

The Western North Carolina

Green Line

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Young environmentalists

YIPPIEs, YUPPIEs, and now YAPIs

by Bill Branyon

Twenty-one high school students have stirred up controversy in Highlands, N.C. They have climbed trees to prevent their cutting; published an environmental call-to-arms newspaper and sent it to all N.C. high schools; and produced a traveling ecological road show that has met with general acclaim. Started in the spring of 1989, the group calls themselves YAPIs — Youth Advocating Planetary Improvement. The YAPIs have also written and performed ecological public service announcements on the Highlands T.V. station and are negotiating with Ted Turner's stations for airings. They have adopted a mile of highway for cleaning and paving with wild flowers, tried to get the earth flag flown underneath the N.C. and American flags at their high school, and started a junior high version of their organization called Yaplings.

The YAPI quarterly newspaper, edited by Erin Graves, is well written and left this critic with a renewed vigor for advancing environmental causes. Called *Reflections* the paper's dateline is "No Time Left" and its cost is "Free But Not Easy". It has thorough articles on recycling, the effects of styrofoam and auto emissions, the black bear crisis, and acid rain. It also contains a report on the destruction of wetlands at Highland High School, poems and art, and an action-inspiring page based on the paper's slogan borrowed from Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, its the only thing that ever has."

Reflections' stories often synthesize diverse facts such as is done in one called "Madness", by Barry Watts, that notes there are enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world 27 times, while world military spending is \$1.5 million/second. Watts contrasts these observations with the assertion that six days of worldwide military spending would end world hunger for a year, and six hours of world weaponry buying is more than has been spent on the environment in ten years.

The YAPIs helped area garden clubs try to stop the destruction of 50-year old dogwood trees that stood in the way of a parking lot on the main street in Highlands on Nov. 17. YAPIs prevented the onslaught for a while by climbing and leaning on the trees while area garden clubbers barricaded approaches. According to YAPI sponsor Collin Paxton, chainsaws finished off the trees that evening. Though unsuccessful in stopping the cutting, the YAPIs noted that the protest did cause many people to think about whether they wanted their town to be the next Gatlinburg. It also shook the ruling

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Can Helms be beaten?

**One expert in
North Carolina
politics says
yes — but only
if the
Democrats
take on
"citizen power"
issues**

by Barry Yeoman,
The Independent (Durham, N.C.)

Just as North Carolina was beginning to forget the terrible U.S. Senate race between Jesse Helms and Jim Hunt six years ago, the time has come for our senior senator to seek re-election.

Before the mud begins to fly, we wanted to help set the stage for the 1990 race. So we turned to Paul Luebke, one of the foremost experts in North Carolina politics. Luebke, who teaches sociology at UNC-Greensboro, has been active for many years in efforts to set a "citizen power" agenda in his hometown of Durham — a political agenda that stresses such issues as environmental protection and minority empowerment.

Luebke is also the author of *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities*, fresh off the presses and scheduled to reach area bookstores by next month. In *Tar Heel Politics*, Luebke offers a major reinterpretation of our political life, debunking the myth of North Carolina as a "progressive" Southern state.

Most pertinent to 1990, Luebke's book explains why Jesse Helms appeals to so many white voters—even ones who don't share his conservative politics. He examines why the senator came from behind to beat Democratic opponent Jim Hunt in

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powers of the town; the mayor said, "This has been the sorriest episode in Highlands' history", and called for the resignation of his tree-supporting Zoning Board chairperson.

According to Paxton, the next day there was a protest in which many YAPIs and others marched. YAPIs were carrying their earth flag when a local store owner grabbed the flag, saying it was a satanic symbol.

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