

Personal account

PIRG convention awakens political realities

by Joy Hamilton

Politics has always been boring to me—that is until last weekend when I began to take charge of my political life. Various groups founded by Ralph Nader were celebrating their tenth anniversary in Washington D.C. in a convention that started Friday and ended late Saturday.

For me, the excitement of the convention was magnetizing; it was like lightning had struck and I woke up from my deep slumber of political and national apathy and woke up to the anti-Reagan nightmare.

Reaganomics (Reagan economics) was discussed in detail from the budget cuts to the extreme conservatism displayed by the president in his televised speech last Thursday night. (Reagan was elected by only 25 percent of registered voters.)

Attending the convention from North Carolina were one student from Duke University, one student from UNC-G, one student from Elon College, and co-PIRG state coordinator Rebecca Margolese-Malin. The group trekked to Washington,

D.C., last Thursday night for a meeting of people from other Nader-oriented groups.

The above mentioned people were attending the convention because they were members of the Public Interest Research Group, known as PIRG. North Carolina has PIRGs at seven college campuses in the state. The PIRGs at these campuses study current issues in the hopes of shaping the democratic culture with an outlet for citizen involvement and responsibility.

The PIRGs on the Elon campus are currently studying voter registration, toxic waste in Alamance County, how the federal cuts will affect social services in the county, and various other issues.

Approximately 200 students from PIRGs in the nation attended the convention that had nearly 750 participants. Featured in the two-day convention were Ralph Nader, Marlo Thomas and Phil Donahue, musical activist Pete Seeger, and former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson.

The future of Ralph Nader-based groups and the controlling of insurance funds, pension funds, public airwaves and public lands were among the issues discussed during the convention. Also featured was a solar film produced by Robert Redford.

The new conservatism was openly discussed, and time was provided for spectators to address issues on the "open mike."

On Saturday, Phil Donahue, TV talk show host, moderated debates on media access and corporate power.

One thing I learned during the convention was that although a single person may have trouble changing aspects of political, economic, and social injustice, an organized group can be deadly, and its protests can activate change. And at Elon, a handful of these people can help save the world (or at least Alamance County).

This political awakening within me has inspired me to work to bring about social and political change. To see 200 students who are so

nonapathetic and politically alive made me realize the tremendous impact students have.

My only hope is that more people I come into contact with will strive to fight what some people call "City Hall." One chance for Elon students will be this Saturday when they will have an opportunity to register to vote in Alamance County from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at City Hall, in Elon College.

A handful of people can change the world. An example of this is activist Heather Booth, executive

director of the Citizens Labor Energy Coalition. She said in a speech on Saturday, "We must give a sounding 'no' to abandonment of the struggle for social justice. But we can't win alone. We need to get women out of the kitchen. Women may have a place to sit but can't afford to eat."

Booth added, "Reagan cuts have not hit." But people are shifting and there is an alternative for a new direction." I, Hamilton, add that this direction could readily come from the students of today, the leaders of tomorrow.

News Briefs

Elon College's blood drive will be held on Thursday, Oct. 8, in Jordan Gym from 10 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Awards will be given to the campus organization, fraternity, sorority, and residence hall that donate the highest percentages of units.

Donor sign-up began Wednesday, Sept. 30, at both McEwen and Harden dining halls. Everyone is urged to register early for this year's blood drive.

Members of the Colonnades staff are invited to a picnic on Sunday, Oct. 4, from 3 to 6 p.m. at the home of Dr. Andrew Angyal.

Those coming should bring a side dish or refreshments. Casual attire will be suitable. For more information, call Dr. Angyal at 578-2387.

The Elon Gospel Choir will be holding a car wash on Saturday at 2402 South Church St. directly across from Wendy's.

The car wash will start at 10 a.m. and continue until 3 p.m. The price for an outside car wash will be \$2.50.

The North Carolina Virginia College English Association will sponsor a conference on Saturday, Oct. 10, at N.C. State University.

Covering many topics of interest to English majors and professors, the conference will begin at 8 a.m. and close at 12:45 p.m. with a luncheon. Call Dr. Linda Bland at 584-2263 or Andrew Angyal at 584-2263 for further information.

Juniors and seniors wishing to be considered for Who's Who should prepare a list of activities at Elon and turn it in to Dr. Charles White in the Academic Dean's Office on or before Oct. 2.

The faculty of the English Department and the members of Sigma Tau Delta will host an afternoon reception for all English and English Journalism majors, including prospective majors on Wednesday, Oct. 7, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the home of Dr. Robert Blake. Dr. Blake lives at 401 College Ave.

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