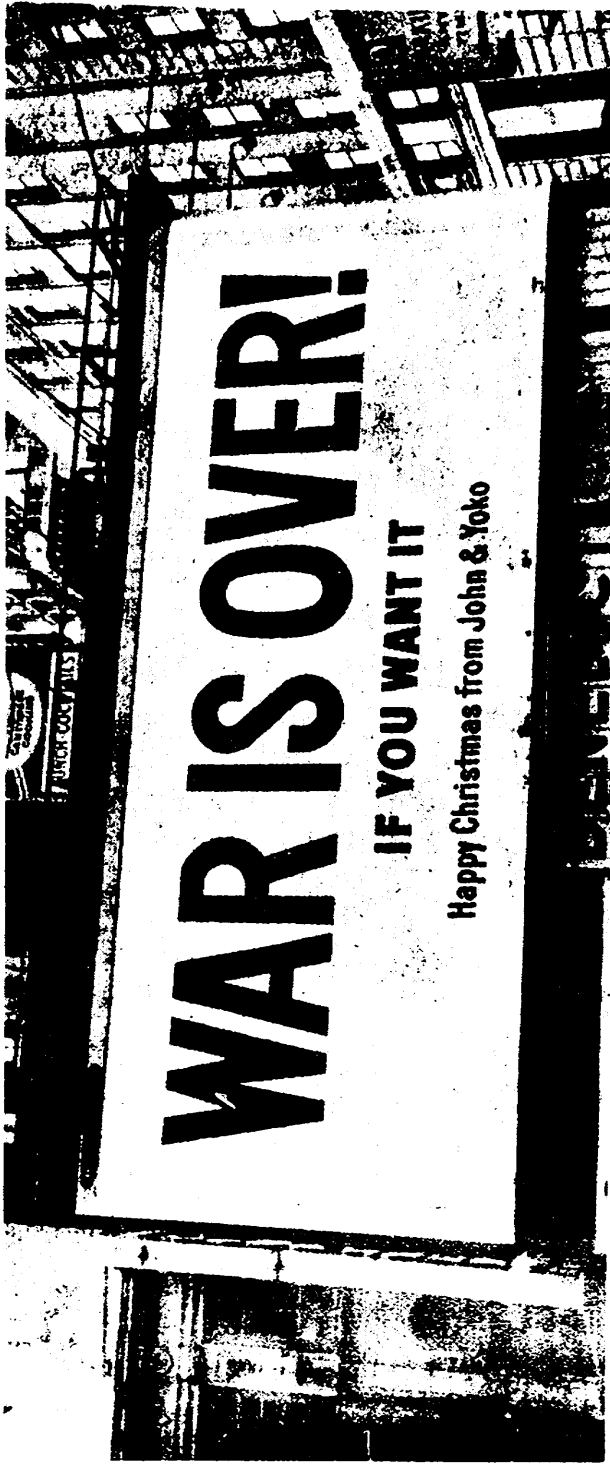


9 observation post



Vol. 57, No. 6, Thursday, May 1, 1975 Wallposter Edition

Election Editorial:

Stop The Senate Circus

The circus is in town, but City College students need not trek to the Garden to avail themselves of Barnum and Bailey theatrics; the members of our own Student Senate appointed Elections Committee have most effectively fulfilled the role.

Elections in the last few years, without exception, have been marred by accusations and counteraccusations of ballot stuffing, arm twisting, dumping of campaign literature and other variations of improper campaigning practices. In last year's elections, the victorious slate accepted office with the full knowledge that pollsters were openly telling students whom to vote for, that their candidates were illegally campaigning in polling areas and that several hundred ballots were stored for a period of at least a few hours in the office of the outgoing president who was known to be friends with their own presidential candidate. In addition, since ballots were continually being tallied even before the voting was over, the slate received word that it was trailing and subsequently requested an extension of the elections. The Elections Committee immediately granted that extension and the slate proceeded to launch a new campaign powerful enough to secure victories for

and the three weeks it takes to transcribe and tally all of the votes.

That responsible students at this College (who have paid five dollars a term so that senators could indulge themselves in such horror stories as these) should not be allowed the security of knowing that they are participating in an election in which every precaution has been taken to insure that it is unquestionably honest and fair, is a most despicable and shameful situation. That students will not have the privacy of a closed voting booth in which they may cast votes without worrying about pollsters and passersby watching every check they make infringes not only upon our fundamental right to freedom of choice, but violates principles of constitutional law as well.

Students have in the past also been asked to enter their ID numbers on all paper ballots to prevent them from voting twice; such precaution did not prevent these abuses but it did once again prevent us from enjoying our rights to privacy.

We are disturbed that these Elections Committee members not only so thoughtlessly elected to veto the idea of polling booths, but did so virtually on the eve of the elections. This act effectively cancelled the prospects of making up

By SUSAN BEASLEY

The annual Student Senate elections, scheduled to have begun last Tuesday, have been postponed indefinitely because of the continuing dispute between Student Ombudsman David Romanoff and the Elections Committee of the Student Senate over voting procedures.

The conflict exploded on Thursday, April 24, when the Elections Committee voted in a closed session to use paper ballots in this year's elections despite Romanoff's objections. Romanoff had planned for several months to use voting machines to speed up the vote counting process and eliminate the basis for the complaints of ballot-stuffing that have occurred following previous elections. He informed the Committee and Acting Vice Provost Herbert DeBerry that he would not conduct an election by paper ballots because there was no real way of making the elections tamper-proof. "People are running because I guaranteed that there would be voting machines, and I've made commitments to the Board of Elections, commitments to truckers and mechanics, and commitments to these students," he said.

The conflict arises from the larger issue being debated by Romanoff and the committee, which is whether the Ombudsman or the committee is empowered by the Senate by laws to run the elections.

DeBerry informed Romanoff on Friday that he was supporting the Elections Committee and would back the use of paper ballots in the elections. He had previously been in favor of

power. He's (Romanoff) trying to tell this committee that it has no power, no authority. Romanoff said he will go to court to stop any paper ballot election that the Committee tries

on a campus this size, and that until "some viable compromise" could be reached they were withdrawing their entire slate from the election. The United Students were considered to be the strongest challenge to incumbent President Donald Murphy, who is running for reelection on the Progressive Students Coalition slate.

In a meeting of the Elections Committee on Monday, April 28, committee members Yvonne Castera and Augustine Craig walked out of the meeting after Romanoff stated that he would only run the election if voting machines were used. Vice Provost DeBerry was present at the meeting and maintained that it was up to the Committee to decide when elections would take place and whether voting machines or paper ballots would be used.

Outside the conference room, Craig stated, "In America, nothing is done in dictatorship power. He's (Romanoff) trying to tell this committee that it has no power, no authority. Romanoff said he will go to court to stop any paper ballot election that the Committee tries

to man the polls."

Immediately after the meeting, Romanoff had appealed to Provost Egon Brennar, the College's acting president during Robert Marshak's illness, overrule of DeBerry's decision. Brennar, however, said that he would support any decision made by DeBerry.

Although he declined to reveal any details of his legal complexities, Romanoff did say that the voting machine dispute will "cause a big stink" and would be good for the school in the end. "It's going to expose a lot of shit that's been going on for a long time. One of the biggest problems in this school is lack of student participation. We haven't had any for a long time. I'm not a martyr, but I'm the legal guardian of the students and I have a responsibility to them."

There were rumors earlier in the week that a movement had begun in the Student Senate to impeach the Ombudsman because of the elections disputes. Treasured Ken Carrington called Romanoff's refusal to conduct a paper ballot election "a severe breach of office" and said that the quorum necessary for impeachment did exist and there would be no difficulty in putting the motion through the Senate. When asked about the impeachment, Romanoff pointed out that impeachment procedures would take at least three weeks and said "they should have thought of that

Senate Election Delayed Indefinitely

winning slate, no one on the Elections Committee, nor any of those faculty who witnessed the gross irregularities which occurred during the campaign dared to come forth and publicly question the validity of that election.

For a while, it seemed that this year's elections would begin to resemble a fair and legitimate election. It was to be overseen by David Romanoff, one of the few ombudsmen to take the job seriously. In an attempt to avoid past pitfalls, Romanoff had arranged for private mechanical voting booths to be installed at several locations around campus, thus eliminating the problems attendant to paper balloting. Furthermore, each booth was to have been manned by at least two students and election areas would be periodically observed by an impartial committee composed of faculty and students. Detailed outlines had also been drawn up in advance for proper campaigning procedures. In addition, Romanoff assured us that measures had been taken to prevent any student from voting more than once and from voting for candidates outside of his or her school division.

Thus we had every reason to believe that the precautions taken this year, thanks to the efforts of Romanoff, would insure that we did not bear witness to the travesty of last year.

Unfortunately, we will not have a chance to find out. Several members of the Elections Committee, apparent supporters of incumbent president Don Murphy, last week over-ruled Romanoff and decided that voting booths were not in the best interests of students.

That every election in the last six years was dampened by accusations and clear evidence of fixed balloting, forged votes, improper counting or improperly filled out ballots, apparently does not concern them. Their excuse for prohibiting the booths is that "the Board of Elections (from which booths are rented) might tamper with the booths and fix the votes." They further claim that with observers periodically inspecting voting locations, everything will run smoothly without booths.

Nonsense. The only way a fair election might be honestly held on this campus, if the past is a reliable indicator, would be to bring on five squadrons of the National Guard and station them 24 hours a day at each ballot box for the five days of voting

be had been under pressure from members of the Student Senate to change his position.

In protest over the reversal, the United Students slate has issued a statement declaring that "a fair and accurate election cannot possibly result through the use of paper ballots

the PSC could be held fully accountable to its constituency, but Campus reporters were repeatedly denied access to minutes and transcripts generally remained unavailable to students not on the Senate. It is now believed that records of meetings are non-existent or have at best been poorly or incompletely transcribed.

There was a promise to "help facilitate a stronger and more effective SEEK program" by initiating community interaction with ethnic studies departments and by evaluating counselor effectiveness. No such project or study has been undertaken.

A pledge to lead "concerted action to establish student parity in departmental policy guidelines, decisions and curricular development" has, too, proven to be an empty promise. We have seen nothing in the way of any leadership or legislation in the sphere of educational objectives for SEEK or non-SEEK students.

Perhaps the greatest sham was the promise of "active student leadership" in both departmental and executive committee meetings; this year's Senate has compiled the greatest no-show rate at these crucial meetings since the inception of the Student Senate six years ago. Apparently, the sense of futility was so great amongst Senate members themselves that not even a 50 per cent attendance at their own meetings could be attained at just about all meetings held this term. One wonders if the fact that over half of the executive committee either resigned, dropped out or simply disappeared before the Senate was even two weeks in office does indeed account for such a pervasive aura of irresponsibility.

Though there were instances in which Murphy and at least a handful of senators did manage to show leadership - during the construction site protest and the Asian Studies dispute - we feel that Murphy's perception of students' priorities are much too narrowly focussed and that his objectives seem to be more in the order of advancing "anti-imperialist" rhetoric and theories than in advancing the educational needs and extra-curricular activities of

all a matter for the courts to decide," he said Wednesday. "Unless the administration changes its position I'll go to court to get the elections going. DeBerry and the Elections Committee are going to have to show cause why they stopped the elections. We hat them all set up and ready to go, with 85 people ready students."

The needs of a multi-racial and multi-ethnic student body such as ours are great and the diversity of cultures, political attitudes and student interests demands that any group of students who wish to represent this body be attuned to and capable of acting upon the needs and demands of such a body.

The Murphy administration has done little to bring students together. The outbursts of executives, the insensitivity of certain individuals as revealed by certain remarks made towards particular racial and ethnic groups on campus and the general inability of executives to understand that a Student Senate is more than just a platform from which to indoctrinate students with personal political propaganda, regardless of how important these executives may honestly believe such political theories to be, all serve to underscore the necessity to insure that the PSC should not be allowed to play with the reorientation of priorities is realized. Until that occurs, it is time for a change.

Among the other candidates running is Ron Maxton of the Young Socialists Alliance (YSA). We were deeply impressed with Maxton, an intelligent and articulate spokesman for a group which has called upon students to organize themselves in the support of working class people. Maxton stressed the need of students to work together to fight against the budget cuts, to have real input into curriculum, hiring and firing decisions, and to assert equal rights for minorities, women and gays. Our concern about Maxton, however, is that while his political objectives are certainly worthy of serious recognition and action by all students, there seems to be no attention paid to academic affairs or to any extra-curricular interests that students may have. The YSA put forth no program which addresses itself to any student activities nor any outline detailing how student monies ought to be spent. We were thus left with no assurance that the five dollars per student which the Senate receives would be

Earlier in the conflict, DeBerry had made plans to bring in a lawyer from the Board of Higher Education to interpret the Senate by-laws as to who is responsible for running elections, but the lawyer's visit was later cancelled without explanation.

put into activities other than those related to purely political causes.

Robert Nola, of the Spartacus Youth League (SYL), another eloquent spokesman for an otherwise erratic revolutionary group, spoke only in terms of furthering his group's Trotskyist platform. We disagree with his contention that the Senate is a powerless instrument and question why, if the SYL really believes so, it is campaigning for this "powerless" traditional structure.

A new group on campus, Lovetrain, derives its name from the popular Olays single. Veronica Hechavarría-Croom deplored the fact that past Senates have not represented all students and stressed that her administration would give top priority "to bringing students of all religions together by holding ethnic and cultural activities open to all." We commend her for her sincere concerns about student relationships but we feel that she does not yet have the experience needed by nor the concrete planning required of a prospective student president. Furthermore, the platform's objectives, while essentially good, are far too vague to give an adequate indication of what kind of leadership we might actually expect of them. Lovetrain, nonetheless, is definitely on the right track.

The final candidate, and our choice, is United Students (US) party candidate, Vivian Rodriguez. Rodriguez, an active member of the Finley Program Agency (FPA) emphasized that the unification of students is the US's major objective. While Rodriguez diminished the importance of some of the political objectives specified by other slates a bit more than we might have wished, it is clear that the US platform is by far the most elaborate and will certainly prove to be most beneficial to all students, a factor we regard to be of utmost importance. Rodriguez heads a slate which is comprised of the most diverse cross section of students of all the slates and their accumulative years of experience in student activities far surpasses that of the other slates combined.

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Monkey's Paw (the old Cafe Finley) in the South Campus cafeteria. Not only did Villedroun design the entire coffeehouse himself but he put in many hours of Cooperative Education Program which has placed over two hundred students in jobs related to their majors while granting them both a salary and full time credit. The



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Opinion

term. Villedrouin has long been active as the chairman of the multi-divisional FPA and is certainly one of the hardest working students the College has seen in quite a while.

A more difficult decision arises over the post of Educational Affairs Vice President. Both candidates, John Long (US) and Selwyn Carter (PSC) are quite personable and both clearly demonstrated their capabilities for undertaking so important a position. We endorse John Long because he has been involved in student functions for nearly two years now, both as an assistant editor for this paper and as a senator while Carter, although a Freshman honors student, is a relative newcomer. Long, in addition, has promised to undertake the next Teacher Evaluation Handbook as well as work with senatorial candidate Dennis Chattman to set up tutorial programs.

Finally, we find little contest for the position of treasurer. Jeff Klokis (US) has worked for three years in the Finley Program Agency and has been both treasurer and chairman of the organization.

Evaluation Handbook complete with ratings, students' comments and course descriptions. The US has secured a pledge that they will assist with production.

-Promise to bring back big name rock concerts and investigate what the last two Senates did with nearly \$50,000 that was supposed to have gone to at least two major concerts during the last two years. -Set up a student run book exchange so that students can receive money for books after the term is over and so that they might buy used books at a much cheaper rate than is presently possible at the College bookstore.

The US has also promised to lead a campaign against any legislation that threatens the tuition free status at CUNY or the existence of open admissions.

Three other races deserve special attention. Running for Vice-President are Richard Villedrouin (US) and Janet Lennon (PSC). We strongly endorse Villedrouin for this office. Although his name is not well known, Villedrouin was the driving force behind the reaction of the

unquestionable responsibility in their work as students and as representatives; we have every reason to believe that they will completely satisfy all promises made.

Among their other objectives are: -Establishment of joint student-departmental committee meetings so that direct student input into the policies of every department will be insured. Such policies include course contents, appointments of faculty members and departmental course requirements.

-Establishment of student run information centers to assist students with any questions they may have regarding administrative, curricular or personal matters.

-Promotion of expanded tutorial services to augment existing facilities and to provide jobs and/or extra credit for advanced students who participate in such programs.

-Establish in coordination with the Placement Office a service which will review job-availabilities and requirements and arrange for job orientation meetings including lectures by employers. -Fight for the continuation of the

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