

Demo's create their own Dream Team

What do Pepsi and the Bill Clinton/Al Gore Democratic presidential ticket have in common? According to those in the know, both are "The choice of a new generation." Perhaps the convention would attract more network viewers if it was entitled "Democrats: The Next Generation." And coming up next on MTV, "Clinton & Gore - Unplugged."

Anyway you slice it, the youngest presidential ticket in history has arrived, and it will need to spend the next four months proving that Dan Quayle really isn't representative of the baby-boomer's generation.

Clinton was decidedly unconventional in his selection of a same-region running mate. Throwing caution to the wind, he decided to forgo traditional politics and selected a partner based on his potential to do the job, rather than how many regional votes he could deliver. Grammar and spelling probably counted as well.

Gore, the second-term senator from Tennessee, is squeaky clean. He was thoroughly checked out during his 1988 presidential bid, and is virtually above reproach (yes, he inhaled). And he has been a leader on environmental issues, a definite plus in the quest for Western votes.

Gore also meets the Republicans head-on over the issue of family values. He is very pro-family, pro-children and at the same time (gasp!) pro-choice. If Gore has any potential flaws, they come in the form of Tipper Gore, his wife.

She is very active with children's issues, certainly a plus. However, as you may or may not recall, Tipper Gore is also one of the founders of the Parents Music Resource Concern (PMRC). The PMRC was able to convince several members of the United States Senate to spend several days listening to vivid descriptions of "darling Nikki ... masturbating with a magazine," and other such politically-charged rock lyrics. The PMRC was granted the hearing because Sen. Gore could arrange it. As Vice President Gore, the potential for Tipper to become another Nancy Reagan is very real, and must be regarded with caution.

That said, this new look for the Democrats bodes well for the future. Both Clinton and Gore are members of the Democratic Leadership Council, the emergent centrist arm of the Democratic Party and a far cry from the classic San Francisco liberalism of the past. The DLC accurately reflects the views of mainstream America; and under its leadership, the Democrats are fielding their strongest ticket in 30 years.

And a quick historical note. Only two vice presidents who became president have ever been re-elected: Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809) and Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909). Whether George Bush deserves a place at their side remains to be seen. Al Gore, however, deserves the chance to try.

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The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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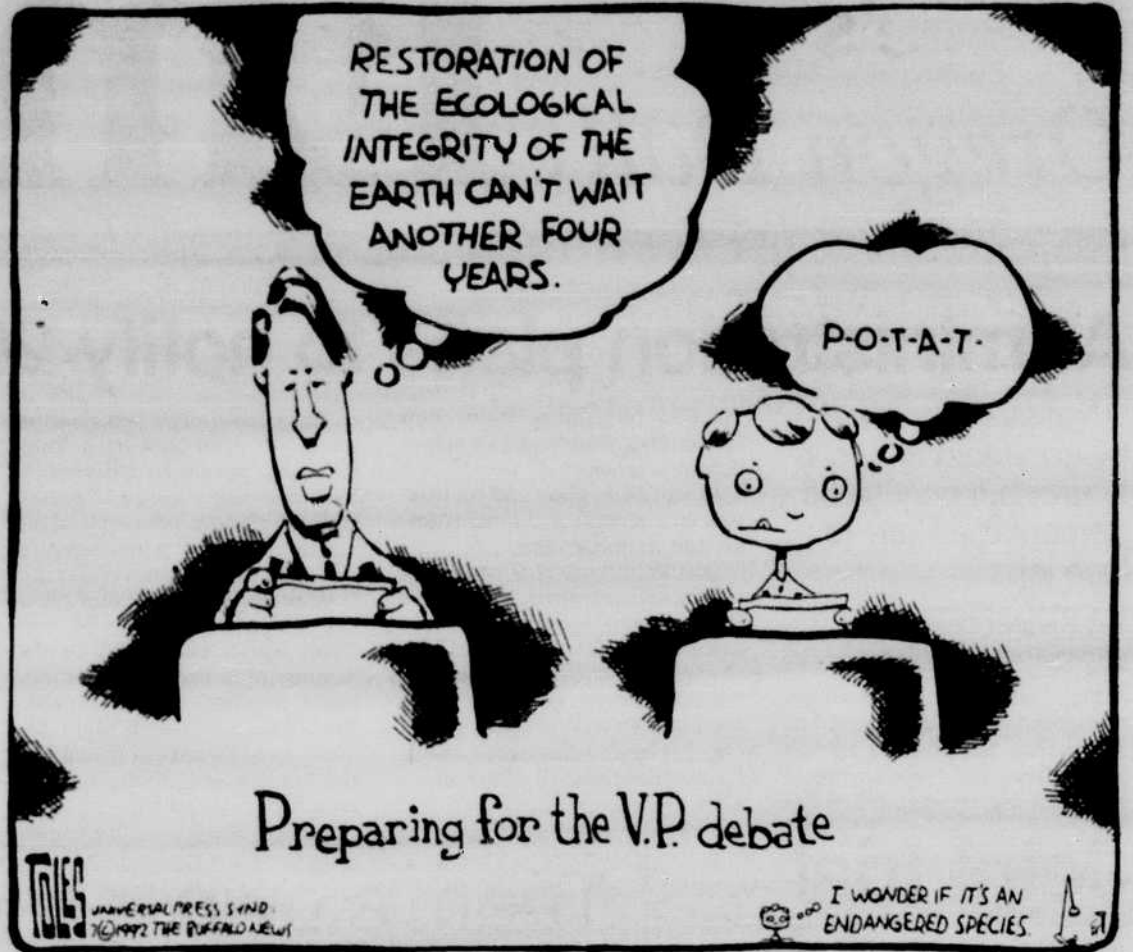
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OPINION

But who will answer the big question?

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

By John M. Clarke, Jr.

New York — H.L. Mencken would roll over in his grave if he knew what kind of political breed has been descending upon the city of New York in the past few days. It's time for the 1992 Democratic National Convention, ladies and gents — a la New York.

It's a mugger's paradise, a pimp's dream, an economic shot to the collective arm of New York, and a chance for Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Sen. Al Gore of Tennessee to convince the concerned polity that they are worthy of the presidency and vice presidency ... and even more important, gaining access to unlimited rides on the White House jet, Air Force One.

Mencken was spoiled with the political excitement of the days of old, from the Great Depression to the rebellious movement of the flappers to the frustration of the Prohibition Act. During the 1924 Democratic National Convention, Mencken found himself stuffed inside the old Madison Square Garden with various heated issues of the time, two of the most important being the Prohibition Act, a vote-splitting crack in the Democrats, and the debate about the condemnation of the Klu Klux Klan, who made several appearances en masse throughout the monumental 17-day event.

They were strange days, days when the media seemed to have a soul and important revelations to share with the public. The issues were right in front of the communal eye of all the voters. Had I been alive to witness such historical and political alterations, I would be able to expound on the feelings of those moments. But my dear father was not even born in 1924, so I will have to make it up with this convention.

Much like the obvious issues of the presidential campaign of 1924, the campaign of 1992 also has its issues out there for all to see. There's no room for '88-style snow jobs where issues took a back seat to debate techniques and personality. Today, the issues are out there, and the voters want to see some change in Washington.

But like the proverbial saying: "The leaves of the trees change, but the roots will always remain," so too goes the antics that will sporadically roar within the confines of the convention. The faces and the issues may change, but the Democrats will always wear their strengths and weaknesses on their cuffs.

"The conventions will be the same damned circus we had in 1984 and 1988," said Steve Husto, a New York press affiliate. "They are always completely out of control, chaotic, drunken, sleazy and a whole lot of fun."

"There was nothing even remotely comparable to finding yourself, on the third or fourth convention night, at some strip joint, and right when you felt your morals have been bruised, ZANG! you recognize two or three delegates from New Jersey or California. The you don't feel as bad, and you order another."

Yes, to a certain extent conventions are highly predictable these days. They're like some massive airplanes stuffed with every kind of political junky. And once the plane is put on automatic pilot and the Great Gavel opens the first day's proceedings, all you have to do is cheer when everyone else does. And when the gavel pounds the day to a close, hold on tight to your wallet and do as delegates do — get drunk.

But I couldn't very well say there will be no surprises at the convention. According to *The New York Times*, at 11:05.5 on Thursday, July 16, there is five minutes of spontaneous cheering scheduled for the benefit of

all the Democrats who really want to get down, get weird, get loud and express their joy with the candidate in the form of shrieking war cries.

But at least this circus that emerges every four years from the dark and murky depths of liberal Democracy has a purpose. It's a time when the party can pull together as a collective whole and participate in the possible election of one of their own. It's a chance for participants to harness all feasible political desires and attempt to sell them to their nominated candidate.

Other than the various ex-candidates who have emerged from the disgraceful abyss of withdrawing from the presidential race to announce their support for Clinton, the only news is Clinton's choice for running mate, Gore. But this kind of news does not really catch my eye in any significant way. It doesn't raise a whole lot of questions that I am concerned with.

Jesse, Mario, Brown, Tsongas, Kerrey, Wilder, Robb or Sharpton can support or fight the Clinton/Gore ticket until they're blue in the face, but I'll bet none of them could answer my question.

The question that was asked throughout the media welcoming party on Saturday night and pondered in the dark and cool bars lined along Madison Square Garden. The question I asked Dan Rather as we helped ourselves to some chablis at the Inglenook tent, the question I whispered to Al Sharpton as I shook his slimy hand, and the question Steve Husto asked Peter Jennings as he downed a plastic cup of beer: "If the walls of Madison Square Garden could speak, what do you think they would say is more of a joke — the 1992 Democratic Convention or the Neil Diamond concert here next week?"

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