

# Election Reflection

## An Editorial

BY RICHARD PHILLIPS

When I decided to run for Executive Council of the Community Senate, I was certainly hopeful that politics on a campus the size of Guilford could be kept in a realm that was sensible and decent. Last year's elections were characterized by an unnecessary amount of distasteful charges and counter-charges. That is why when I first approached my potential running mates, John Richardson and Bob Wells, I made it clear that I wanted no involvement in the kind of campaign we typically see with platforms and promises of accomplishments to come. But, really, Guilford is not Washington, D.C., and I have no political favors to trade with anyone to help accomplish what I will. That is why I did not see it necessary to publicize a platform per se. I am not even sure that Bob, John, and I agree on many of the issues. We did not talk about them enough to really find out. But we did spend our time talking about what could be done to achieve greater involvement in the Community Senate. I think it is only obvious that this is the chief failing of any student government — or perhaps any democratic form of government. I would even hope that the fact that my runningmates and I do not even agree necessarily on many of the issues would be an attraction for our ticket — if it had been known.

But it did not seem to me that this year's senate elections were kept out of the rut into which they fell last year. The February 22 issue of the *Guilfordian* contained five letters to the editor that specifically dealt with the elections. I found two of these to be decent and the other three to be indecent; two of these to be fair and the other three to be unfair; two of these to be reasonable and the other three to be unreasonable. I would like to deal with each of the letters.

The letter from Sara Beth Terrell was written with good judgement. She said what she felt needed to be said, but she did it without propogandizing her position by siding with one or the other tickets. The letter from Eric Jackson accomplished nearly the same thing. He said what he felt he needed or wanted to say. Part of what he wanted to say of course was that he hoped those reading the letter would support the ticket

of which he was a member. This is only obvious. But what is important to me is that he said it in a way that does not try to bring discredit to the rest of the tickets. These two letters are the kind of campaigning that I had hoped to find in the Senate elections. The other three letters in this particular issue of the *Guilfordian* were the kinds of literature that I would hope to not have to come up against.

The letter co-signed by Mark Sieber, Jenny Wiebler, and Frances Henderson struck me as being no more than a piece of propoganda trash and I think it is insulting to me and to the community in which we live. Their first point mentions that "of the four candidates, only one is currently a member of the community senate." This is true, but the President constitutes only one-third of the Executive Council. The president is just not that all-important a figure that anyone should vote for a ticket solely on the basis of that ticket's presidential candidate. I'm proud to "regularly appear on Guilford's roster of complainers." I suppose that this charge is referring to my involvement with the Community Council about the matter of dormitory life. I have never uttered a word to the Administrative Council about any matter. The Community Council is a place to air concerns, and anyone as well as I could air their concern if they wanted to. The Community Council has absolutely no decision-making power, they are only there as a place to express a concern of the Guilford College Community. Of course people are going to see in a situation that which they want to, and I am as guilty of this as anyone, but what people fail to realize is that I did something about a situation that I saw as dissatisfactory to a substantial number of students. And it is ludicrous to think that that matter went as far as it did, in terms of time and energy spent, just because Richard Phillips was "complaining." There were a good number of students involved in that effort (more about that later) and the fact is that the Administration was aware for a good number of years that there was a severe problem about the attitudes of many of the resident students towards the community as a whole. They told me that they had

simply been waiting for a number of years for enough students to become concerned with the situation because that is what it was going to take to make improvements. The nature of the problem was not something that the Administration could do something about. And obviously, the time is not ripe, that is to say, enough students really do not care enough because that effort has obviously fizzled out.

Granted this letter from Sieber, Wiebler, and Henderson was only talking about presidential candidates, but let's extrapolate their concern about experience to the other members of the tickets. The other two members of the ticket these authors were supporting have, I would venture to say, absolutely no experience in working with the Senate. Therefore, I think that this point in the letter is either presidentially-elite or hypocritical. And I think it is unfair to charge that I am only concerned with the Senate now after bypassing them all year. As co-editor of the *Guilfordian*, I thought it imperative that at least the Senates be published on page one whenever possible. This is not to mention the fact that I attended a handful of Senate meetings and went so far as to suggest in one that whenever possible Senators should alert the communications committee, or whoever was responsible for those duties, of any work that they might be doing so that this could be reported to the newspaper and in effect, the agenda published for the upcoming Senate meeting. The hope was that this would encourage other members of the community to attend at least one meeting, that is one in which there was something of specific interest to them being discussed.

Their second point about the Williams ticket being the only one that is not solidly male ticket is nothing more than sexist in itself. I think one of the practical goals of the women's movement (or whatever you might want to call it) is that we be able to get to the point where we need not even consider the sex of an individual. It was more than once suggested to me that before the ticket to which I belonged was organized that I certainly ought to have a woman on the ticket if I wanted to have any chance of

winning. I dismissed this suggestion without any second thoughts. I resent the sexist implications of their second point.

And the third point of this ill-conceived letter is thoroughly disgusting. They write of my ticket: "The third is not campaigning as such, but is conducting fireside chats. Unfortunately, they seem to have little spark and too much dead wood." Group discussions are in my opinion a much better way to exchange ideas and find out what the sentiment of the community is. If you want to have individual conversations, why bother, simply take a poll. But, if you want to try and have a mutual exchange of ideas and at least make the first attempt at arriving at some kind of consensus decision, then group discussions are the best method in my opinion. Bob and John and I are not the dead wood: we were there for the discussions; it is all the people who failed to show, and failed with no good reason to show, that indeed are the dead wood. We tried in what we saw as the most effective means to involve the students. Granted, it did not work as well as we would have liked. I apologize for not being gut-level and being pretentious as Sieber, Wiebler, and Henderson have charged.

The second letter that I have disagreement with is the cute one from A. Launched Quaker. As best I can figure out, I am the "seemingly debonaire, miscast Demosthenes (who is in gear only for the elections)." Again, this letter is infused with an elitist attitude toward the President of the Community Senate that is alarming to say the least. And of course it is only obvious that it gets nasty throwing about accusations that are insulting and degrading. Why is this necessary? I don't feel like this is an unreasonable concern that I have that I not be slandered in the campus newspaper. I do not appreciate being the victim of a piece of propoganda. That is not what the newspaper is for. I think it should be for the publication of responsible and ethical pieces, not the kind of advertisement for one candidate that this letter most obviously is.

And lastly, the letter from Peter Reichard. The first portion devoted to the discrediting of the Elliott Good Party are nothing but slander-

ous and irresponsible. There is no place for commentary like that anywhere. In dealing with me personally and the Alternative Party, Peter charges that we "offer an alternative to student government." This is hardly true at all. What we hoped to offer was an alternative method of student government. Our platform is just not that important. The will of the Executive Council should not be the work of the Community Senate. Therefore, a platform is unnecessary and in my opinion, even inappropriate.

One point that I would like to make, which I mentioned parenthetically earlier, is noteworthy. I first approached the Community Council at the invitation of Bruce Stewart to express what I saw the problem to be from the point of a student living in the dorm and an intern in the dorm. They invited me to gather a group of students to bring before them in a specially-called meeting the next week to propose some solutions for the the problem. Peter Reichard was one of those students, and his development of the party room proposal is the realization of his efforts and the support of the community council at that time. We were both appointed to the *ad hoc* committee that was to meet and consider further the problem and the proposed solutions.

My point is this: if my approaching the Community Council was so inappropriate, why was Peter Reichard so willing to participate fully in the handling of the matter by the Community Council and how is one to explain his own lack of initiative in organizing the matter as a concern of the Community Senate when he was so obviously interested and enthusiastic in solving the problem? That is for Peter to answer. For myself, I would simply say that the Community Council was not an inappropriate place to take the matter and to take the matter to the Community Senate would have been also very helpful. I am only sorry that it was not done.

I hope in the future that people will be more careful about what they write. There is not anything to gain that is worth the gaining by slandering someone in as irresponsible a manner as I view these letters to be. Running for office was a lot of fun!!