

Forum

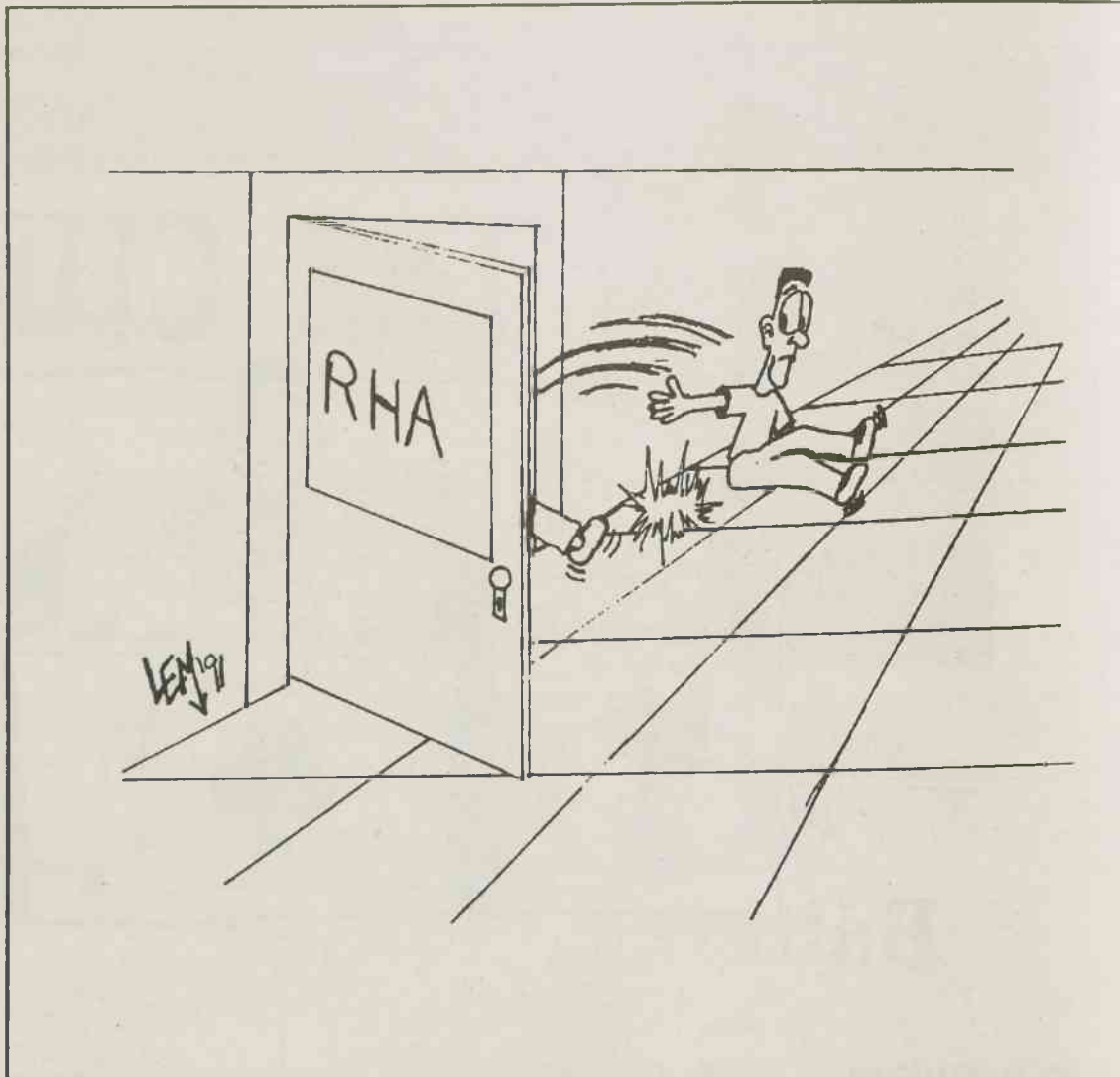
Dissent Over RHA Election

On the evening before campus elections, the governing board of the Residence Hall Association (RHA) voted 5-2-1 to endorse Scott Peeler and Christy Pons for RHA president. Peeler, Pons and opposing candidate Charles Streeter all participated in the voting.

Peeler and Pons were elected on February 12 amid cheers and dissent. The fact that RHA waited until the night before elections to issue an endorsement upset some students. Some felt that it was unfair that RHA waited until the last minute to issue an endorsement against Streeter, who had received endorsements from both The Daily Tar Heel and the Black Student Movement. They argued that the endorsement was unethical and was an attempt to force Streeter out of the elections. These feelings were further compounded by the fact that Streeter is African-American.

However, other students feel that the fact that RHA made an endorsement at the last minute is irrelevant. The election was not a close one. Peeler and Pons won by nearly 500 votes. These students feel that RHA's last minute endorsement could not possibly have influenced such a large amount of voters.

The newly elected RHA Co-Presidents and Streeter both agreed to address the African American community here, in Forum.



Streeter Wishes To Continue Work With RHA

Every year at election time, it seems something happens pertaining to elections, and this year was no exception. As many readers may know, I received two major endorsements from the Black Student Movement and The Daily Tar Heel. I feel these endorsements strengthened my campaign and may have given me the edge to win.

Then came the endorsement of the RHA governing board, which many have criticized as unethical. An organization should have some say in the election of a leader. But it appears from that an endorsement is not *the* way, when the candidate is from your own group. It is without a doubt the way in which this final endorsement was passed that disturbs me the most. If one of the RHA members felt so strongly about endorsement, then why wait until the last moment?

Why after I had received two endorsements from well-respected groups? Let me add that Gret Diffendal, RHA president, said before the election that she was not endorsing a candidate.

There is also the issue of the display of the endorsement on the front page of the Tuesday DTH. I ask: Why is this? However, I believe this was a decision of the DTH.

These factors lead me to believe that

what happened was a willful act against me. Many students feel it was due to my being a black male vying for the presidency of a predominantly white organization. Whether it was racial or personal, I cannot say because I am not a mind reader. But I look at the facts and base a judgment on them.

I must concede that I lost, although I have been wronged in the process. The phrase "nothing ventured, nothing gained" comes to mind. This does not mean that I am out of the picture as far as RHA is concerned. Given the opportunity, I will stay on the executive board after discussing these problems and possible solutions to continue to work toward the goal that initially inspired me to run.

I will not be there as a token to make up for the lack of diversity on the governing board, or any animosity on behalf of current, future or past RHA members. I am, and would be, in RHA to perform a duty that has been placed upon me by the residents, who must come before personal feelings (although wherever you place them, they still affect working relationships). I will not give up easily because it is only through hard work and perseverance that one accomplishes a goal.

— Charles Streeter

RHA Co-Presidents Believe Validity Comes Resident Body

As election day 1991 approached, we prepared ourselves for both the best and the worst. We hoped for victory, prepared for loss, and anticipated our reactions to both possibilities. We were not, however, prepared for the response we received last Tuesday night. We felt hurt, devastated and robbed of our celebration.

As the campaign has ended, we have received feedback that indicate many believe we are simply giving lip service on the issue of minority affairs. Ironically, in our attempt to avoid just this, we miscommunicated our true goals and plans. We are neither avoiding the issue nor paying lip service. We simply want to ensure that our final plan to tackle issues such as racial separation in residence halls is solid and concrete, and addresses residents' desires and needs. If we were to pursue a policy that neither African-American nor white students wanted, then we have failed as your representatives.

We understand that the central issue seems to be the RHA governing board endorsement. Naturally, we were thrilled that our peers would endorse us as the most qualified candidates. However, we did not ask this of them, nor did we initiate the endorsement process. Holding us account-

able for this is simply unfair.

We are excited about the next year and our term as RHA co-presidents. We have many things to accomplish — things that cannot be completed successfully without feedback from both the BSM and the African-American population as a whole. We feel confident in our ability to put the events of the past week behind us and move forward with purpose and a positive attitude.

The cries of a few students in Manning 209 seemed to us an attempt to invalidate our election. Our validity as RHA co-presidents comes from the resident body as a whole, however, and we claim *their* support. We won by a margin of roughly 500 votes. We feel sure these voters had made their decision prior to reading the DTH Tuesday.

It is our hope that these feelings of discomfort will soon deteriorate. We are open to further discussion and criticism of our platform and our plans for RHA, and we hope that the hostilities can be replaced with sincere, combined efforts to solve the problems before us. This is the best for the future RHA and the resident body.

— Scott Peeler and Christy Pons