

Election season success but ugly

What seems to have been one of the longest campaigns on record will end later this week, with the second round of ASUO elections beginning today and continuing until Thursday.

It will end just in time for most students, who are tired of seeing candidates and campaigning, as well as the fliers, leaflets, signs and anything else asking them to make a decision.

No matter who wins in this election or what ballot measures pass (or don't), the students will be the ones to come out as winners. Hundreds more students decided to take part in the election this year compared with last year's. Students have shown that when the issues count and are close to home, they can stand up and be counted. When more than 2,000 students are motivated to take time to vote, or a candidate or ballot measure interests them enough to vote, elections on the University level once again begin to mean something.

While it would be better if more, if not all students took two minutes to vote, the fact that more students are voting should be viewed as positive. Elections weren't meant for the few to choose for the many, but for the diverse University community to express itself on issues of concern to students.

With the success that there has been in motivating students to vote, it is unfortunate to see how campaign rules have been violated throughout the election.

A forest worth of campaign signs have been plastered throughout the University campus. While election rules specify that signs are only allowed on a one-per-bulletin-board basis, they have been affixed to trees and other less than legal spots.

It's also sad to see that campaigns have become negative. While now commonplace in state and federal politics, spending time digging up items against other campaigns is now as ordinary as promoting one's own candidate. It seems like campaigns have sunken to a lower level expected only of big-time politicians.

This is a University campus, not a political battleground. Candidates and campaigns should concentrate on informing and promoting their viewpoints to the public, not trashing the opinions and lives of others.

Election campaigns are never perfect, but the University has been mostly fortunate with this year's relatively painless election season. The University community and Elections Board have come far in increasing student turnout in ASUO elections. Candidates and campaigns shouldn't spoil the trend now by making the elections ugly. Students deserve to participate in an election after participating in an informational and informative campaign based on the issues.

After all, we are here to get an education, not to witness a knock-down drag-out political fight.

Remember to vote today and Thursday.

Don't duck the vote.



OPINION

Environmental regulations necessary



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

It is ironic that the era of Bill Clinton has been a time in which we have seen three of the greatest victories of the conservative movement.

First, and most importantly, was the passing of both NAFTA and GATT. The isolationist dogma spewed by modern Joe McCarthys such as Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan was no match for the greatest legislation of our lifetime. No matter what happens in 1996, history will smile on President Clinton as the man who helped open our world in a way that no other president has. We should all remember that when we vote.

Second, Ira Magaziner's incomprehensible health-care gimmick was defeated, which will allow a true and prudent reform of our system's misgivings.

Third, in the November 1994 election, the Republican Party (of which a few of the members deserve to be called conservative) won control of both the House and the Senate.

At this propitious moment, we must consider the duty of the conservative. To paraphrase the words of George F. Will, it is to look at government activities and ask, "Should government be doing this?" If the answer is no, a conservative should cut the program.

With this in mind, we can look at some examples of current government activity.

How about National Public Radio? Should farmers in Iowa have to support a radio network that directs its programming to socialites in Manhattan and San Francisco? Of course not, so

NPR's funding should come from people who listen to it, not all taxpayers.

What about NASA? Should scientists be allowed to blast stuff into space at their whim on the public dime, even without practical benefit to the taxpayers? Not in a civilized society, so its profligacy should be cut as well.

So, in honor of Earth Day, which we celebrated last weekend, what about environmental laws? Are they necessary?

Of course.

Unlike the previously mentioned programs, environmental laws have a practical benefit: they keep all of us safe.

The role of government, as envisioned by the oft-called father of conservatism Adam Smith, is to intervene when the free market has failed.

In a "pure" market society, if there were such a thing, there would be no police, no military, no welfare and no central government.

Most of us, however, know that this is impractical. There are criminals, so there is a need for a police force. We have an obligation to keep our nation secure, so we have a military. People sometimes are out of luck and can't find work, so we have welfare and other programs to help them get back on their feet.

Recalling Will, there is a reason for the government to do all of these things.

Now, just as we need to keep our streets and our nation safe, so too do we have a responsibility to our environment and its resources.

This responsibility has been forgotten by many members of the business community. They have shown that they do not deserve the benefits of the free market, for they cannot truly abide by its precepts.

This brings us to the crisis of conservatism, which comes

from those on the right who believe the rantings and ravings of Ayn Rand, Alvin Toffler, and other so-called writers of their ilk.

These thinkers tell their readers that if you simply do what you want without concern or compassion for anyone else, things will be just fine. It is a philosophy of selfishness and arrogance that has become quite fashionable in our generation.

Where they are wrong, is that for the free market to truly work, it needs participants who are not less, but much more moral (for lack of a better term) than their counterparts in centrally planned societies. The free market depends upon ethics. Without them, there would be chaos.

This is what has caused the environmental problems that we have today: a lack of ethics from big businesses.

The institutions responsible for this recklessness have acted in true Ayn Rand fashion, considering only their own profit, and guess what? The market, more precisely its participants, has failed miserably.

Therefore, the government must intervene in the market to ameliorate the situation. Legislation such as the Clean Air and Water Acts are like the police force, the security, for our environment. As long as such activity does not trample on the private-property rights of individuals (which, to their credit, the Republicans are fixing), it is certainly appropriate, even in the freest of free markets.

Even those of us on the right should not allow the current GOP House to roll back environmental legislation that is both practical and constitutional. Such actions are a prudent investment that will pay high dividends in the future, and you can't get much more conservative than that.

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