

Campaign '92: short on style, long on substance

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It's 1992, and Americans are looking down the double-barreled of a presidential election year once again. Five major Democrats and two Republicans (three if you count David Duke) are scrambling for the presidential nominations of their respective parties. They're visiting shopping malls, unemployment offices and factories; they're addressing the local Lion's Club; they're kissing babies and shaking hands. But are they saying what the American public wants to hear?

While the 1992 campaign may lack personality, it certainly has produced an abundance of issues. Unlike the 1988 campaign, in which the "big" issues were saluting the American flag in public schools and reading Bush's lips, this campaign has taken a far more serious tone. Americans still ask themselves if they are better off now than they were four years ago. More of them are unable to answer "yes."

The Economy

Above all else, the economy is on everybody's mind. The country is mired in a recession that just won't go away. Unemployment is up from less than 5 percent in 1988 to more than 7 percent today. Economic growth is down and President Bush is taking the heat.

The College Vote '92
NEWS ANALYSIS

One of the dominant themes so far in the campaign has been the promise of salvation for the forsaken middle class. Bush has proposed a Carteresque tax rebate of about \$350 for middle-class families, a scheme which has been widely ridiculed by Democrats and conservative Republicans as nothing more than a token gesture in an election year.

Democrat Bill Clinton is proposing a 10 percent income tax cut for the middle class, as well as an unspecified tax hike for those who earn more than \$200,000. Clinton also



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Patrick Buchanan. Beating a popular path.

proposes an "economic lifeline" for the middle class, a rather ambiguous program involving financial assistance to the middle class for everything from home improvement to health care. No word on how the program would be funded.

Foreign Trade

Foreign trade is another major issue on everyone's mind, especially since the dismal failure of Bush's highly-touted trade mission to Japan in early January. Slammed by opponents as a "hat-in-hand-horror show," the trip was filled with sound and fury (and vomit), but ultimately signified no progress. The Japanese made no promises, and instead criticized American business leaders for being too fat and American workers for being too lazy.

Rather than mending the rapidly deteriorating relations between the United States and Japan, the debacle only served to fuel protectionist and anti-Japanese sentiment. Most candidates say the issue is one of fairness — and jobs.

General Motors is forced to lay off 74,000 workers, while the Japanese import more than 2 million cars annually.

The Democratic candidates, joined by Bush's Republican challenger, conservative columnist Patrick J. Buchanan, have called for various degrees of protectionist legislation. Buchanan, the most unapologetic protectionist of the group, supports the idea of higher tariffs on Japanese autos and a more strong-armed approach to trade relations. In essence, Buchanan has said that if Japan doesn't start playing fair — by allowing American rice imports, for instance — America won't play at all.

National Health Insurance

National health insurance is another hot topic this year. More than 35 million Americans are without health insurance. The United States and South Africa are the only two industrialized nations in the world without national health care. Everyone seems to want a national health plan, but no one knows exactly how to pull it off.

No one, except for Bob Kerrey. Of all the candidates Kerrey seems to know exactly how he would implement a national health insurance program — but little else. Kerrey, the quintessential one-issue candidate, proposes a system modeled after the one currently failing in Canada, requiring upwards of \$256 billion in tax increases.

Education

Of course, education will be of particular interest to college students all across America. Four years ago, Bush vowed to be the "education president" (right around the same time he told Americans to read his lips). But besides his endorsement of vouchers for poor and working-class families who send their children to private schools, and his support of the "Head Start" program, little has come of it.

Presidential candidates are notoriously vague about their education plans. But, of all the challengers, Clinton actually has said something specific about higher education. Clinton backs a program to grant all college students loans in return

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Candidates vie to be the choice of a new generation

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They're baaack. You've seen them on TV. You've read about them in supermarket tabloids. They're the candidates for President of the United States. Choose wisely. Because, like it or not, one of these men is going to be our leader.

George Bush

He's the education president. He's the environmental president. He's the incumbent president that everyone is out to get. Bush will have a tough fight this November when voters, disenchanted with his domestic policies, come knocking on his door. Bush, who has gone from an almost inhuman level of popularity following the Gulf War to virtual basement ratings with the dismal economic start of the new year, could have stiff competition from Democrats taking aim on domestic issues.

Pat Buchanan

He has been called the candidate of political incorrectness and a beer-hall conservative. But Buchanan is actually a right-wing conservative who longs to put "America first" and return the nation to traditional values. The former television and newspaper commentator has never been elected to any political



office. Yet politics are not new to him. He has worked in the press offices of both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Buchanan's America First campaign calls for the phasing out of foreign aid, abolishment of federal employment quotas and term-limits for politicians.

David Duke

He is the candidate you love to hate. The former Ku Klux Klan member and state legislator from Louisiana is nothing if not controversial. Duke, who has been shunned by the Republican elite, has publicly stated his distaste for affirmative action and busing for racial integration. During his run for governor, Duke blamed social programs such as social security and welfare for the financial woes of the government.

Jerry Brown

The candidate known as "Governor Moonbeam" actually has his feet set firmly on the ground. But Brown still may lack what it takes to earn the Democratic nomination. "Politics is a rotten, miserable, corrupt profession which I have spent a good part of my life in," he said. "(However), I know a lot more now than I did when I was a lot more popular." Vowing not to accept special interest money or personal donations of more than \$100, Brown thumbs his nose at the establishment.



Bill Clinton

This five-term governor of Arkansas and former Rhodes scholar is the middle-of-the-road Democrat who just might have a chance at the White House. Clinton's biggest weakness, though, could be his desire to be liked by everyone he comes in contact with. He refuses to be labeled a liberal, conservative or anywhere in between. "We use labels as an excuse to stop thinking, to jerk our knees instead of turning our brains on," he said. He proposes a tax cut for the middle class, requiring those who earn more than \$200,000 to pick up the slack; welfare reform ("welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life"); and a domestic G.I. bill that would allow students to pay for college by a two-year stint in public service.

Tom Harkin

Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin is a liberal and proud of it. "They say, 'Harkin, you're a liberal. If by liberal you mean someone who cares about people, their jobs and about their housing and education, I am one, and I am proud of it,'" he said. The 18-year member of Congress has said he wants to reclaim the American dream for all citizens and plans to do so through a blend of traditional Democratic messages: a massive public works program, increased spending for health care and



education, and a program through which students can pay for college with some degree of public service.

Bob Kerrey

Businessman-turned-politician, Neb. Sen. Bob Kerrey is perhaps best known for his national health care proposal. And while the "Health Care U.S.A." bill has helped thrust Kerrey into the national spotlight, his apparently single-minded devotion to the cause may be his downfall. A former governor whose term in office was marked by a financial revival and budget surplus, Kerrey views health care and educational reforms as the keys to economic recovery.

Paul Tsongas

Another son of Greek immigrants from Massachusetts is seeking the nation's office. Former Sen. Paul Tsongas is hoping "A Call To Economic Arms," an 85-page plan to help jumpstart the American economy, will bring him better luck than Michael Dukakis had with the Massachusetts Miracle. He hopes to succeed with a platform of economic strength through environmental, educational and social reforms, along with business initiatives to help drive the economy. "I know where America must go," Tsongas said. "And I do not see anyone else ready to take us there."

