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CGLA Referendum:

42% of Student Body Favor Funding; SBP Winner Martin and Most Student Congress Winners Pro-CGLA

As LAMBDA went to press, results of the SBP race were announced. Candidate Kevin Martin won by a margin of approximately 600 votes.

Student elections on February 16 produced an abnormally large turnout because of a referendum on the funding of the Carolina Gay & Lesbian Association (CGLA). Also on the ballot were seven candidates for Student Body President, six student referendums, candidates for Student Congress, Senior Class officers, Residence Hall Association & Carolina Athletic Association presidents.

The referendum concerning funding of CGLA emerged early last semester when two Student Congress members, H.F. Watts (District 17) and David McNeill (District 19) started a petition to place the referendum on the ballot. In a period of a month or two, they were able to garner 2,425 signatures, more than the required ten percent of the student body needed to place the referendum on the ballot.

CGLA representatives responded to the concept of this petition as being homophobic in its origin and intent. Since no other organization's funding was being questioned, CGLA argued that there would be no control group to determine how students felt about funding other student organizations. Neither would the results answer the begging question of whether students wanted to fund any organization, or even wanted to pay student fees.

Fortunately, such a referendum with so much potential for discriminatory decision-making (not to mention statistical error) was non-binding and only a gauge of student opinion. The UNC Student Congress, the legislative body which determines levels of funding for student groups with student activities fees, may choose to ignore or interpret the referendum results as they wish.

Intensity on the issue burned steadily as dozens of students wrote in to the Daily Tar Heel voicing their concern about the blatant discrimination which a few so-called "conservatives" on campus were perpetrating. A few examples: a fraternity on campus had been selling a "Stop AIDS" t-shirt, which pictured two male figures engaging in anal sex with the international circled slash over it, equating AIDS with homosexuality; in the 1987 Football Homecoming Parade, a campus dorm sponsored a float with "Deacs have AIDS"

emblazoned upon it (referring to the Wake Forest Deacons); organizers of the petition were telling students that CGLA spent all their money on social activities to persuade them to sign; and vandals had obliterated a CGLA bulletin board and painted over a 4'x 6' CGLA membership announcement with a religious message in the shape of a cross.

Probably the most damaging example of slander and misrepresentation against CGLA occurred just two days before the election. One of the seven candidates for Student Body President (SBP), Keith Poston, ran an openly homophobic campaign and promised in campaign speeches and literature that he would veto the entire budget if CGLA received one dime of student fees. On the eve of the election, Poston distributed a flier which included a photocopy of a sexually explicit pamphlet on AIDS risk reduction published by the Lesbian and Gay Health Project of Durham (LGHP).

Unfortunately, Poston did not document the pamphlet, but instead implied that student fees were used to publish the graphic terminology. He said in the letter, "I have enclosed a copy of a flier distributed by the CGLA concerning AIDS. I know you will find it as disgusting and obscene as I did. We cannot allow this kind of behavior to be funded by us anymore."

Although there was little chance for CGLA to respond, we were fortunate enough to have a front page news story in the Daily Tar Heel on the day of the election in which we pointed out the misrepresentations of Poston's flier. But, for the most part, the damage was already done.

The election results on the referendum and on the Student Body President election were fairly indicative of what an emotionally charged campaign this was. In the end, supporters of CGLA funding represented 42% of the vote (2,285 voters) while those who opposed funding were 58% (3,195 voters). On the surface it appears that CGLA "lost" the referendum, but one also has to consider several factors.

Firstly, we know more about the reasoning of those who supported funding than those who opposed it because there was no gauge of student opinion on other groups' funding. In fact, another referendum on the ballot concerning a one-time raise in student fees narrowly passed, with 2,537 voting against it.

Secondly, there is the SBP race. Four of the seven candidates endorsed CGLA funding, and two of those were the highest vote-getters, forcing a run-off between two

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