The Observer, April 14, 2000
Volume XXXII, Issue 20

Nader finally speaks
Phil Fijalkovich, Staff Reporter

Ralph Nader, who, thanks to the College Scholars Program, gave a lecture on campus April 6 entitled "Whose Media and What for?" evoked polar reactions from students who attended the lecture.

Senior computer science BS/MS student Johan Eric on said, "If America was to follow his ideals, we might as well rename ourselves the USSA."

On the other hand, sophomore political science major Anita Patankar, who, as a member of CWRU's College Scholar Program (CSP), ate lunch with him, said, "He was really open and interesting to talk with."

Since receiving his law degree from Harvard in 1958, Nader has spent much of his life working to benefit others. With the publication of his first book, Unsafe at Any Speed, in 1965, he became famous for his efforts on behalf of consumers everywhere.

Today he is responsible for more than 14 books on the subject as well as numerous consumer organizations which include such nationwide ones as the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) and the Center for Auto Safety.

In his lecture at CWRU, Nader focused on the role of the media in society today, emphasizing who controls it, what it covers and what kind of media best suits a democratic society like the United States.

Introducing Nader was Jonathan Sadowsky, professor of history at CWRU and faculty member of the College Scholars Program, who said that, if he were to mention all of what Nader has accomplished, "we would be here all afternoon."

Beginning the lecture, Nader asked, "What is the criteria of success for the media?" He answered that it was more valuable stock and increased profits. Because of these motives, he said, the media must pander to the largest possible audience with "obscene sensual appeals; shows like Jerry Springer and loud radio talk show hosts like Howard Stern." These appeals are not in the best interest of the people, Nader argued, and there is a valid reason to oppose them.

Nader believes that the American people own the media and could surely find something more intelligent to watch, if given control of the programming.

He particularly criticized the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) because of its ability to regulate media and the fact that it does not charge the large television stations any money for the use of airwaves. Essentially, he concluded, it amounts to us giving the huge media conglomerates a free ride.

Additionally, Nader reprimanded newscasts. He said that every newscast could be partitioned as follows: "Nine minutes of ads, two or three minutes of street crime, three minutes of weather teasers and another minute for the real weather report, four minutes of sports, and the remaining time filled with contrived impromptu chit-chat and an animal story." Television in general, he said, is 90 percent entertainment and advertising.
In an effort to show how beneficial it could be, Nader stated several times how media, particularly television, could be used to dramatically improve society.

He specifically mentioned the media's coverage of the atrocities in Ethiopia and the many lives that were saved as a result. Moreover, he said that such shows as 60 Minutes exemplified the capability of an informative media once the power and money removed from it.

Nader spoke for nearly an hour before yielding the floor to 15 minutes of questions. He concluded with comments on the tremendous income disparity in the United States and the possible and likely negative side effects of the growing biotechnology field.

Email: observer@case.edu Phone: (216) 368-2916 Fax: (216) 368-2914 Mail: Observer Office 111