

S. G. A. Elections Present A Time "To Go Forward"



(This week's column is written by the Cluster advisor Mr. Tony Stansfeld)

Ever since I entered Mercer three falls ago, I have noticed an extreme amount of indifference existing on its campus. This apathy is present in nearly every activity on campus, extending from a panty raid (where only about twenty boys brave the perils of entering the forbidden area) to the support of a Bear baseball game (where the perhaps 200 seating capacity bleachers provide adequate facilities).

The most dramatic, and possibly the most discouraging evidence of this unconcern apparent is during student elections, where a minority of one-third is enough of a "majority" to secure a victory. There are many remedies that one might suggest for a problem such as this, but most of them would fall upon deaf ears.

There is one possible solution as I see it which might help to arouse enthusiasm; and that is to create student "parties" for student politics. This is a practice followed at most big schools. The parties are responsible for nominating candidates (though independent candidates can run), planning and carrying out a spirited campaign, creating a platform designed to be for the students and their needs, and generally they are responsible for the voter turnout.

Now there are many arguments that this type of suggestion might evoke (though due to the apathetic situation I feel safe in assuming that I shall evoke but a very, very few if any) and I shall attempt to consider both sides.

The first argument that comes to my mind is that the parties will eventually evolve in popularity cliques, with perhaps the fraternities competing amongst themselves. This is a valid argument in the sense that I cannot picture any of the top fraternities actually working together unless it is in the sense of working against another fraternity. The solution to this appears to be to have perhaps three major parties, their existence being based on issues rather than on personalities. In this way it would be possible to have members of a fraternity in different parties (Though this is probably not likely). In the same respect all non-fraternity people would not necessarily be obliged to belong to the same party.

A second argument might be "Would the SGA go along with having student parties?" I have not approached any of the student leaders on this point, but I believe that if they felt it was in the best interest of the students themselves they would consent to the idea.

How would this work? In the past, the SGA itself has sponsored and managed student elections. Candidates were allowed to run by self-nomination; the only restriction being that the applicant have a "C" average and be of good character. I feel that this in itself constitutes grounds for changing. I don't believe that all students who are capable of being leaders are sure enough to nominate themselves. (Many of those who do qualify probably have been encouraged by others.)

If Mercer had a student party system I feel that the students could get a better selection since the parties themselves could screen possible candidates and pick the best qualified (based on experience, intelligence, and desire). Lest I am being misunderstood at this point, I am not criticizing the present S.G.A. leaders but rather hoping to provide a system whereby the SGA would be assured of the full support of the student body.

From another angle, party politics on campus would give the individual student a chance to have his say before the votes are cast. In addition, this type of arrangement would permit students to familiarize themselves with political procedure (which plays no small part in everyday life).

Student Government Elections are in the early part of next quarter. Perhaps a start can be made then; if so, preparation must be prior to elections.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I believe that this is a time of decision. It is a time when Mercer's students must choose whether to have a big college attitude or to remain silent in this area of student growth. It is easy to sit back and criticize, ridicule, or ignore proposals to go forward, but it takes work, dedication, and more work to make progress. The first steps are the hardest, no one knows better than I; but once you move out just a little and then look back, you will know that it was worth it.

Faculty Corner . . .



Florence Disaster Is A Blow To Western Culture

The disaster which struck the city of Florence last November is no doubt the greatest single catastrophe suffered by Western culture since the fall of the Roman Empire. No one act of wartime destruction in this or any other century approaches it.

Apart from the ruin of uniquely important works of art, such as Cimabue's Crucifixion, one must consider the terrible losses in manuscripts, books and records which together constituted one of our main sources of knowledge, not only of Italian, but also of the whole of Western culture. Florence's loss is our own.

It is, perhaps, some small source of satisfaction to know that, in the hours following the flood, amid the chaos of collapsing buildings, in the search and in the slime, there were American Students, including almost 100 participants in the Florentine extension program sponsored by Florida State University, who played a considerable part in assisting in the first works of salvage and rescue, often at considerable personal risk.

The artistic losses in terms of cold cash reach an astronomical figure, certainly hundreds of millions. The damage to private property and the ruin of many hundreds of small traditional businesses — of the leatherworkers, the weavers, the mosaicists, the potters, the artists of filigree, who have lost their stock, their shops, their tools, their livelihood — multiplies this loss both in terms of money and of human suffering. It seemed for a time, in fact, as if this Florence, this art-lover's greatest goal for so many generations, the city of the Medici, of Galileo, of Michelangelo, of Machiavelli, of Robert Browning, of Landor and of Bernard Berenson, was smothering under the pall of disaster, just as its streets and palaces lay festering under their crust of mud and oil and decay, a city defiled and broken.

But, miraculously, Florence is recovering. Somehow the city is shaking itself clear of the thousands of tons of filth and debris. The dead are buried. The stink and the typhoid have gone. Bridges are repaired. Tottering buildings are being unpinned. Small businesses have somehow found the heart and means to start again from their beginnings. Municipal services function once more.

The outside world is helping, and already almost all Western countries have participated, Russia included, in aid both practical and financial. The CRIA program has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. Volunteers from a dozen nations have gone to Florence to aid personally in the salvage efforts. With the Spring just ahead of us there will, we hope, be yet more. But enormous efforts are still urgently needed if we are to save this precious and irreplaceable portion of what is, after all, the heritage of all Western men.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Bobby and Cluster Staff,

After lazily enjoying the luxury end of the CLUSTER for the past few issues, I have decided to make at least a minor contribution.

I couldn't find it in myself to condemn anything you and your new staff have done since taking over the paper, for you have the two essential requirements for putting out a good publication: interest and effort. There are many who have enough interest in the CLUSTER to pick up a free copy once a week a few who have enough interest to write a critical letter, but very few who have enough interest to put forth any effort to help the CLUSTER survive, much less improve.

It's true that our paper has its blemishes but I can have nothing but praise for a small staff working against tremendous odds (including an inherited reputation for being undependable) to produce a paper for an eternally ungrateful student body.

Please don't get discouraged. Perhaps someday those of us who do have interest will get around to some effort.

— Becky Sims

Dear Sir:

Three grievances stand to put forth by the student body of Mercer University to the administration of said University. They are as follows: the high prices of the Mercer University Book Store; the poor food and service of the Mercer University Cafeteria; and the poor food, service, and sanitary conditions of the Mercer University Snack Bar.

In all three of the afore mentioned conditions, one may see near-monopolies at work. Moreover, Mercer University has a tax-exempt status because it is an educational institution. One knows that the University needs money very badly since the GBC failed to approve a federal loan to Mercer. However, is it fair for the student body to provide the badly needed funds? All expense of said student body? All three of the previously mentioned grievances directly or indirectly provide the University with the much needed money at the expense of Mercer students.

Isn't there any other way in which the University may obtain these funds than by punishing the student body for some action made by the infamous GBC?

Sincerely,

Roger L. Bell

Christianity, Sex, Capitalism Big 3 Or So It Seems

Horrors!! It has been reported that the learned theologian, Dr. Ray Brewster, has suddenly turned capitalist. Does this mean that he has fallen prey to that treacherous villain greed? Or could it be that starvation has set in on our good professor?

The story goes that Brewster set up a do-it-your-ownself type of book store to, as he put it, "make space for new books and to replenish my own miniature Fort Knox." Without denial it appears that the germ has set itself upon the good Dean. But all is not lost; students, rebel, cut chapel, protest, cry, burn money; do anything you can think of to help stamp out Capitalism. Christianity has enough competition as it is. (What with sex and all).

Speaking of sex and capitalism (notice how the former gets top-billing all of a sudden), how about that big, hulking two hundred-pound joker (pardon the expression) who came to Mercer giving lessons on the art of self-defense. Two easy lessons and "presto!" any ninety-eight pound girl can not only repel an assault but cripple, maim, and perhaps even kill her assailant. Wanna bet? I'll take on any girl, anywhere, anytime, and I bet I'll come out on top. So girls, the next time you have 3 bucks to blow just let's pick the place and I'll be there.

**Honor Council Vacancies
(apply before March 15)**

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