

# Proposal offers profound change

Take a good, close look at what is attached to your copy of the Oct. 11 Assembly meeting minutes. You'll find a deceptively slim package of proposals that would, if adopted, make profound changes in faculty governance at the University. Nov. 9 is when the University Assembly will consider these proposals.

## comments james lemert

Our task force, which was appointed by the Faculty Advisory Council last fall, has been working on this set of proposals for almost exactly a year now. Many, many hours of information gathering, consultation and subcommittee work are behind these documents.

- In brief, these proposals would:
- Delegate legislative authority on most matters from the Assembly to the Senate, subject to rights of appeal back to the entire Assembly.
  - Reduce the voting membership of the entire Senate from its current 54 to 40 voting members.
  - Cut the proportion of student voting members from a third to a fifth of the new Senate.
  - Provide some release time from other responsibilities for the Senate President during his/her term in office.
  - Finally put on paper, in one document, many current governance practices which, until now, have been strewn through a maze of documents or have somehow survived, as tradition, in the collective consciousness of the University.
  - Automatically "sunset" all the new provisions unless the Assembly once again approves them three years later.

Why give legislative powers to the Senate? And why reduce the student presence in that Senate? Let's take the second question first. Even the 20 percent proportion of students that we recommend for the "new" legislative body is, after all, a significant leap upwards in effective voting power. The real legislature presently is the Assembly, where even the present maximum of 18 students becomes less than 20 percent any time more than 72 faculty show up. Nationally, to have students with any representation in their University's legislature is a rarity. There will be faculty members at the Nov. 9 Assembly meeting

who feel that even the eight voting students we are proposing are far too many. The task force does not believe the Assembly will support a newly-empowered Senate without a reduction in its present proportion of students. If we are wrong in that prediction, it will be easy enough to demonstrate our error when the Assembly votes.

Why give legislative power to the Senate? The University in the last major American university to depend on a town meeting style legislature. Ten years ago, the only remaining other major institution — the University of Wisconsin — junked its town meetings for good after it had given its new Senate system a three-year trial run. The same three-year trial is proposed here. Wisconsin found its town meetings couldn't effectively do business in crisis situations. Ironically, in view of a major criticism of our Assembly, Wisconsin couldn't get its business done when too many faculty showed up. Normally, we have the opposite problem: sparse attendance. Sparse attendance means potentially less representative decisions and, as an AAUP report said in 1969, Assembly decisions susceptible to "the concerted influence of special interest groups."

If too many show up, it clogs the town meeting's gears; if too few show up, the legitimacy of Assembly decisions is jeopardized. Perhaps then, the problem is not with how many it takes to gum up the works, but with "the works" themselves — the town meeting.

The town meeting always will be an excellent forum for a State of the University speech, where those attending listen and can ask questions. But in times of crisis, a town meeting can be almost totally unprepared either to initiate or to examine alternatives other than those offered us. For example, do you remember that mass meeting of faculty and staff in the EMU Ballroom concerning the University's financial crisis?

It is significant that the University has sought more flexible ways to discuss retrenchment with faculty, such as small group discussions combined with group reports at plenary sessions. The success of these other ways of discussing matters of crucial academic importance should tell us much about the inherent limitations of the Assembly.

From 1949 to 1972, three different faculty committees each recommended that the Senate replace the Assembly as the principal legislative body.

Perhaps they were trying to tell us something. James Lemert is the chair of governance task force and professor of journalism at the University.

# letters

## Travesty

The Rev. Stuart Shaw's twisted, "biblical" defense of abortion ("No Message," Oct. 11) is a travesty of the principle of faithful reasoning from scripture.

First, and most important, Shaw completely ignores the biblical evidence pointing to the humanity of the unborn child — the central issue of abortion.

Second, although the Bible does not explicitly say "Thou shalt not commit abortion," Shaw fails to see that abortion is implicitly prohibited by the sixth commandment — "Thou shalt not commit murder."

Third, Shaw also ignores the severe judgments pronounced by the prophets on those who consent to the shedding of innocent blood. The unborn child has a blood supply completely separate from its mother's.

But I do not have the space to list the scriptural evidence to prove my point. Instead, I would like to issue a challenge to the good

Reverend.

In a free and open debate before the students of this University I challenge Rev. Shaw to prove that the Bible has nothing to say against abortion and can, in fact, be construed to condone it.

I, on the other hand, will prove the following:

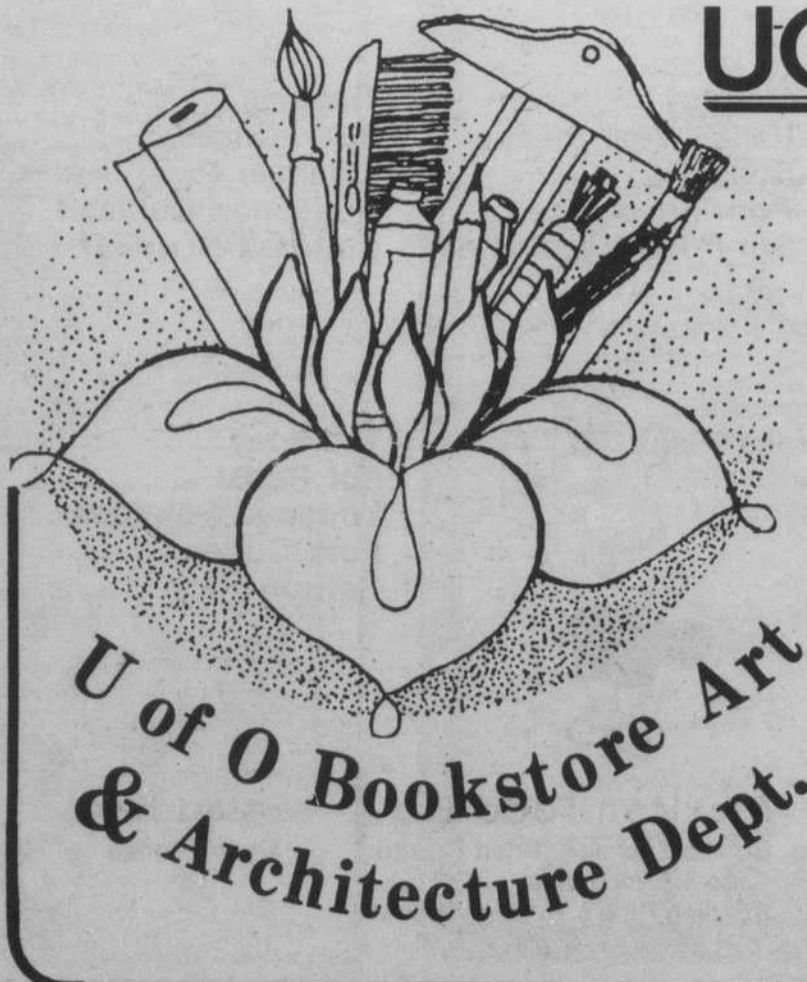
- 1) That the Bible contains ample, undeniable evidence that testifies to the true humanity of the unborn child in the eyes of God.
- 2) That based on the above evidence and a faithful adherence to the spirit and letter of the Bible,

Scripture implicitly and explicitly condemns abortion.

3) That "Christians" who persist in condoning abortion after fully hearing and understanding the biblical and medical evidence against it are guilty of willful rebellion against God, and should refrain from naming the name of Christ until they repent.

So, Reverend, grab your Bible, get your ducks in a row, and let's go. You may name the time and place, although I would prefer to be on campus. I await your reply.

Tom Visoky  
graduate, journalism



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