "recognize" the union. The weakness of this argument lies in its all-inclusive conception of collective bargaining: Chancellor-designate Thorne seems to regard any discussion whatever

between the union and the College as collective bargaining. As union members, we take it as axiomatic that no one can bargain collectively who does not intend to do so, and we hereby state that our intention in wishing to address the Board is to exchange information, not to negotiate. We hope that the Board members can understand the difference between discussing and bargaining: The former need not include the latter. If they can, an important if chimerical legal obstacle to our dialogue may be removed. So far from being illegal, there is some reason to believe that it is legally mandatory for the Board to hear our views. In a recent Federal Court case, it was ruled that "...the participation in public discussion of public business cannot be confined to one category of interested individuals. To permit one side of a debatable public question to have a monopoly in expressing its views to the government is the antithesis of constitutional guarantees. Whatever its duties as an employer, when the Board sits in public meetings to conduct public business and hear the views of citizens, it may not...discriminate between speakers on the basis of their employment, or the content of their speech....Restraining teachers' expressions to the board on matters involving the question of the schools would seriously impair the board's ability to govern the district." (City of Madison Joint School District No. 8 vs. Wisconsin Employment Relations Committee, 429 U.S. 167) Perhaps the Board considers itself to have discharged this responsibility in its Citizen Participation program, but we would call attention to the word "category" in this decision. In other words, the Board has the duty to hear not only from individuals but

also from groups of individuals through the groups' representatives. It is for this reason that we are not content with the Board's practice of hearing from us only as individual citizens.

Another reason which, in our society, may justify one group's refusal to converse with another is that certain valued concessions may thereby be gained. Turning a deaf ear to an opponent while promising to listen under certain conditions can be played to tactical advantage if the opponent has a desire to be heard. The United States, for example, refuses to talk with the PLO until it recognizes Israel's right to exist, and it might be argued that a PLO recognition of Israel is an end sufficiently valuable to justify the means. But it is far from clear that the Board's silent treatment of the union could be justified in any analogous fashion. For one thing, the Board has never announced any conditions it might want to trade for allowing the union to address it. For another, if it did announce such conditions, it would be attempting to bargain collectively, which is illegal.

Sometimes we are justified in rebuffing other parties on the grounds that, in our judgment, they are not likely to provide us with any new, relevant, or useful information. Most of us have refused to see pesky textbook salespersons for this reason: If we think highly of the text we are using, we are unwilling to waste time considering others. When the Supreme Court refuses to hear a case, it implies that probably no more material could emerge on appeal to weaken substantially the lower court ruling. It may well be that the Board views the union in this way. It may be so sure that existing policies and administrative actions against the union are correct that no other view would appear

likely to have much merit. Last summer's hearings brought forth Board member Brad York's contention that the union is not a "legitimate" organization because it does not further the interests of the school. Perhaps this attitude is wedded to the conception that the Board should not concern itself overly much with detailed information about matters internal to the College, but rather with broader principles that guide the College's relations with external agencies. The various levels of administrative hierarchy might thus be perceived to exist for the purpose of dealing with the topics the union wants to address, and the Board ought therefore to repose its faith in the competence of those appointed to look after such matters. When Mr. Phillip advised Mr. Hall to work through official channels rather than coming to the Board, he manifested reasoning of this sort. There is certainly much to be said for the practice of respecting the turfs of others, and it would not become the Board members to involve themselves directly in the picayune details of the College's day-to-day operations. Yet, the questions of whether the Board can rightfully assume that union representatives have no probability of providing them with new, relevant, or useful information still remain. Because Chancellor-designate Thorne so trenchantly opposes the union, union members naturally doubt that he provides the Board with undistorted, unslanted information about the union. To strike a temperate balance among opposing positions, it is necessary to listen to all partisans. An instructor who never listened to textbook salespersons would eventually teach dated material; a Supreme Court that never reviewed lower court rulings

would be unnecessary; and a Board that refuses to hear a faculty union representative receives slanted information.

We maintain, therefore, that none of the standard reasons recognized in our social norms for refusing to hear from others clearly justifies the Board members in refusing to hear from the union. There is always the possibility that they turn us away for some less noble reason, like a desire to express hostility toward us. Perhaps they shun us in order to convey their sense of odium about our endeavors and beliefs. While reportedly there are etiquette books on the market which instruct a person on the delivery of a well-placed snub, it is difficult to see how such behavior could ever be justified for the Board members from whom we expect professional, judicious conduct, not emotional reaction. We fear that both the Board and Chancellor-designate Thorne have taken the union's legal action against the College personally: This fear is corroborated by the way Chancellor-designate Thorne appears of late to be giving some union members the cold shoulder even upon passing them in the hallways of the

College. Perhaps they view the filing of a suit itself to be a hostile act which ought to be recompensed in kind, but that is not the union's view. We find it a civilized, rational manner in which two parties who conscientiously disagree over matters of policy can settle their disagreement by appeal to a disinterested and duly ordained third party. It is no part of our purpose to stir animosity: Should we not rather reflect on the common bond that unites us as citizens who respect a legal deliberative process that saves us all from, in Hobbes' words, "the war of every man against every man"?

Let us all then eschew the silly posturing that lies at the basis of this impasse. Matters cannot improve as long as the Board attempts to pretend that the union does not exist. Conversely, there is great potential for mutual understanding if the channels of communication are opened. We simply entreat the Board members to open those channels.

Olin Joynton

## TUF/AFT NEWS

Teacher unions were the fastest-growing labor organizations from 1978 to 1980, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Membership in such unions rose from 502,000 at the start of the 1978-79 school year to 551,000 at the beginning of the 1980-81 year, thus showing an increase of 9.8 percent. Communications workers had the second highest rate of increase. State, county and municipal workers were third.

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Ed Asner, star of the Lou Grant television series, vowed as the new head of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG)-AFL-CIO that he will try to stem a nationwide erosion of unionism. At a news conference, Asner called himself "a unionist," and said that anti-unionism is heightened by Reagan's occupancy of the White House. Asner hopes to bring about a merger between the 50,000-member SAG and another AFL-CIO local, the American Federation of Television and



Radio Artists, with 30,000 members.

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On October 15, the Core Committee of the Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows and Lecturers Association of the University of Houston met and conducted its first organizational meeting since the group voted to unionize last May. The members voted to join Texas United Faculty, the higher education local in Texas of the American Federation of Teachers.

Core Committee members Nancy Ford and Cynthia Santos said that they expect the membership to include at least 150-300 parttime faculty. Also at the meeting was Professor John McNamara, who is leading an organizing effort for TUF among fulltime faculty at UH.

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Texas AFL-CIO President Harry Hubbard reports, in October, that organized labor has grown 42 percent since Gov. William P. Clements took office. Clements has been good for union organizing efforts, he said, "because he gives the impression that he is very much anti-union" and thereby unites working people.

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The AAUP decided in October to establish a national resource center to help faculty members take a larger role in running their colleges and universities. One official said, "We have let those governance issues that allowed faculty members to make decisions slip through the crack. Faculty members got scared because their jobs were in jeopardy. Essentially, we gave up our role in shared governance."

## NHCC-UF NEWS

On October 26, the Houston Federation of Teachers dropped a federal lawsuit against North Forest I.S.D. in Houston. North Forest officials agreed to allow union organizing activities on school property and to allow the union to use district facilities. HFT now receives the same privileges as other teacher organizations in the District. Despite this settlement and similar agreements elsewhere, NHCC continues to refuse any settlement and to waste tax dollars on expensive legal fees to break the union at NHCC.

The Portland, Oregon Community College student paper, The Bridge, cannot be barred from running advertisements on controversial subjects, says a federal judge in August, 1981. The judge rejected arguments that the paper was not a public forum and simply part of the journalism program.

Here at North Harris County College President Thorne continues to prevent "controversial" advertisements in The Paper. To Mr. Thorne, "controversial" apparently means "union."

When someone demands blind obedience, you'd be a fool not to peek.

--Jim Fiebig

The Knight

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News and Information of the NHCC-UF  
P.O. Box 38893, Houston, Texas 77088

Editor.....*Arlene Schultz*

NHCC-UF Executive Board:

President.....*Kevin Bailey*  
Vice-President.....*Alan Hall*  
Treasurer.....*Olin Joynton*  
Secretary.....*Bob Locander*

Contributors to this issue:

*Kevin Bailey*  
*Alan Hall*  
*Olin Joynton*  
*Bob Locander*



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