


 editorial

Combat Zone

An Editorial Commentary

by Barbara Boswell

I would like to preface this report by saying that this has got to be one of the most difficult and psychologically draining commentaries that I will ever write for this column. Those of you who have spoken with me about this, know what I mean. The rest of you, hopefully, will gain some understanding of it as you continue to read.

Friday, tomorrow, certain campus officials will be meeting with the Human Relations Commission in Harrisburg to discuss a case which is pending. The plaintiff is Ms. Twyla Brown, secretary-receptionist in the student affairs office. The charge is one of racism. This, to my knowledge, is the second of such complaints filed by Ms. Brown, against the university, with the commission. The first was filed approximately eighteen months ago. It was discontinued for lack of sufficient evidence.

It is very difficult to get specific information about charges made in a legal case, especially one of this sort, but I believe that the present amended complaint has to do with an increase in pay which Ms. Brown did not receive.

The pay scale for office personnel within this university system is based upon job classification. As a person advances in classification, an automatic pay increase takes place. Should a person remain within a certain classification for an extended period of time (as Ms. Brown has) he or she will receive periodic pay increases which are required by the state. Also, this person, after working for given time intervals are eligible to receive additional "merit" raises. These increases, however, are not automatic. They are at the discretion of the person's immediate supervisor. The first few of this type of increase are granted, at the supervisor's recommendation, for "satisfactory" job performance; the last few of this type, after, say, two years, increases are granted, at the supervisor's recommendation, for "outstanding" job performance. (All this is quite similar to the time-in-grade system within the military and is nearly identical to the policy used by the civil service).

Last July first, Ms. Brown reached the point when the last type (last type described above) of these periodic "merit" increases was possible. Her immediate supervisor, who, at the time, was Kathy King, denied the pay increase on the grounds that Ms. Brown's job performance was not "outstanding."

Ms. Brown's retort was that she could not do any more work because there was no more work for her to do. So, part of her complaint is saying that she was not granted a raise because of race. (Here's how that fits: "The alleged racists do not give enough work to the plaintiff so that the alleged racists are no longer "required" to give performance pay increases)."

It is true that there is little work involved with Ms. Brown's position. Until this year, the bulk of that position was to maintain up-to-date, general information files (names, addresses, etc.) of all students. It was discovered that academic services were also keeping such files, theirs being a bit more complete. There was a duplication of work so the files were all sent to academic services. (Remember the student directory hassle? The main reason why student affairs did not print one this year was because their files went to academic services. We are concerned with the same files here).

Another big chunk of the workload designated with Ms. Brown's position involved secretarial work for Kathy King. Ms. King's position is no longer in existence, therefore, the work formerly generated from her position is no longer in existence either.

That which remains is a job that requires very little work and, perhaps, should become either a part-time position or be eliminated completely. It simply does not require full-time personnel.

Last Friday, Ms. Brown was offered another position within the university system. This is a newly created position, which, if not accepted by her, will be given to someone else. In taking the position, Ms. Brown would be accepting a lateral transfer. This means that there will be no loss in classification standing, pay, or benefits. The position, though not specifically named to me, will be under the direction of Mr. Slygh, and it is either in admissions or academic services. It is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a demotion.

Undoubtedly, a number of "incidents," whether they be real or imagined, have taken place in the student affairs office over the past two years. Some of them I know about; but to report them all would serve no real purpose for they seem to be subject to too much interpretation. That is, they can be interpreted on the one hand as purely personality oriented conflicts (a formal person vs. an informal person); and, on the other hand, as in Ms. Brown's case now, as racist in nature. Both views are dependent on "where one is coming from." If a black expects to see racism in the actions of those around him, racism is what he is going to see. And, the other side, if a white is expecting to be intimidated by a black, intimidated is what he is going to be, regardless of either situation's reality.

"Black goes all the way back. I'm not going to run anymore." This is all Ms. Brown would say to me. I figured, at the time, that she did not feel she could trust me. (This stems from my first Combat Zone column). Now that I know about the meeting in Harrisburg tomorrow, I understand that she may not have wanted to make explicit statements because of the pending meeting. (That's cool).

Ms. Brown is intelligent, capable, and super-outgoing...qualities I admire. (And all qualities that employers are eager to find in their personnel). To such a person, an unchallenging job can be extremely frustrating. I have been in a similar position and can relate, first hand, to that frustration. She has made it known that she is unhappy in her present position, and yet refuses to transfer out of there and into a position which really needs her talents. I do not understand this because there remains, in my mind, a reasonable doubt that there ever were or are now racist activities connected with the case.

Also, Ms. Brown was informed as to the existence of a grievance procedure within the university system. Help was offered to her twice in this respect. Both times she refused and went straight to Harrisburg.

There remains the possibility that there is a case of racial paranoia, where every "incident," which, in reality, can be purely a personality conflict situation, can be labeled as racist. It is such a thin and "touchy" line to walk.

Perhaps if I may make a suggestion, not only to Ms. Brown, but to everyone, it would be this: Before you decide whether or not to run at all, perhaps it would be wise to try to discern whether you are running from something or running to it.

The Capitolist

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Short Term Loan Fund

To the Editors,

At the Student Senate meeting on January 22, 1973, I noted that we were planning to move the operation of the SHORT TERM EMERGENCY LOAN FUND from the Placement Building to the Main Building.

I am pleased to inform you that effective Monday February 12, 1973 all student short term emergency loans will be approved by the Dean of Student Affairs in Room W-101, Main Building.

Students will no longer need to go to the Placement Building to have short term emergency loans approved.

PLEASE NOTE: All other financial aid matters--scholarships, PHEAA grants and loans, on-campus jobs, etc. still remain the responsibility of the Financial Aid Counselor in the Admissions Office (Placement Building).

John R. Grimm
 Dean of Student Affairs

Urges Student Involvement

To the students of Capitol

If you would, kindly read the cartoon in the Feb. 1 issue of The Capitolist by Gene Mater (page 6).

That is the general attitude of the students here. They want everything for nothing. If you want more activities, better government, better help on problems of all sorts, then you must assume the responsibilities of getting the job done or, yes, even the consequences if you fail.

But think if you fail, you learn not to act in that way again in similar situations. So if you would, stop the complaining while sitting back and doing nothing, and get into the front lines.

Do something for yourself and the fellow students at Capitol.

Juniors--you will be the next leaders of Capitol Campus and of the world, so get involved.

Michael Kowalcheck

From Your Editors

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

We have learned of a relatively humorous happening involving Mr. James Paul, Campus Security Chief, and a faculty member.

It seems that one night last week, Dr. Joseph Fleishman had entered the Placement Building through a rear entrance with a key secured from Dr. John Nichols. Mr. Paul, whose office is located in the building, approached Dr. Fleishman and asked him what business he had there and how he was able to enter the building. Satisfied with Fleishman's answer, Mr. Paul noted the "incident" in his record and classified him as a "student."

In defense of the dutiful Mr. Paul, we'll add that Dr. Fleishman might look like a student by his apparel and his short hair?

'IMPLIED CONSENT'?

by Barbara Boswell

The following is a warning to those people who tend to drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol: "Implied Consent" is the term applied to Pennsylvania's legal method of identifying persons driving under the influence of alcohol and removing them from the highway. The law specifies that in applying for, and receiving and accepting a license to operate a vehicle on Pennsylvania's Highways, it is implied that:

* you consent to a chemical test of the alcoholic content of your breath.

* you consent to this test being used to determine whether or not you are under the influence of alcohol while operating a motor vehicle, PROVIDED THAT the test is administered:

* by qualified personnel (all physicians and those police officers who have completed an approved training program)

* at the direction of a police officer having grounds to believe the person was driving under the influence of alcohol.

I thought I'd try to answer, briefly, some of your obvious questions: Yes. Yes. Ten one-hundredths percent. No. Yes. Yes. There, that should put your minds at ease.

Should one refuse to take the test, the officer fills out a form, the local magistrate signs it. After this, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles suspends one's license. No, I don't know for 'how long'. Strange.
