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OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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Debate: Don't expect enlightenment

Tonight's final verbal duel between Clinton and Dole will be as empty as the candidates.

If you are already tired of hearing about targeted tax cuts, balanced budgets and bridges being built to the future, it might be wise to skip the second presidential debate tonight in San Diego. And if you do plan to watch President Clinton and Bob Dole duke it out again on national television, be

prepared to listen to more of the same political rhetoric used in the Oct. 6 debate.

Despite the fact that Dole is up to 20 points behind Clinton in the

polls, don't expect him to come out swinging tonight in an attempt to make up ground. Instead the most vicious that Dole is bound to get with Clinton is to call him a "liberal" over and over in hopes that the label will conjure up nightmarish visions of communists, taxes and Jimmy Carter. The Republican headquarters in Oregon has stressed over and over that "Dole is going to win this one on the issues, period." So any hopes viewers of the debate have of Dole snapping and calling Clinton a dope-smoking hippie are probably not going to come true. Instead, each candidate will try to focus on the important "issues" at hand.

While a debate focused on the issues sounds like a good way to inform the public of what these two presidential hopefuls stand for, people who watch the actual debate are likely to walk away with less knowledge than they came in with. Presidential candidates often use the debates to try to make themselves look good, not to enlighten the public about the real issues.

And because most people don't have a great amount of knowledge about the issues being debated, stretching or changing the truth is easy.

For example, during the last debate Dole claimed that Clinton passed the largest tax increase in world history. While numerically Clinton's \$260 billion tax increase is in fact the largest ever, these numbers are meaningless at face value. In order to under-

stand how much Clinton's tax increase really was compared with previous tax hikes, you have to account for inflation, rising incomes and population increases. When you look at the tax increase with these factors in mind, it becomes apparent that a tax increase of \$260 billion today is significantly less than a \$260 billion increase ten years ago. In fact, it is even less than Bob Dole's own \$230 billion tax increase in 1982.

Of course, Dole doesn't have a monopoly on misleading facts; Clinton has a handful of his own. For instance, Clinton

pointed to his own crime bill as the reason crime has gone down during his administration. While crime rates did go down while Clinton was president, this doesn't necessarily imply that Clinton's crime bill was successful. A quick lesson in basic economics reveals that whenever the economy is in a recovery (which it was during Clinton's administration) crime rates always go down. Clinton could have slept through his whole presidency and produced similar crime rate results.

Unfortunately, there is little reason to suspect Clinton or Dole will enlighten viewers with any substantial information tonight. We're bound to hear some mildly amusing jokes, speeches about bridges and visions of the future, buzz words like liberal and conservative and false or misleading boasts from both sides. It is sad that these debates, with such potential to help voters decide who to vote for, are more misleading than informative.

It's no wonder Americans are becoming more and more cynical about the political process. Until our elected officials start giving us reason to trust in what they tell us, there is little reason to suspect this trend will end. If the debates are a way to measure the ability and character of our potential president, we all may be feeling a little bit uneasy about the future.

Brian Diamond, a sophomore majoring in journalism, is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

OPINION



Brian Diamond



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

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LETTERS

Useless police

Imagine this: You're sitting on the porch of your house with a couple of buddies after the football game on Saturday night. Because you're sitting on your porch listening to music with a few friends, party goers walk by and infer you're having a party. You're a nice guy, so you let a few people come and hang out for a bit. You offer them a free beverage. You're being a good host. Then, all of a sudden, one of the guys starts picking fights.

Being the non-violent, nice person you are, you kindly ask these people to leave. These guys get offended by your meager request and for no reason, strike you over the head with a walking cane. They keep striking you until one of your friends tries to pull you out of the circle they have formed around you. Then the attention gets directed toward your friend, and they decide to strike him with 40-ounce bottles of beer — four of them to be exact.

So what do you do in this situation? Let me suggest buying a gun. Don't bother calling the police department. We called the Eugene police department and when they finally showed up, they were scared, disorganized and useless. They made no arrests, they got no names, and they acted like they had better things to do (Winchell's closes at 2 a.m.).

This happened at my friend's house on Saturday, Oct. 5 at 1:30 a.m. Currently, they haven't found these punks. Actually, they haven't started looking for these punks. If the Eugene police department was a student and this was a test, I would fail that student ten times.

Simon Austin
Pre-Business Administration

Details lacking

First, I am not a party in *Brennan Rounds v. OSBHE* nor is the *Commentator*, but the Oct. 8 article written by Angie Suchy was insulting in

two ways and bears response.

Ms. Suchy first made the misinformed presumption that the *Commentator* would have any official statement about the case. Check the record — the *Commentator* and all but two of its staff members are not parties in the case. A little research would have cleared this up.

Ms. Suchy then failed to contact Don Corson or Thomas Nelson and Clarence Belnavis, the attorneys involved in this piece of litigation. Instead, political punditry passed for official analysis of the legal process.

The case is first taken to a magistrate for a summary judgment based on existing precedent. Judge Coffin, acting merely as a magistrate in this case, decided that existing precedent did not pertain precisely to the facts of this case and dismissed it for summary judgment. This only impedes the speed with which the case is decided. As any prior case like it shows you, however, the

buck does not stop here. The case goes to Judge Hogan in a federal circuit court and then to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals for judgments. PIRGs nationwide in similar litigation typically win at the level of the summary judgment. Once taken to trial court or an appeals court, however, they typically lose.

While a visit to the Law School and a couple of long distance calls would have been necessary, the additional research is well worth the cost for a well-researched story worthy of front page coverage.

Farrah L. Bostic
Publisher
Oregon Commentator

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes your opinions on issues concerning the University community. You may submit a letter no longer than 250 words to the Emerald offices at Suite 300 in the EMU or send us your thoughts via e-mail at ode@oregon.uoregon.edu