

Johnson's remarks spark election controversies

Whoever wins election needs student support

Outgoing Student Body President Ken Johnson disapproves of both candidates in today's election for student body president.

So what? Two candidates, Mike Lawshe and Pat Pearson, are competing in the run-off. Ken Johnson says he's disappointed in the student body, that "they don't know what they've gotten themselves into."

Why didn't he say so before the election? If Lawshe and Pearson are so horrible, why didn't Johnson speak out and save us from the disaster he seems to feel is so inevitable?

Surely, Johnson was not hindered by election regulations from speaking before or during the elections about the consequences of electing the candidates. And if he was, what loophole in the regulations allows him to speak before the run-off, but not before the main election?

As student body president, he obviously thought the candidates were bad picks from the start, so why weren't we, the victims, warned?

Unfortunately for Johnson, his comments seem to be sour grapes and do not help the student body.

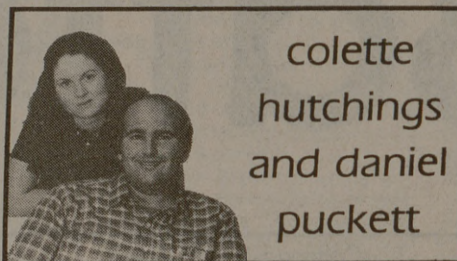
Comments such as "none of these people have the tried-and-true record that you can feel confident about..." only add to general apathy about student elections.

What kind of constructive action should the student body take now? Refuse to vote?

Johnson took great pains to criticize not only the candidates, but also the people he feels are their supporters. Charges of guilt by association were despicable when Sen. Joseph McCarthy used them to ruin lives back in the '50s; they are no less despicable now.

Again, comments of this sort only increase the doubts a number of students have about the effectiveness and necessity of a student government at Texas A&M.

Cynical comments of the sort Johnson engaged in are nothing new; they abounded at the University of Texas in



colette hutchings and daniel puckett

the mid-1970s when student politicians seemed more concerned with the triumph of their own factions than with helping the student body.

It was precisely that political seeking that led the UT student body to abolish student government in 1978; whether Johnson desires that goal for Texas A&M is irrelevant — the attitude he displayed in Monday's Battalion can only lead to the same end for our Student Government.

The students voted last week; they had the facts before them, they had access to meetings and speeches throughout the year. They were able to evaluate Student Government's actions. To call their choice "uninformed" is to condemn the entire election process.

For better or worse, the students made their choice last week; they are making another choice today and whoever wins deserves the support of the entire student body.

Johnson is logical one to comment

People are always complaining about the lack of honesty in politicians, but when someone decides to be honest — brutally honest — there is a flood of criticism.

Ken Johnson yesterday put his opinions and reputation on the line in a frank assessment of the capabilities of the student body presidential candidates.

Whether you agree or disagree with the sentiments he expressed, you have to admit he is the logical person to make this type of critical analysis. Because of his office, his opinion is newsworthy.

Political opinions from former office-holders, whether critical or praise-worthy, is nothing new. In the April 4 edition of "Parade" magazine former President Gerald Ford gave his reflections, and criticisms, of President Reagan's policies. Nobody calls that sour grapes.

Because Johnson is leaving office and will not be involved in Student Government next semester, he is in a position to make an objective assessment of the candidates and their platforms. And he did just that.

It took guts, damnit.

Johnson's timing has been criticized, and with some justification. If he saw inconsistencies in the candidates platforms, he should have said something. But as student body president, he felt he should remain neutral if possible.

His comments were not meant to strip the candidates of all their credibility and

angelique copeland



belittle the organization he is sented the past year. They were meant to challenge the voters to look beyond airy campaign slogans and help them make a tough decision that will have significant consequences. It was a challenge that should not have been necessary.

His comments also were intended to challenge the candidates. Mike Lawshe or Pat Pearson will be student body president. For the first time, both candidates have come under close public scrutiny and have been held accountable for their statements. Welcome to the real world of politics.

It has been charged that his comments will make an apathetic voting public more so. That by presenting only negative, students will lose faith in the election process and Student Government.

But look at the reaction his comments have generated so far. People are reacting. People are reacting. The word that describes these reactions is "apathy."

There must be more to a candidate than his painting ability. Ken Johnson took time to point that out.

Candidate evaluations premature

Editor:

We realize that opinions are news, but it is unfortunate that the opinions rendered by Ken Johnson, student body president, in his interview yesterday are likely to be assumed authoritative opinions of student leadership on campus.

Johnson was known by many to have supported both candidates who lost in the general elections last week for student body president. We realize that Johnson must be disappointed in the election results, but his interview is not the proper way to respond to a personal disappointment.

However, any personal statement should be looked at as the subjective opinion that it is, not a statement of fact. Johnson's opinion is not held by a majority of student leaders — including the writers of this letter. We are in just as good a position to judge the runoff candidates for president and make statements about their personal character.

Pat Pearson and Mike Lawshe are qualified candidates; they are both hard-working and will serve our student body well. We think that it will be a genuine shame and an unfortunate disservice to the students of Texas A&M University, if Johnson's personal opinion is given greater deference than is due. Students

should not be discouraged from voting in the runoff election or from keeping their responsibility to vote for the best candidate.

Paul Bettencourt, OCA President
Lance Wright, Judicial Board Chairman
Fred Seals, Graduate Council President
Rhonda Rhea, Vice President Rules and Regulations
Wally Brewster, Student Senator
Dale Collins, Student Senator

Not student leader opinion

Editor:

I'm afraid that our current Student Body President, Ken Johnson, has overstepped the bounds of his rationality in his premature evaluation of our present campaign and its candidates. It is surprising that one in a responsible position, such as Ken, would make comments potentially detrimental to the future of our student body. Ken has effectively downgraded both viable candidates at a particularly vulnerable time in the campaign and his actions deserve attention.

If there is indeed a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the student body towards

student government (and there is) then Ken's actions have seriously reinforced the problem. To advertise thought inadequacies of the candidates presents a hopeless attitude toward the forthcoming school/legislative year and thus impairs student involvement. The simple fact is that effective campaign tactics and yes even student support have allowed these candidates their runoff opportunity. To criticize their platforms and abilities is a mistake. Ken's actions have proven to be completely inappropriate and more importantly, inconsiderate of the student body.

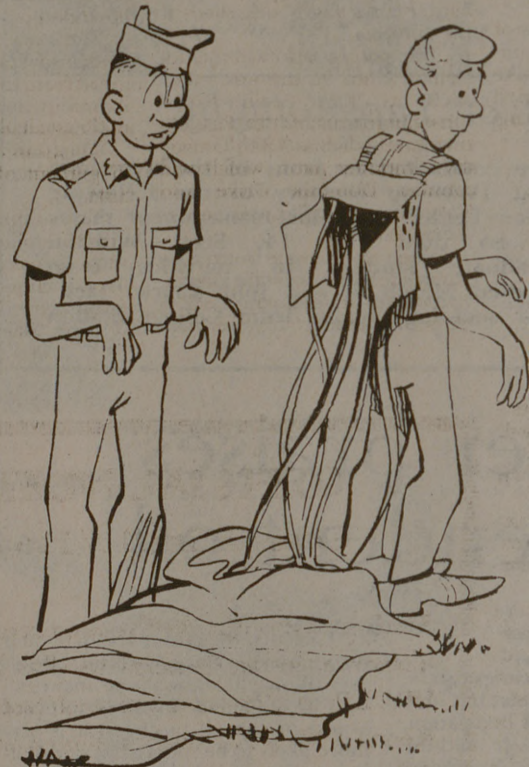
As well, one would expect the student body president to refrain from justification of candidate's platform accusations of the presiding student government... at least until after the elections.

I urge all potential voters to reevaluate this election and its importance and understand the value of your vote. Examine the platforms and vote accordingly because as has been said, pressing issues important to both students and the University are at stake. Understand that regardless of Ken's depressing comments, both are in the runoff for a reason and deserve voter attention. Vote one way or the other; just make sure you vote!

Miles Ouren
Schuhmacher

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"Pardon me. I thought you were carrying books."

Letters: More non-regs need to vote in elections

Editor:

Texas A&M is a fine upstanding university. It has a foundation which is awesome in every respect. The traditions which are unique to this University unite us as one. We have had an excellent year, one with many changes. These changes should allow us to become even better.

At one time, the entire student body of Texas A&M was composed of cadets. In recent years, our University has experienced tremendous growth, and today 90 percent of the students at Texas A&M are non-regs. We need to continue to be fine University that we are, but because of this growth, much of the student body has become apathetic. It is up to the students, especially non-regs, to do something about this. We certainly do not want to evolve into a pseudo t.u. It is up to us, the students, not the Board of Regents or other administrators, to do this.

So, Aggies, I encourage you to take a stand and have a voice in your University. The Corps is encouraged to vote by their superiors and I would like to encourage you to do the same. It is really a shame that a body of less than 10 percent of the University can be the controlling factor in the elections. I therefore strongly encourage you to have pride in our University and voice your concern by voting in today's runoff elections.

Lance Bryant '83

Candidate missing the point

Editor:

I read with interest your Voters Guide for Student Government elections. The responses for the office of president were of particular concern. With one exception all the candidates for student body president seemed to have a firm grasp of the issues and the position Student Government holds within the Texas A&M System. From his personal statement it seems to me, a two-term senate member, that Mike Lawshe has little or no understanding of the functions or responsibilities of the Student Senate.

Mike complains that 45 percent of the membership of the senate has left this year. He is right in suggesting this is a high figure but wrong in condemning the Student Government for the losses. Our Student Government loses between 20 and 35 percent of its members yearly due to many factors. Among them are lack of interest, grades, change of interest and finding out that democratic government is slow and time consuming. Our Student Government is a slow, time-consuming democratic body. Attrition could be slowed but only at the expense of democracy, quality research of issues

and student input. Lawshe should realize these facts and offer constructive suggestions rather than destructive condemnation.

The most disturbing part of Mike's statement is his desire to leave off-campus issues to OCA, dorm issues to RHA and student programs to the MSC Council. The Texas A&M Student Government is designed to represent all students: Corps, non-regs, greeks, graduates, men, women, on and off campus with no exceptions. Mike does not seem to understand this point and thus he fails to grasp the need or purpose of Student Government. If we divest Student Government of all the areas Mike suggests I feel we would find our Student Government dealing with only the Mickey Mouse issues he wants to send back to Hollywood.

In closing, I would like to say that Mike has done a good job representing his class this year, however, if his statement is indicative of the way he intends to represent the Texas A&M student body I have great reservations. My many years in civic clubs, professional organizations and student politics cause me to question Mike's true knowledge of Texas A&M, its student government, the operations of both and the relationships between the two. I strongly encourage the students at Texas A&M to consider what they want of student government. The choice, I be-

lieve, is clear we will have either a slow, democratic, multi-issue body or as Lawshe desires a body that remains intact all

year, does little and addresses nothing. Fred Seals
Graduate Council President

The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography courses within the Department of Communications.

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