

# CLEMSON RESTRICTS PRAYER ON CAMPUS

A local resident wandered on to the campus of Clemson University, sat down on a folding chair, and held up a sign reading, "PRAYER." A student saw the man, sat down next to him, and joined him in prayer. An administrator from the university saw what was happening and proceeded to do his duty: he informed the man that his speech was in violation of campus policy.

This is the way Clemson operates. No South Carolinian who pays to support Clemson in his taxes is permitted to speak on the campus without written permission from a school official. Moreover, praying is regarded as "solicitation," and subject to restrictions: it is limited to "free speech zones," places set aside for First Amendment exercises. The censorial policy may be lifted provided the proper paperwork is completed and approved.

Clemson is not unique in restricting speech. It is a sad commentary in America that when it comes to free speech rights, the policies of many colleges and universities more closely resemble the strictures found in maximum security prisons than neighborhood libraries.

Prisons, of course, were established to protect the public from dangerous criminals. Universities were established—the first one was founded by the Catholic Church—to promote the free marketplace of ideas. But not anymore. Today, institutions of higher learning are more likely to engage in mind control than they are to promote the free exposition of ideas. And if there is one idea they really loathe, it is faith-based expression. Prayer is taboo. Indeed, it enjoys less protection than treasonous speech.

Recently, the House Appropriations Committee expressed its concerns about the proliferation of “free speech zones” on campus. Because Clemson receives public monies, it is important that our elected officials take note of its illiberal policies.