

OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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Next time, vote with an agenda

OUTCOME: Election showed candidates what they wanted: prepackaged politics are acceptable

I spent election night in Max's Tavern drinking desperately and wondering where it all went wrong. On the television over the bar, I could see a map of the United States and the blue and red sections that divvied it up between Dole and Clinton. The coastlines were almost entirely red, and the heartland was very, very blue — as was I.



OPINION
Sonja Sherwood

I had voted for electoral reform, and he was losing again.

For a journalism student, I manage to stay out of touch with what's going on in the media pretty well. I don't read the paper except when called upon to write these columns, don't subscribe to magazines and absolutely never engage in meaningful debates with my peers. I base my decisions on a simple philosophy: Have a philosophy. Otherwise, you're not making a decision at all.

I thought about this last Tuesday as I waited in line with the other voters from precinct 1429. My friend had just told me she planned to vote for Clinton. I wanted to know why.

The spirit of her reasoning was that 1) Clinton is likable, and 2) Clinton will win. I then subjected her to 15 minutes of bribery, blackmail and a crash course in

voter philosophy as I attempted to avert the inevitable. I told her she was perpetuating a defunct and unfair electoral system.

I suggested she vote for the Libertarian Party, the Pacific Party, the socialists or just about anyone other than Dole and Clinton. But she was determined. It was her first election, she said, and she wanted to vote for a winner.

I don't hold any voter accountable for the quality of a decision — these things are relative, after all. But I expect that person to have a good reason for making it. An outright agenda is even better.

The voter who keeps pushing the same tired levers despite shrinking rewards isn't participating in the democracy. He or she is only telling politicians that the people can indeed be won over by appealing to recognizable formulas and safe solutions.

In a free society, many voters voluntarily abdicate their freedom — it's easier to be a slave than a master.

I happen to cherish, deep inside my self-righteous heart, an image of myself as a guerrilla voter. It is essentially a policy of losing. My strategy is to initially register with one of the two major parties so that I am allowed to vote during the primaries.

At this point, I vote for the Republican or Democrat least likely to win, in hopes of skewing the otherwise stellar progress of shoe-ins such as Clinton.

I then reregister with a third party. The Libertarian Party is always my first bet because they are the largest and most up-and-coming third party in the country



— it doesn't hurt to make the donkeys and elephants nervous. Yet serious Libertarians are a gun-loving bunch willing to stand by while the planet becomes a corporation filled with

privatized sidewalks. If the Libertarians ever actually stood a chance of winning, I would probably vacate after the first successful election. This year I went ahead and

voted for a Green president, if only to commemorate the first time since George Washington that a real person ran for office.

I've written about my qualms with bipartisan politics before. The longer citizens continue to buy into prepackaged politics, the harder it will be to ask for anything else.

All any of us want is a little leadership. But our candidates have as much in common with reality as neoclassical economics.

The nature of the political profession, meanwhile, guarantees a parade of (mostly) white males whose success depends on their ability to rob selective Peter to pay collective Paul and to leave both smiling. Just about the only advantage of hiring politicians to govern our country is that it keeps them all off the streets.

This leaves plenty of room in the American political system for voting patterns that monkey wrench the two-party process. It's not enough to abstain. Like one of my fellow columnists wrote recently, participate because it's the only thing standing between America and a dictatorship, more or less. I would add to that: Vote with a goal in mind, and it won't seem like so much of a chore. You have four years to make your decision.

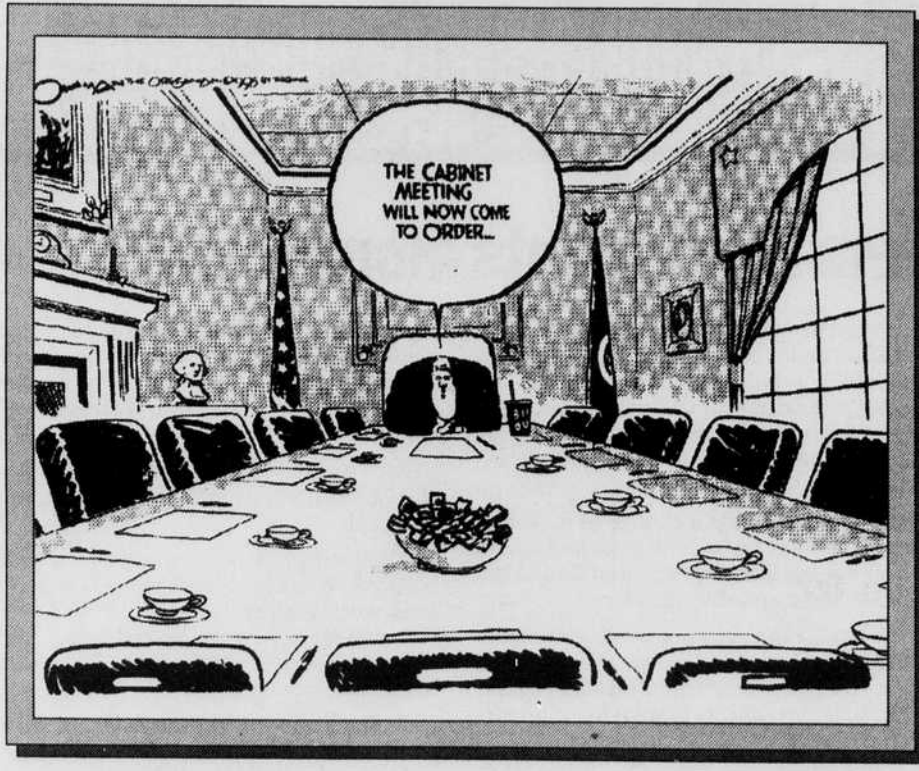
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LETTERS

Thanks EMU

All too often, we forget to thank people and spread the word of good deeds. This letter is my attempt to do just that. I work near Willamette Hall, and I always get my morning cup of coffee at the Atrium Cafe. On Thursday morning, the window was not open. And there have been other times when it was not open according to the schedule. I phoned EMU Food Services and received voice mail. So, I dialed zero to speak to someone else and received another voice mail. Well, I was a bit cranky by now and decided to go to the top. I called EMU Director Dusty Miller and explained the situation to him. Both Mr. Miller and Theresa Coleman-Kaiser, EMU food services manager, were very helpful. I was treated to a fine example of customer service. So please spread the word. There are still people on this campus who do care and do believe in customer service. Thank you, EMU employees, for your service. You were a ray of sunshine on a rainy Thursday morning. Shirley Trimble
Biology Purchasing