

# Faculty at UNLV are in a Nasty Mood

It is one thing to hypothesize about what an acting president should do, and quite another to document what an acting president actually does.

In our case, the acting president was given three clear and public mandates: call a truce in the war between athletic and academic interests, convince the legislature that higher education warrants support, and facilitate a search for a new president. It's still early in the play, but the reality looks like the acting president is stumbling badly on the first mandate—the war goes on and the body count is reaching stunning proportions.

In the past two years UNLV has lost its President, Deputy to the President, Provost, Vice-President of Business Affairs, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Research, Associate Vice-President of Student Services, director of the Student Advisory Center, Legal Counsel, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, and a body of faculty who have seen the writing on the walls.

Some of the above-noted dignitaries left on their own. But too many have left through the process of intimidation and smears perpetrated through the local media. It seems as though there is a continuation of an unstated agenda—one designed to leave UNLV headless exactly when it needs stability. Indeed, the faculty are in such a state of shock that the Faculty Senate did not have a Sep-

tember meeting because it was unable to field an agenda.

The athletic agenda is doing no better. The basketball coach has been beleaguered by legal, media and administrative pressures that nationally telegraph haste, instant gratification and wasted resource. We look stupid. Each year the contract for the basketball coach would have become increasingly easy to buy out; why the rush? We could have allowed the man, hired in good faith, to have a chance to prove his worth. We may field a credible basketball team, but what about our credibility, our honor and standing as a university?

We had better start thinking about the national image of UNLV. It is beginning to look as if we have a body of idiot regents, idiot boosters, idiot administrators, and idiot faculty. What everyone here should be keeping in mind is that you can't do university sports without a university. A university is generally defined by its teaching, learning and service functions. It seems clear that those functions are not the primary concern at UNLV.

While the faculty are given an average of 19 state dollars a year for research travel, the university found nearly \$2 million to buy out a coach's contract. The priorities are clear.

The faculty at UNLV are in a nasty mood. They live in one of the richest places in the world, and yet they have been continually run down by shoddy politics and manipulated by negative press. They have not

had a raise in three years—a situation that has repeated itself over and over again at UNLV. The economy is good, every industry is making money. And then the legislative session rolls around, and every negative economic indicator in the world is latched upon as the basis of holding back support for the state's institutions of higher learning.

The reward system has been as insane as the support system. The faculty are expected to publish and report upon their research findings. Because there is so little money for research and travel, the administration and research faculty have focused rewards on those faculty who have burned the midnight hours, spent their own money, and traveled in the pursuit of the research agenda. Superior teaching and community service have not been rewarded.

Those of us who know this campus can point to numerous faculty who burned the midnight oil for their students and the university community, but go unrecognized and unrewarded in term of rank and salary. The bottom line is the faculty have been divided upon themselves, and are in a state of disorder and disenchantment.

And listen to this, just as the basketball coach is being given almost

\$2 million to leave town, the faculty are being asked by the university's fund-raising foundation to please give money for university research. How about the foundation trying to match state monies for

research with private donations? How about having the foundation make the rule that every private athletic dollar must be matched by an academic dollar? How about asking the community to dig a little for excellence in the classroom, for the acquisition of knowledge, for the service of the community?

As many of you know, I have declared that if one person can act like an acting president, so can two—and I have thrown my hat in the ring, taken on the burden, tried to act like an acting president, through letters to the university community in *The Rebel Yell*.

As part of my act, I would restate that it is time for us to get collegial, for us to meet and discuss our collective goals and processes. No more shooting, no more body counts. No more support of one area at the cost to another. No more un-public agendas. Those are the rules of my acting presidency.

Will I succeed? I doubt it. It's like Socrates once said, there are times and circumstances when it is best to retreat to the leeward side of a strong rock and let the winds blow. In this play of ours, we need a backdrop, the sort that accompanies television weather reports. Ours would read, "High Wind Warning."

—Dr. Blythin has been a teacher, administrator and resident rhetorical critic at UNLV for 25 years. This is the 18th letter in his campaign for the presidency of UNLV.

Guest  
Commentary

EVAN  
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## The Religious Right Continues Its March

The Christians are coming! The Christians are coming!

Too many in both political parties, this comes as somewhat of a scare, if not an evil omen. Politicians from both parties are denouncing the rise of what is known as the "Religious Right."

They "try to impose laws . . . that trouble people who believe in the Constitution," declared Rep. Vic Fazio (D-Calif), head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. They promote "intolerant" policies, far outside "mainstream" thought, said two GOP leaders, Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Thomas Kean, the former governor of New Jersey.

They influence the outcome of party politics on the local, state, and federal level. They are said to have been a major influence in the outcome of the Republican senatorial primary, which Oliver North won, and the Minnesota gubernatorial primary, in which incumbent governor Arne Carlson lost to Allen Quist, a purported 'Christian activist.'

They are reviled by the media, blasted by politicians, and joked about by comedians across the land.

They are called intolerant bigots who use their religion as a smoke screen for their personal prejudices; hatemongers who abuse the fears of others to create political fronts to destroy democracy and impose their faith on.

Who are "they," those who consist of the religious Right? They are generally middle-class men and women, mostly of the Protestant persuasion. They do, however, come from all races, cultures, and walks of life. They are businessmen, lawyers, teachers, housewives.



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Before I go further, it should be noted that, while they are the majority, Protestant Christians are not the only ones who join in this coalition. Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Mormons, and many other religions participate in the political life of the religious Right.

Surprisingly, according to a poll released by the Roper organization, and contrary to the conventional wisdom, the religious Right is about evenly split on party affiliation and ratio, consisting of about 18 and 19 percent of the Democratic and the Republican parties, respectively.

The religious Right has a very basic agenda: to form broad-based, grassroots political coalitions leading to the ballot box. To win victories in politics, one must have a voice and a vote. After being as if dormant, while their country's leaders took them down a path they don't find to their liking, people who are exasperated with the status quo are now becoming politically active.

It is a populist revolt of sorts. It is primarily centered on issues of morality—such as school prayer, political correctness, abortion, gay rights, and pornography.

The main political priority is centered on the roll back of government programs and legislation that are seen as financially burdensome—and destructive—to our nation's families. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but if you can influence the mind of Caesar, more power to you.

They see the nation falling apart due to a moral collapse of a people who have lost their moral center. Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) agreed when he penned, in an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* a month ago, that "democracy begins to dissolve when (the) people to whom it is entrusted collectively lose their moral compass—a compass which, for many of us, has

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its basis in religious faith."

By influencing the political process and public policy formation, an individual becomes empowered. This is the way that it has always been. Groups such as the National Organization for Women, People for the American Way, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Abortion Rights Action League—those on the left side of the aisle, have been using such techniques for years.

Just recently—primarily within the last decade and a half—the religious Right and its organizations, Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, The Heritage Foundation, and National Right-To-Life Committee, have been doing catch-up work due to counter the Left's advances that were made during the apathy of the sixties and seventies.

Instead of reacting to Supreme Court decisions or congressional legislation, as they had done in the past before reeling from *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the religious

Right is arguing directly with their own teams of lawyers. In *Lee v. Weissman* (1992), the influential high-school graduation prayer case, Christian lawyers from the American Center for Law and Justice argued across the aisle with ACLU attorneys, and although they lost the case, the religious Right showed their legal prowess, impressing the opposition with their tenacity.

The religious Right is often times accused of being out to destroy the political careers of certain politicians—and rightfully so. When people of faith believe in an important value—religious liberty, for example—they should not be expected to stand idle while their sensibilities are being trampled upon by others. For the vice-president to go to a U.N. conference to advocate abortion as U.S. policy, this was anathema to many Christians and Muslims alike, and they made their protestations known. As they should.

The democratic process provides a way for all groups—

whether they be Right or Left—to gain access to the portals of political power. Indeed, the groups on the Left—some of whom were previously mentioned—are carefully watching and creating strategies to defeat the Right, and vice versa. The religious 'nuts' have gone political, and their opponents aren't too happy. The religious Right is on the march.

The ballot box has become the battlefield in the war of ideas. When the smoke clears, there will be a victor—and it will not be a pyrrhic victory. It will be interesting to see who will win in the end.

Those who do not vote cannot complain about government and the way it is run. The religious Right has decided that it is sick and tired of being the complainers.

—Donovan Steltzner  
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