

# PIRG referendum is on; points need consideration

Whether or not the student body likes it—or even knows it—a referendum on the status of a Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) organization on this campus will be held Nov. 6.

The decision to put this issue on the ballot this fall was the result of some extremely poor planning on the part of the Campus Governing Council (CGC).

For these reasons, the CGC action is ill-conceived:

- The decision to put the PIRG issue on the ballot was made by CGC last Tuesday, just two weeks before the election;
- Two weeks is not enough time for the students to absorb both sides of the issue and to make a reasonable decision;
- The PIRG issue is complicated, involving much more than what projects PIRG would be sponsoring. Many other questions about politics, principles and funding are involved;
- The PIRG referendum is scheduled one day after the Nov. 5 general elections, and will undoubtedly be overshadowed by these other elections;
- While voter turnout in the campus spring elections is traditionally low, the turnout for by-elections is simply pitiful. For example, about 6 per cent of the students voted in the by-elections held this past Oct. 2.;
- There was a bill before the CGC to postpone the PIRG referendum until next spring, when there would be a more representative and more knowledgeable percentage of students voting, but this was defeated;
- Finally, Student Body President Marcus Williams said that PIRG representatives would be willing to delay.

Despite these substantive reasons for setting the referendum at a later date, CGC plans to go ahead as scheduled.

Little can be done now except to try as much as possible to hash through the good and bad of PIRG in just ten days.

## PIRG's good points

PIRG is a nationwide organization, but the state PIRGs are autonomous and may act as they please. In this state, PIRG is currently established on four campuses; Duke, Wake Forest, St. Andrew's and Davidson.

The number of representatives each school sends to the state board is determined by its enrollment. Thus, UNC would control a large proportion of the board.

If PIRG is established on this campus, student fees will increase by \$3 per year over the current \$18 paid in yearly fees. Any student not wanting to pay the PIRG fee could so indicate on his registration form.

Of the roughly \$60,000 collected in fees, 90 per cent would go towards state projects and 10 per cent would automatically return for local projects.

On the statewide level, many enemies of the consumer could be investigated, with the prior approval of the campus representatives. Also, PIRG could constitute a powerful lobbying force in Raleigh.

In general PIRG would give clout to consumers as a whole. PIRG would also absorb many of the activities of the Student Consumer Action Union (SCAU).

## Reservations to consider

PIRG may be involved in worthwhile activities, but what benefits are there for this campus?

Also, there are a lot of outside groups with potentially worthwhile goals. What kind of precedent are we setting by allowing this first one to come on campus?

What about the funding procedure? Why should students be required to mark off each semester if they do not want to pay the PIRG fee? Shouldn't students not have to pay the fee unless they check off the \$3 on their registration forms?

Why is the procedure for getting rid of PIRG so much more difficult than the process of getting it established? All PIRG needs to get started is the approval of a majority of students in a by-election with low voter turnout. To get removed from campus, PIRG would first have to be refused fees by more than 50 per cent of the student body, and then be defeated in a subsequent referendum by a vote of 65 per cent.

Once PIRG gets a foothold, it may be almost impossible to remove, despite a conceivably large majority of students who would be either against it or indifferent to it.

Although at first UNC would have a large proportion of members on the state board, the entrance of the Chapel Hill campus into PIRG would be a strong selling point for PIRG to recruit support on other campuses, in which case UNC-CH's strong hand would diminish.

The 10 per cent of funds coming back locally—a maximum of \$6,000—is less than SCAU's annual budget of \$9,000. Do we want to edge out SCAU, which has printed many valuable pamphlets and which was able, through pressure, to get concessions for tenants in Old Well apartments?

Obviously, despite PIRG's many good points, there are many bothersome particulars which must be answered. PIRG must show its efficiency and responsibility as an organization in answering these questions to students in the next 10 days.

Doug Clark

# The high price of grades

The purpose for going to college, I am told, is to prepare for the lives and careers that we will lead once we get out into the "real world." The University of North Carolina, I am told, is one of the better places at which we may obtain the tools necessary if we are to succeed in that world. This may be true. After four or more years here we may be better able to compete against others for those prized but elusive goals of prestige and prosperity.

However, before we can begin to climb the ladder of success in the highly competitive society in which we live, we must overcome many obstacles here. Only the most capable among us will emerge from this University with a better-than-even chance to reach the upper levels of society. These are people who prove right here that they have the drive and the talent to out-do their fellow travelers in whatever journey they embark upon. They accomplish much now, and are destined for even greater successes. But what price do they pay for their achievements?

Our University is a small society unto itself, one very much like the "real world." There are many people here striving for many things. Success here can win one a ticket to success in later life. And just as in the "real world" where success can be measured in dollars and cents, success here can be measured in A's and B's.

Dollars and good grades are very similar things. Everybody, it seems, wants them, but there are limited supplies of both. However, the more one gets the easier it is to get more.

Consequently, people will go to great lengths to obtain them. What's worse, it appears that people are going to greater and greater lengths all the time. Politicians, of course, have long had the reputation of knowing how to make an easy dollar, but Nixon and Agnew certainly overstepped the boundary of what is reasonable. Most recently, the matter of Wilbur Mills' \$1,500 champagne parties has been brought to the public's attention. But these things really are not so unreasonable when one considers the amount of white-collar crime and questionable tax write-offs that take place every year. Similarly, some students at this University (and, presumably, others) will do almost anything for a good grade.

Since there is only so much money, one person's accumulation of it, by whatever means, causes another person's deprivation. So if Nixon uses taxpayers' money to improve his home at San Clemente he is using money that could be better spent, perhaps for hungry people, and when a wealthy business executive loopholes his way out of paying large part of his taxes he may be depriving illiterate people of an education.

Similarly, if there is a limited supply of good grades, then students are in direct competition with each other. Most people are not consciously trying to better their classmates, but they are out to make good grades.

There are several ways to do this. One is to be highly intelligent. Another is to study very hard. Yet another is to seek a lot of easy courses, and a final way, one

that an appalling number of people employ, is to cheat. None of these methods is guaranteed to stand on its own, but the right combination of the four can leave one well ahead of the field.

It is a shame that enough emphasis is placed on grades and money to make people do what they do for them. Sure, grades can help determine what a person's ability to perform in a certain capacity is, but they don't always tell what he knows, just as a person's salary can't tell you what he's worth. Besides, grades are fickle. They can vary from teacher to teacher, course to course and by the luck of a single test.

Of course, one may argue that without grades the potential successes cannot be separated from the potential failures. But when considering prospects for a job or graduate school, does it make sense to include all those grades from courses irrelevant to the individual's chosen field in a single deceptive QPA? Is a high QPA really worth the struggle and the pressures from oneself and others?

The need for high grades is only too easily transformed into the need to make a high salary in the hopes that wealth can buy security and happiness. But perhaps it takes a special kind of inner security to find happiness in knowing that one can exist and be productive and not feel the need to compete with others. Many people do have this kind of security. I hope to.

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THAT'S OUR BOY!

Thomas and Stevens

## Twin opportunities

Sometimes the most important events get the least attention. Such could be the case both tonight and Thursday night when Holly Stevens and Dr. Lewis Thomas come to speak in Chapel Hill.

Tonight Bernadette Devlin is speaking at the same time Wallace Stevens' daughter will be in 101 Greenlaw. Thursday is Halloween, but Dr. Thomas will be the main treat of the evening in Memorial Hall. If you're free around eight o'clock on either night, think twice before you automatically go do what everyone else is doing.

Devlin will take most of the suspense out of her talk by showing up. She is a courageous woman but popular and visible leaders aren't always the best, or the most interesting, speakers. Colleges have the tendency to go after the big names (with even larger honoraria) even though people with lower public profiles are usually cheaper, and more provocative. The two speakers who are coming this week

should be the best bargains of the semester.

If you think you've had enough medicine after C.P. Snow, think again about Lewis Thomas. A Renaissance man who combines being head of the nation's leading cancer research institute with one of the best prose styles in American, Dr. Thomas should be a vast improvement over Lord Snow. He is one of America's ablest citizens and is well worth delaying those All Hallows Eve celebrations for at least an hour.

Picking good speakers is like choosing fruit. When they're too green or too ripe they're rotten, and the biggest specimens don't always have the best flavor. Carolina is often starving for this basic element in our intellectual diet, but finally two carefully-selected speakers are coming. Yet, by coincidence, peripheral activities threaten our full enjoyment of them. Students should not let these twin opportunities be missed.

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## Cool your heels in a Porky Pontiac

Climb on in. Don't be afraid. That's right... I mean you. Don't look at me so strangely, I'm serious. Get in the car of your choice, podnuh. What makes you think all those sensual people in the ads have anything you don't have? So you don't look like Trini Lopez and Burt Reynolds or even Don Knotts or Shelley Winters. So what if people call you fat or ugly or simply ignore you. Your money looks as good as Joe Namath's and, therefore, so do you.

Enter marshmallow land. Sit on the "Flight Bench Seats" of the Mercury Broughman.

Cool your heels in the front seat of a new Lincoln Continental (don't push the seat's "Front-Tilt" and "Rear-Tilt" buttons at the same time or you'll be pinned under the steering wheel; then you'll be, cooling your heels in the hospital.) Imagine glancing lovingly back over your shoulder after parking your new Firebird. Just feel this baby's upholstery. It beckons you. Let it caress your writing hand. Get your wallet out. Sign on this line, podnuh.

It's that time again. The 1975 cars are here. A layman's survey of new cars displayed at University Mall last weekend showed that Ford, GM and Chrysler have again this year stuck to the basic American tradition of automaking—make them big, expensive and impressive looking with total disregard for functionality, longevity, economy, comfort or safety.

Most cars displayed were about as appealing as their paunchy prices. The features offered were designed to appeal to the buyer of lowest common denominator—the kind of people who, when not car-shopping, buy lava-lights and Betty Ford ashtrays.

Some Examples:  
• Several Mercurys have spring-

mounted flaps over their visor vanity mirrors which, when opened, activate two make-up lights. A hi-lo switch enables the concerned cosmopolitan to adjust her make-up for either daylight or interior conditions. From the ceiling, tiny beams emanate from reading lights previously found only on buses and airplanes. With all light switches activated, the driver could conceivably get a sunburn.

• Cadillac Eldorado (\$11,324) has an expensive steering wheel extension feature which, when a switch is flipped, brings the wheel right up the driver's face. This conveniently enables the driver to honk the horn with his nose.

• Lincoln Continental's (\$10,803.40) armrest ashtrays have latching doorknobs (perhaps so your Doral butts won't dance away). The dashboard ashtray, however, is the mecca for all

cigarette butts in the car as its capacity surpasses that of the average ice bucket.

• Access to Oldsmobile's Omega (\$5,391.65) glove compartment proved particularly easy—It's door fell off when opened. As if to apologize, Olds built another glove compartment into the car, this one in the back where the trunk used to be.

• Oldsmobile's Delta 88 (\$6,457.50) had strips of three-inch deep padding attached to the doors just below the windows, a pot a rider could probably never come in contact with unless he happened to be a contortion artist. We could only conclude the padding was there to be peeled off and eaten were the car ever lost in the wilderness and the riders starving.

• Mercury's Montego is definitely a traffic-stopper. Its doors are so large they block an entire lane of traffic when

opened, a handy option for eliminating pesky dogs who run along beside cars.

• All three major manufacturers seem to think no more than two people will ever ride in their cars at the same time. The back seats of most models seem to be designed for comfortable occupancy only by double leg amputees.

• Ford bills its LTD (\$8,098) as "almost a foot shorter than many costlier cars." This may be true, but the car still stretches nearly one-quarter the length of a basketball court. Ford's Thunderbird, once called a sportscar, will now fill your living room.

And to own one of these modern mastadons, whether it be a Beefy Buick or a Porky Pontiac, you can now pay more than ever before. The least expensive car on display was an Astro, Pontiac's equivalent to the Chevy Vega. The Vega originally cost \$1,995, when introduced in 1971 and is still the least expensive model offered by GM. The Astro, with options, costs \$4,249.

Of course, all prices have gone up in recent years, car costs included. But, along with the skyrocketing prices has arisen a desire on the part of many consumers to buy only essentials. Witness the trends at the grocery store.

Vacuous ads extolling the dubious benefits of certain car models will no longer be meaningful (not that they ever were). The consumer will content himself with last year's, or maybe the smallest, current models.

Maybe automobiles will someday be looked upon as what they really are: Means of transportation. Status doesn't pay rent.

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