

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rationality needed in civil dialogue

Professor: 'Who will take us seriously if we don't make sense?'

To the Editor:

"Conservative Manifesto, Take Two" makes important points, as did take one. There is indeed a time to jettison civility and civil dialogue. The Boston Tea Party was hardly an exercise in civility. The anti-war movements of the 1960s also went beyond civil dialogue at times, so point well taken. To everything there is a season. I would argue, however, that it was not the incivility by itself that led to the victory for American colonists or anti-war activists. While it is a useful tactic in some circumstances (we might argue whether the situation the column describes is such a circumstance), I don't think it is very useful by itself. Nor do I think Morton Blackwell or Phil Graham or the other conservatives the column mentions would agree with the sentiment "civil dialogue my ass." The most recent edition of *Building Leadership*, the publication of the Leadership Institute that the column refers to, reports on its training of young people to work in civil society, not in bomb factories.

As a polemic, the column does

not need to get its facts straight. However, as a historian, I have to insist that all the evidence be presented no matter the final judgement. For more recent examples of conservative speakers than Margaret Thatcher and F. W. de Klerk, how about Allan Simpson, the former Senator from Wyoming, who spoke last year? Hardly a liberal. And again, I can easily imagine that his fee was far higher than were those of some liberal speakers. There may well be an argument to be made about the balance of speakers on campus, but it remains to be made.

To make a rational argument, one needs to be logical and consistent. Why were Thatcher's and de Klerk's appearances "cameos," but Werbach's was not? How can one claim that "this country is a democracy," but then criticize a professor for expressing an opinion on nuclear weapons?

How can one ask what makes that professor an authority on nuclear weapons, and then turn around and speak as an authority on the political views of faculty, in-

cluding my own? You can't have it both ways.

Finally, to say that my goal was to attack the point of the column is simply wrong. My response said that "the column's main point... was a good one," and I referred to it as "a valid point." Sometimes we're so intent on yelling that we don't even hear when people agree with us.

In the end, I insist again that the column has good points to make. Does the college present all viewpoints? The column calls on us to celebrate diversity. Do we? I think so, but if others don't than it deserves our full attention. Beyond talking, students should get involved in the campus, as this and another column point out. (The Revolution and the anti-war movement were successful because people got involved.) And instead of yelling about it, we should present rational arguments backed up with factual evidence. Who will take us seriously if we don't make sense?

Sincerely,
Jim Brown

Professor calls for civil dialogue

Gimmicks unnecessary in real political debates

To the Editor:

Is it too late for civil dialogue at Elon as the writers of "Conservative Manifesto II" suggest?

I hope not; civil dialogue can be direct and witty, and we certainly need it to solve problems, but the facts must matter as Professor Jim Brown pointed out so well.

Sounding off on many topics, ad hominem attacks, and name calling may help us blow off steam, but they can also make a column an unproductive monologue. We need to persuade each other; intimidation doesn't work in the long run as a rhetorical strategy or as a foreign policy.

The *Pendulum* staff has a major role to play in encouraging

good political debate at Elon, and we need a lot more of it.

Putting name calling in the heading of my Letter to the Editor, e.g. "Nuclear Test Ban Voted Down: Example of Conservative Idiocy" is eye-catching but unfair to a letter that listed many conservative supporters of the Treaty and emphasized that it could have been a victory for us all.

Real political debate is interesting in itself; it doesn't need to rely on the gimmicks of anger and abuse. Let's not accept them as a substitute.

Sincerely,
Anne Cassebaum

When surfing the Net, check out the Pendulum Online!

www.elon.edu/pendulum
It's your cyberspace link to Elon!

Elon uniqueness reflected in Fightin' Christian

To the Editor:

I know that by this point, this has been stated many times, but after conversing with a friend this evening, I feel compelled to write this letter.

Elon College markets itself as a unique, small college which is, to quote the current admissions video, "steeped in tradition, yet moving confidently towards the future." However, I, along with many other students, faculty and alumni, feel that this tradition is being stripped away from this fine institution.

By taking away the mascot "Fightin' Christian," we are taking away the school's identity. When you mention Elon College to some people who don't know the school all that well, they say, "Hey, you all are the Fightin' Christians!"

Our mascot is how we are known, and I for one, am proud to be a Fightin' Christian. Yes, it's a contradiction of terms, but that is why we're unique.

Elon proclaims that it's a small school with the advantages of a large university, which is a contradiction of terms the school uses to promote itself!

But I guess it's all right, since it is "inclusive." As for the "inclusive" issue: every piece of literature that is sent out to pros-

pects notes the school was founded by the UCC, and that the mascot is the "Fightin' Christian." Hence, students know the history of the institution before they come here.

Although this has been said, I think we should consider what Elon has taught us and wants us to do: change the world. Let's start here at Elon. I know that students and alumni are upset about the change, and if we all organized in some way to prevent the name change, then the administration might realize that this is not what the general population wants.

I would offer this as a suggestion to all of the concerned parties, if we truly value our namesake. If going to Division I means that we have to give up our identity, the Elon doesn't need Division I.

Let's be recognized for the unique institution we are, not the institution some people think the nation wants us to be. Do your part, let your voice be heard. Elon wants us to be a part of our world, so let's do it by letting it be known that we are damn proud to be Fightin' Christians!

LONG LIVE ELON COLLEGE!

Sincerely,
Patrick C. Gallagher



Got something on your mind?

Write a Letter to the Editor

Mail letters to 7012 Campus Box or drop them off at *The Pendulum* office (Moseley Center 233) by noon Monday. You must include your name and phone number.