

EDITORIAL

Rocking the boat?

by Allan Carter

In the past few years, the Student Union election campaigns have included little more than posters plastered all over campus and election candidates speaking on every issue under the sun, yet saying absolutely nothing on any of them.

This year's election campaign looked just as boring until a group of students decided to run under what they titled the "Candidates for Change". These candidates claimed that they felt many students were not being represented by the current Student Union and argued that, if elected, they would take a "fresh look" at issues on campus. Their strategy was quickly and clumsily put together and many of their candidates scurried to get in their nomination forms before the deadline. However, "Candidates for Change" had a student running for every position in the executive, except for V.P. Finance and Administration. Further, they also had a few students running in councillor positions.

What became increasingly clear during the election was that the "Candidates for Change" were willing, not just on a superficial level, to discuss student issues. In fact, it would appear that many people were surprised with how interesting the forums were. One individual remarked that "people in the cafeteria actually stopped what they were doing, looked up and watched the candidates debate during the forum." Suddenly, many students appeared to take interest in the election and they were reacting to what was being said by the candidates. Students were either approving the "Candidates for Change," shaking their heads in disappointment, or were becoming angered at a group of students who openly stated that if elected they were going to "rock the boat".

With such interest, one would assume that the voter turnout for the elections would be significantly higher than last year's. However, it was not. In fact, voter turnout for this election was lower than last year. Last year about 19% of students voted, yet this year the percentage was only about 16%. Why such a low turnout?

A number of reasons could be surmised; however, one which many students have batted around was that students were not greatly impressed with the selection of candidates, particularly the candidates running for the execu-

tive positions. It is one thing to be entertained during lunch in the cafeteria by a group of candidates arguing over daycare, but it is quite another thing to actually make the effort to vote for one of them, particularly if you were not greatly impressed with any of their performances at the forums.

Perhaps, such a theory for the low voter turnout is unfair to the numerous candidates who made a commitment to run in the elections. But what other reason could there be? Indeed, if students had gained interest in the elections by the issues which were being raised during the forums and were impressed with the candidates, would it not only be logical to assume that voter turnout would have been higher? If one looks at the number of spoiled ballots, it becomes clear that even those who voted were not impressed with the candidates running. For instance, there were 88 spoiled ballots out of a total of 1091 for the presidential seat.

It became evident early in the race on Wednesday evening that while many of the "Candidates for Change" were getting quite a few votes, it was doubtful that many of them would win. In fact, the only "Candidate for Change" who won was Elizabeth Lautard for V.P. University Affairs.

In hindsight, the "Candidates for Change" probably could have planned their strategy a bit better. For instance, many students were doubtful whether or not a group of candidates who were running for the executive positions would make an impact if they won. After all, the "Candidates for Change" failed in finding students to run for every councillor seat. If a "Candidate for Change" had run for each councillor position then perhaps they would have been more successful since the students voting may have concluded that the "Candidates for Change" running for executive positions would have a better chance in being effective if they had a council which accepted them. It was not clear whether or not the candidates who were acclaimed in many of the councillor positions would have supported a "Candidate for Change" if one had been elected.

Further, the "Candidates for Change" did not have a candidate for V.P. Finance and Administration. This was pointed out by many

people and again doubts were raised over whether or not any of the "Candidates for Change" would be able to work with a student who is not part of their group. Such a doubt may be totally unreasonable; however, when a group of people collectively decide to make it their mandate to make changes, they have to at least provide enough candidates to ensure that the voting population will seriously consider them.

Yet, even though the "Candidates for Change" won only a small victory, they certainly illustrated that the candidates who won executive positions may breathe a sigh of relief, but they better not get very comfortable at their new desks.

Yet, even though the "Candidates for Change" won only a small victory, they certainly illustrated that the candidates who won executive positions may breathe a sigh of relief, but they better not get very comfortable at their new desks. Take for instance the race against Nicholas J. Oliver and James van Raalte. Van Raalte has maintained a fairly high profile position as V.P. Finance of the Student Union this past year. Oliver, on the other hand, has no past political experience. Nevertheless, the race was tight and van Raalte only won by a 113 votes. Such a margin may seem quite impressive. Yet the "Candidates for Change" put together their strategy very quickly. Further, Oliver did not gain any popularity this year through some unfortunate remarks which he made in this newspaper about a female residence. Thus, such a margin is significant and van Raalte should keep that in mind.

One can only hope that next year a group of students will again decide to address certain important issues and challenge what has become a Union that sometimes becomes stagnant and ineffective in many areas. However, if they decide that running as a slate is necessary, better organization and more foresight is indeed necessary.



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