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Congress vote recalled

Election suspected to be tainted; new poll Friday

JULIE BLAIR
editor-in-chief

Fingers pointing to fraudulent ballot operators, an incompetent cabinet and a student body swayed by unethical intentions led Student Congress representatives to void last Friday's election of Ryan Cook ('97) and Katy Whitfield ('98) as 1996-97 President and Vice President.

During the two-hour long emergency meeting, Vice President Andrew VanEden ('97) unveiled a laundry list of Friday's election practices he and Congress advisor Anne Bakker-Gras deemed questionable and asked Congress to hold another election this Friday. Fourteen voted to pass the motion, four called nay, seven abstained.

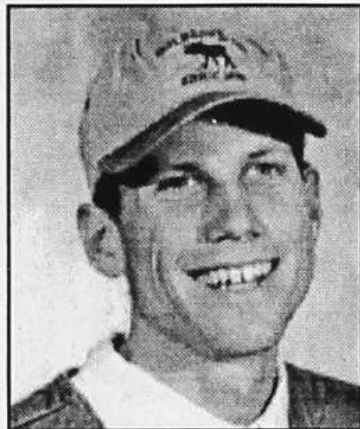
VanEden, constitutionally responsible for election measures, said there was reason to believe ballot boxes had been tampered with as 5-6 groupings of ballots of approximately 3-4 slips were folded together indicating the same candidate.

Furthermore, he added, ballot boxes had been discovered left unattended, polls had remained open for a half hour longer than denoted in publicity and the ballots had been prepared in alphabetical order versus in order of receiving candidate's petitions as prescribed in the constitution.

Jeff Whitmore ('96) backed up VanEden, testifying that a Congress poll worker had given him advice as to which candidates to choose, also a violation of the constitution.

Other indiscretions, VanEden said, though not stated in the constitution, involved candidates being allowed to submit their statements of purpose to *The Anchor* after Congress' specified deadline, the allowance of presidential candidate Matt Herriman ('97) and vice-presidential candidate George Landolt ('98) to give their election speeches together in Phelps dining hall April 11 after all other candidates had been told running mates could not give their speeches in succession. Also invalid were ballots handled by election workers. Moreover, VanEden said, candidates were aided in campaigning efforts through resources not available to the public (ie. computer equipment at SAC, the Union Desk and *The Anchor*).

Lastly, only one out of four election booths contained per-



VanEden '97

manent markers for marking ID's, a system that helped keep track of those who had voted.

Tyler Smith ('97), representative At-Large and comptroller candidate, slapped President Nina Bielauskas ('97) with the responsibility for the invalid election, asking Congress to consider impeaching her.

"I'm tired of not holding people accountable," Smith said. "Nina's running the election and she didn't bother to check the rules. I'm so sick of Student Congress complaining about higher powers and we can't even take ourselves seriously."

After turning over the gavel to Off-Campus Representative and Parliamentarian Jeremy VanEk ('96), Bielauskas agreed the constitutional infractions may have tainted the election results.

She then took responsibility for some of the violations of the bylaws, details, she said later in the evening, that were either last minute decisions, oversights, or meant to be helpful to the candidates.

"I am in complete shock that this is happening," Bielauskas responded. "I am not sure why you are trying to impeach me. Frankly I was trying to help out."

Bielauskas said she had extended *The Anchor* essay deadline because only three of the nine candidates had come through and she had a responsibility to the public and the newspaper to provide the full statements.

The polls had been kept open upon constituent demand, as people were "still pouring in" minutes before closing.

"I did err in helping out with publicity," Bielauskas said. "But Andrew didn't know how to do the computer work—I did. I



Bielauskas '97

helped all the candidates. I have a right as president to step in and help out."

Bielauskas negated suspicions that she had endorsed candidates including Cook, with whom she has been a long-time personal friend and Whitfield, a Delta Phi Sorority sister.

A dozen representatives quickly came to Bielauskas' defense, citing that it was the vice-presidential and election committee's duty to preside over official elections.

Congress representatives agreed throughout the proceedings no candidates were at fault for the bureaucratic stumblings.

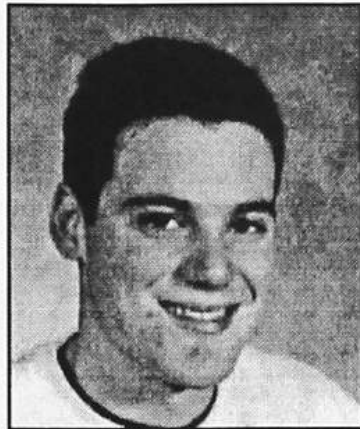
But even the candidates themselves admitted they knew of some of the top ten indiscretions and did not object.

"We knew about the help with publicity," Whitfield said. "And we didn't care. If we would have had a concern we would have said something."

Others like Herriman and Landolt called the election process "ludicrous" and "unfair." The team said they were not informed about *The Anchor* essay deadline. Herriman physically pointed to one member of Congress who he said told him whom to vote for.

With tensions threatening to explode ten minutes to midnight, Congress finally voted to have Friday's election procedures be revamped by VanEk and Bakker-Gras and approved by VanEden and his committee, a compromise to both ensure neutrality and uphold the constitution.

"This has never happened in my eight years as advisor," Bakker-Gras said of the re-election.



Smith '97

The closest thing to a presidential ousting came in the spring of 1993 when then-President Holly Moore ('93) resigned from office amid ugly undercurrents of power struggles between cabinet members.

Congress agreed candidates could again campaign for Friday's election, a point of contention among representatives who feared some may not get a fair shake and a chance to clear up the circumstances surrounding the re-election.

The other option was to force all nine candidates to rip down their advertising and convince well-meaning friends to hush up for fear of having their names stricken from the ballot for violating the agreement.

"How would I do that," asked presidential candidate Matt Fretz ('99), "when I have signs up in all the girl's bathrooms all over campus? That would take forever."

But this time the candidates only have two days to infuse their programs.

Ballots can be picked up Friday at the Student Union Desk from 9 a.m. until lunchtime; at lunch the polls will move to either the Gilmore or Maas side of Phelps. During the hours between lunch and dinner Congress members will be at VanWylen Library.

During the dinner hour they will return to either the Gilmore or Maas side of Phelps.

"Having ten things on a list is kind of disgusting," said Cottage Representative Rob Doering ('97).

"We need to do this election right so that next year it doesn't come around and kick us in the butt again."

gray areas

AT ISSUE IN THE CABINET ELECTIONS:

- People voting were told who to vote for at the polls, a violation of article 2.5 and 2.10 of the bylaws.

- Ballots were printed incorrectly as per article 2.2 of the bylaws.

- When ballots were counted, there were 5-6 groupings of approximately 3-4 ballots, folded together, all for the same person.

- Ballots were left unattended in the Student Congress Office for over an hour after election hours.

- The ballots were left unattended for an unknown time during poll worker changes. This was noted in the Maas lobby.

- Inconsistent enforcement of rules pertaining to:

- a) *Anchor* essays—deadlines not followed, candidates called and reminded after deadline.

- b) Speeches—some candidates not allowed to give speech together, others were.

- Ballots were handled by election workers.

- Candidates were given help with campaign publicity and used resources not available to all students (i.e. *Anchor*, SAC, Union Desk equipment).

- Only one of the four election booths contained permanent markers for marking ID's.

a look at the horse race:

president	vice president
Cook 29.3%	Whitfield 44.4%
DeWitte 26.5%	Kraseman 33.3%
Fretz 25.3%	Cindric 10.5%
Herriman 11.1%	Landolt 10.1%
Monty 6.3%	other 1.8%
other 1.5%	

*percentages from the 1,033 total vote

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Anchor EXTRA! is an unscheduled response to late breaking news on the Hope College campus. Because the issue of student government is one of great importance, we felt it imperative to put together a publication that would clarify the above situation before our next scheduled press run April 24. Thanks to Angie Strey and Sufjan Stevens for their late-night efforts.

—Julie Blair, Editor-In-Chief