

ON THE HOME FRONT

Trinity's political brow remained fairly unfurrowed last September as in previous years when apathy ruled.

Perhaps, perhaps not. But some definitely felt political concern existed only in student's homes on the academic hill, and wasn't evidenced on a public level. Political events on an international scale were not yet controversies. War was still in the "sneaking up on us stage."

January, however, was another matter altogether. Most of us arrived on campus on the 14th; just one day before America's deadline for Iraq to withdraw its troops from Iraq or else. Conversation in the endless bookstore lines and at the pre-semester get-togethers often dropped the cliché "How was your Christmas?" in favor of "Do you think we are really going to war?"

Some were even asking if choosing war over continuing sanctions was the right thing to do; these students wanted to know what was in the best interests of America and Iraq. These concerned leaders who formed STOP (Students at Trinity for Operation Peace), led by senior Bill Fields, held an impromptu educational forum that day, urging students and faculty to send empty film canisters labeled "No blood for oil" to their congressmen and President Bush.

STOP was the brainchild late last semester, of Fields and a couple of friends. It was founded, according to Fields, "to stop the war, support the troops, search for a just peace in the region, and a coherent energy policy."

With a turnout of about 50, the campus was waking and becoming more active. Opposing viewpoints, some from students with relatives and friends stationed in the Gulf region, were welcomed and debated with emotion and intellect from both sides. There Junior Jason Libby, a member of ROTC, asked for open adult



Students gather to show support for the war. The campus came alive with debate over Operation Desert Storm. (photo by Rich Powers)

dialogue. Libby, Professor John Donahue of the sociology and anthropology department and Professor Susan Siavoshi of the political science department laid the ground work for what they felt was a much needed Teach-In on the subject in light of student concern.

War broke out at about 7 p.m. standard time on Jan. 16. A lot of us were eating at Mabee Hall, some were at the mall, some of us were studying. A radio broadcast saying that coalition forces had struck Iraq disturbed more than our appetites (see pages 6, 7).

On Saturday, Jan. 19, over 2,000 protestors attended a state rally for peace in Austin. Thirty STOP members joined such groups as Mothers for Peace, the Peace and Justice Coalition and University of Texas students. The protest's tone was strictly non-violent in contrast to the types of protests during the Vietnam era. Amidst clapping, shouting, chanting and foot-stomping, speakers preached non-intervention in Arab affairs, greater support for civil rights issues and discussed the economic and moral implications of the war.

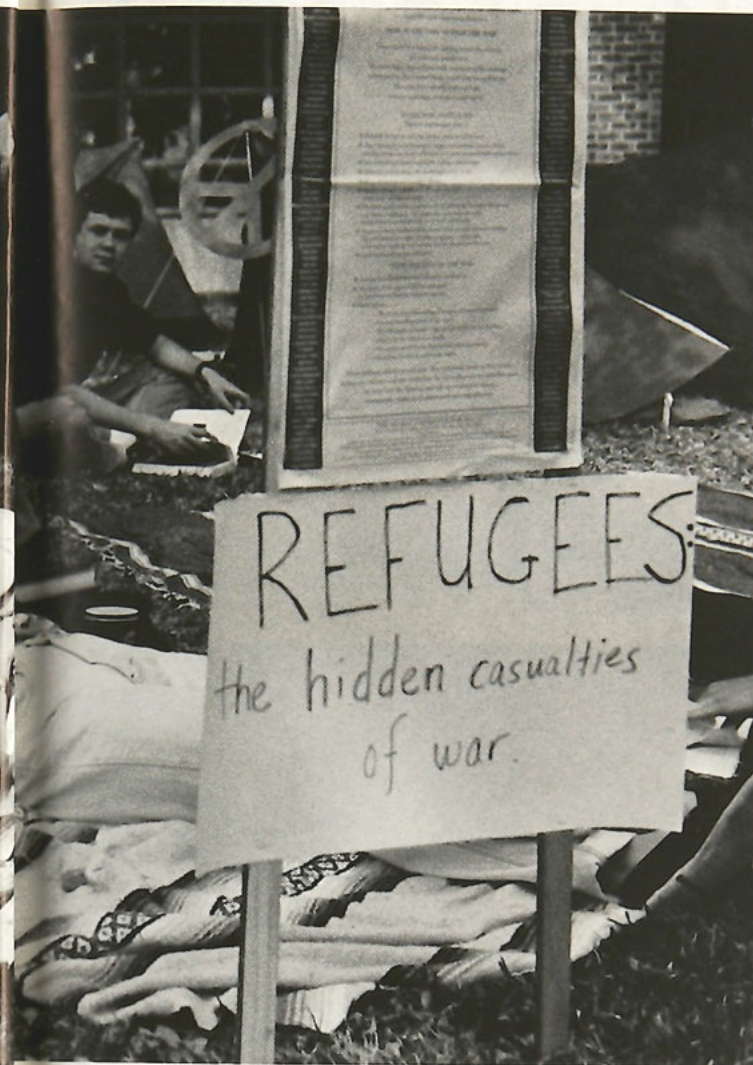
A judge from Travis County summed up



STOP, under the auspices of the Religion Awareness group, camps out on the Coates esplanade to protest the war. (photos by Rich Powers)

the general feelings of the movement: "What we do now will determine policies and budgets for years to come at every level of government and every community in this nation. This war, like so many before us, was not necessary. But I caution you to remember that we here today are not the only people who want peace and do not want war. Our brothers and sisters in military uniforms in Saudi Arabia did not want war. Soldiers don't start wars and soldiers didn't start this war... They are devoted to this nation and to you."

STOP tried to gain sponsorship as a first-tier university sponsored organization, but the administration denied sponsorship, citing concern that an association with the group might seem as though the university supported their political views. Thurman Adkins, assistant vice president for student affairs, called STOP a narrowly-focused peace organization and said the group was clearly making a political statement which



could threaten the neutrality of the university.

Trinity's art history department voted unanimously to endorse the organization, and professor John Hutton said the administration's decision was one of moral cowardice; he felt STOP was to be "a continuing organization on campus to raise issues about non-violence" and not just an organization protesting Operation Desert Storm.

Nonetheless, when STOP held a refugee camp from February 13-15, they were considered a project group by the name of SCAR (Students Concerned About Refugees) sponsored by the first-tier Religion Awareness group. The stated purposes of the campout vigil as expressed in the camp proposal was "as a visual demonstration of the plight of the refugee class of people created by both the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent United States and Allied attack on Iraq."

Junior STOP member John Mendoza said

rally with ENACT to protest the current

energy policy in accordance with National Energy Policy Day. Fields said they protested increased drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as well as increased nuclear power plants in the U.S. The energy policy issue had always been on STOP's agenda, since they saw oil as one of the main reasons for America going to war.

Fields said he doesn't know how effective the peace movement has been or will be in the future.

"You see a rally around the flag... We've lost track of the big picture. ... People believe that America's back, ... but the war took a reactionary turn away



Loved ones in the gulf are remembered with a star on the Yellow Ribbon Tree. The Sigmas sprouted the tree in Coates. (photo by Rich Powers)

that the image of students camped out for three days on the esplanade with tents and protest signs was effective, as it made people take notice. According to

Mendoza, members of the Trinity community stopped to look at their educational materials and even stopped to discuss the issues.

Members were trained as monitors by Director of Safety and Security George O'Katy to be non-confrontational, to promote honest discussion and to defend themselves.

Professor Lisa Reitzes of the art history department spent some time at the camp. She said she thought students in the current anti-war movement were more informed than the student protestors during Vietnam.

"Their reactions are more than sheerly visceral responses. I think people have more information at their disposal on what's really going on—a lot more than during the 1960s."

Now that the war is over, STOP remains a division of the first-tier Religion Awareness group which is sponsored by the religion department. The group has worked to distribute educational materials on Bush's energy policy, and they co-organized an April

from policies of the past like energy policy... The effects will come out over the next few years after people discover what happened."

Another group, not affiliated with STOP, called START (Students at Trinity aiding refugees today) led by first year student Craig Welch and sophomore Chris Meyer, is a third-tier university recognized organization that professes to be the only organization at Trinity "dedicated to materially aiding civilian victims of the Gulf conflict." Currently their actions are on hold until they hear back from congress members and the American Red Cross as to where they can send any monies that they will collect. In addition to monetary support, Trinity provided emotional support for members of the university community with loved ones in the gulf.

The support group was designed, according to Gary Neal of career and counseling, "to provide an opportunity for participants to express their feelings and to give and receive support." The end of the war signaled the end of the group.

By JULIE POUCHER