

## THE GUILFORDIAN

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## I Have a dream . .

"I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'

—In Memory of Martin Luther King, Jr.

## CAMPUS COMMENT: SAC vs Student Power

### Can Students Have Responsibility?

Dear Sirs:

In the academic community one is allowed the chance to communicate with his fellows in whatever way he feels most effective. The Student Affairs Committee, then, will not begrudge my speaking to them on paper, where I feel I can make an impression, instead of over the mahogany board-table, where it has been demonstrated that I cannot.

My concern is with the proposed dress restrictions, which are currently awaiting passage through the Committee. I spoke out on elaborate dress regulations and advised their approval March 19: Bob Wilson spoke out on elaborate dress regulations and advised against their approval April 9: we will both, inevitably, speak out on elaborate dress regulations and advise against their approval on April 16, at which time they will, inevitably, be approved.

What will be the content of these dress restrictions? If they reflect the Committee's discussion in previous sessions they will (a) enforce semi-formal attire for men and women at Wednesday and Sunday meals, (b) possibly enforce Semi-formal dress at all evening meals and provide a salaried cafeteria hostess to prevent those who would dine in inappropriate dress from dining at all, (c) possibly enforce improvement of student dress in class and on campus, and (d) probably enforce an air of increased gentility and good taste in the student body. These are the suggestions which have been made and to which no non-student member of the Committee has seriously objected; we can expect most or all of them to become policy in a matter of weeks.

And it would be a decidedly wise and fitting policy at that, but for the generally overlooked fact that teaching young adults what to wear and how to wear it is the prerogative of the Finishing School, under which category the Quaker School does not traditionally qualify. I

would not presume to lecture my fellow committee-members on Quaker History and custom, but it was George Fox, I believe, who went to prison on several occasions for his refusal to remove his hat in a court of law, as required by seventeenth century custom. No denomination is more justly famous for pointing up the individual spirituality of man and woman through non-conformity and plainness, as you may made aware by glancing at the portrait of Nathan Hunt which hangs outside your meeting room. You will be offended, no doubt, to realize that Nathan wears no tie.

These are typically Quaker considerations. We have not, in Student Affairs Committee, fallen into the habit of allowing mere religious sentiment to influence college policy, so I would not expect to gain much support for killing the dress code on such dubious grounds. But there are other very urgent reasons militating for a liberal dress policy and discouraging the standardization of student dress at any given time. Consider that we are not, after all, a fashionable school, an affluent school, a prestige school whose success depends upon the turning out of hordes of urbane and sophisticated Seniors: nor are we attempting to attain any but intellectual grandeur. Consider that we are trying to become a less regional school, and that it behooves us not to constantly be invoking North Carolina standards. Consider that we are accumulating, at great cost in time and trouble, a curious and seeking studentry, and that no creative and independent freshman is going to apply to a school whose administrators have no greater concern than to tell him what he may and may not be permitted to wear in the library. And consider, finally, that the individuals who most resist standardization of dress are mysteriously the same ones who show up in the Moon Room after convocations; the ones

who run our slum-teaching programs; the ones who publish the newspaper; the ones who have painted our pictures and sung in our choir and brought us our dramatics prizes; the ones who get us in the news occasionally, outside the confines of the sports pages. They are, speaking generally, our cultural hewers of wood and drawers of water, and they bring us whatever small shreds of intellectual dignity we have. We might concede to them that perhaps they do, after all, possess a certain measure of taste.

I hope my impatience with this proposed collectivization of student taste will not earn me the ill-feeling of any of the faculty and administration members of Student Affairs; but I should like to do whatever I can to point out to a none-to-sensitive administration, on behalf of the student body I represent on SAC, that it has failed to grasp the meaning of the liberal arts college. When it becomes apparent that human and intellectual values are absent in so many areas of the life of a college, and when the stimulation of creativity and student interest has become crucial in the race to bring Guilford back into the twentieth century as a reputable center of learning, it is time to stop worrying about the Old School Tie.

Very Cordially yours,  
Robert Swain  
Student Affairs Committee

**!!VOTE!!**