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Election: three perspectives



When it's time to fill out your ballot for president this year, you will have to decide whether you have faith in your fellow citizens, or whether you should vote for Al Gore.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush has real plans to change Social Security so that by the time the college students of today retire tomorrow, they'll have a larger benefit from a program that will actually be viable when it's time to hang up

the saddles.

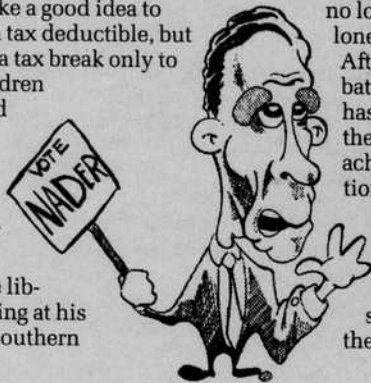
Or, you can vote for Al Gore because you fear change; he has essentially threatened old people that if his Republican counterpart is elected, it will mark the catastrophic

end of all social services in America.

You can vote for Bush's morally justified across-the-board tax cut, where the largest benefit goes to the poorest of Americans, and the rich will actually pay a higher burden.

Or, you can vote for Al Gore, who is essentially running on a modified "four more years" theme with tax cuts available only for those who obey certain behavioral patterns. It may seem like a good idea to make college tuition tax deductible, but why is it fair to give a tax break only to those who have children in that age group and are already wealthy enough to pay for college anyway?

The common knock on Bush is, of course, a supposed lack of intellect. The liberal elite enjoy scoffing at his poor grammar and Southern



drawl. But make no mistake, his ideas are real, and he is no longer giving Gore a free pass on issues such as foreign policy or social programs, where Gore once roamed alone.

Bush has made sure recently that foreign policy is no longer Gore's lonely playground.

After Wednesday's debate, Bush showed that he has a grasp on history and the delicate balance our nation must achieve when dealing with other nations of the world. At the same time, Gore showed no real passion for foreign affairs outside of the terrible notion of nation-building.

Bush has also taken on the issue of education, usually allied to the Democratic Party. He has real



plans for accountability in failing schools, which are necessary to end the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Finally, why waste your vote on Gore when there's no way he can win re-election in four years? The man is not personable, and he has no passion for

any cause but victory itself.

Vote better education. Vote smaller govern-

ment. Vote integrity. Vote Bush.

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Giovanni Salimena Emerald

I'm voting for Al Gore.

Now, I don't like everything about Mr. Gore's politics, but he's the best candidate in a field of capable men and women. My roots are in the old Republican tradition, the mantle of Lincoln. In basic terms, a socially progressive philosophy mixed with fiscal conservatism. Combine that with a zest for radical centrist policy, and you have my platform.

Since John McCain is no longer running, and I'm not totally comfortable with Ralph Nader, I'm choosing Gore. I can't vote for Nader because he's a one-issue candidate. A great issue, mind you, but his record is severely lacking on the broad spectrum of factors affecting Americans today. And Texas Gov. George W. Bush — not only is he dumb, he's dangerous. Our next president will likely have the responsibility of appointing between one and four justices to the Supreme Court. Both Bush and Gore have denied using a litmus test to filter candidates, but their true beliefs are clear.

Gore is pro-choice, and his election would keep a woman's right to choose safe. It's funny how most Republicans want government out of their lives but inside other people's bedrooms and bodies. Which brings us to issue number two, civil rights.

Gore has said he would seek to remove the "don't ask, don't tell" policy from the armed forces, permitting gays and lesbians to serve openly. This is not only the moral-

ly correct choice, but a logical one as well. People against gays in the military use the argument that it would damage credibility and morale. They said the same thing about women and minorities serving, and they were wrong.

Gore would also end racial profiling, a cancer in our law-enforcement system. The Clinton-Gore administration has the best record of any presidency in appointing minorities to positions of power.

Democrats once suffered a stigma of being fiscally irresponsible and deservedly so. For the most part, they have improved. True, Gore's plan would spend more on social programs, but overall, it's actually more responsible and conservative than the plan of Gov. Bush.

Gore takes heat from die-hard environmentalists for not being perfect. But make no mistake: He has done more to promote clean air, water and sustainable communities than any other major politician.

Finally, Gore has experience in leadership that far exceeds his competition. No one leader can change the system alone, but a Gore administration will move us in a better direction.

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On "The Simpsons" a few years ago, voters had two identical, slobbering aliens as presidential candidates. One character said he would vote for a third party rather than support an alien taking over the Earth.

"Go ahead," the alien said menacingly, "throw your vote away."

The idea that a third-party vote is wasted has been forced on voters for so long that it was lampooned by a primetime cartoon. Why, then, are third-, fourth- and fifth-party candidates still campaigning, and why is more of the electorate disenfranchised?

The answer is simple: representation. Despite the rhetoric of the major parties, American voters increasingly feel that they're not properly represented by Democrats or Republicans. Compromise is one reason why. Let's take a look at that very democratic idea.

Running a large country with a vast population holding many different ideals takes compromise. Ideally, no one party, nor any one set of ideals, gets to set the agenda. Unless, of course, your interests are capitalism, in which case you need only buy off the two major parties and own the media, and pretty soon everyone will believe they have only two corporate-approved choices.

Is that democracy? Not entirely. People are still voting, but for what? Voting for the Democrats or Republicans is voting for compromise that has already happened.

In European countries with many par-

ties and proportional representation in their legislative bodies, compromise happens when everyone sits down and decides what they can all agree on and what they're willing to trade for support of their ideas. This is real compromise and real democracy.

In America, compromise happens before voters even have a voice. The major parties water down the issues that matter to voters, trying to find a palatable middle-ground that, like Muzak, tries so hard to offend no one that it ends up offending a lot of people.

American third parties still need improvement. They still need top-notch candidates and money to get their message out. But voters must realize that they're NOT throwing their vote away, so that third parties get enough votes to be considered worthy of a seat at the table.

Read about all the presidential candidates before you vote. No matter your ideology, you may find that another party represents your views a whole lot better than do Texas Gov. George W. Bush or Vice President Al Gore. With enough support, those opinions can be heard. Otherwise, we may get taken over by slobbering aliens.

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Yugoslavian democracy elicits premature euphoria

GUEST COMMENTARY

Ronald Wixman

Jubilation about the democratic ouster of Yugoslavian dictator Slobodan Milosevic is welcomed by all interested in the democratization of what is left of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, this euphoria may be premature. The success of real elections, demonstrations and the unwillingness of the Yugoslavian army to shoot at the masses are important steps in the right direction. But this does not solve the problem of why Yugoslavia fell apart to begin with, nor does it address the reasons for NATO intervention. Lifting the embargo and pulling out troops may sound appealing, but it may not be

the right course of action.

The destruction of Yugoslavia did not happen because Croats, Slovenes, Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, or Macedonians were hostile to a united Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia did not have a minority problem, it had a MAJORITY problem. The rise of ethnic Serbian nationalism, which resulted in Serbia's seizure of one-third of Croatia, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina and all of Kosovo, and the mass deportation or slaughter of non-Serbs is why the republics left the Yugoslavian Union.

It was not traditional ethnic hatred, but rather a neo-Fascist Serbian nationalism that attempted to rewrite history and create an enlarged, ethnically pure Serbia. While Milosevic led this movement, he was not alone. Years be-

fore the Yugoslavian wars, ethnic Serbs demonstrated against Milosevic's secret police and brutal policies. Serbs wanted communist rule and tyrannical leadership ended. But when Milosevic shifted to radical Serbianism, these same demonstrators flocked around him.

The same Serbs and newly elected leaders, like Yugoslavian President Vojislav Kostunica, were staunch supporters of the ethnic cleansing of Croatian, Bosnian and Kosovan lands. Kostunica has not condemned radical Serbian nationalism, but rather condemned Milosevic for selling out Serbian interests to save his neck and for leading Serbia down a ruinous economic and political path after NATO's bombing. Kostunica and his Serbian allies have not handed Milosevic and other war criminals

to the world court for trial or discussed reinstating the Kosova Autonomy for Albanians. Just because Serbs have rewritten the history of Kosovo, Bosnia and elsewhere to suit their nationalist designs is no reason for anyone to believe these revisions.

Unfortunately, Europe and the United States, in their desire to leave Yugoslavia, may play into Serbian nationalist hands. Will we let war criminals off the proverbial hook for expediency? Will we give Kosovo and Serb-held territories in Bosnia to Serbian radicals and declare them democracies just to exit with grace? One would hope not.

How tragic to set a precedent that if one votes democratically to deny human rights to ethnic, religious, or social minorities, that it is OK, because it was done at a ballot box

rather than on a battlefield. Will we now chastise Albanians and Bosnians for demanding their rights from Serbian thugs because our demon, Milosevic, is no longer there, but a democratically elected nationalist is?

We need to wait and see what the new Yugoslavia will be before we jump for joy. If Kostunica and the new Yugoslavian Parliament apologize to ethnic minorities for the harm inflicted upon them, if they immediately vote to reinstate the Kosova Autonomy and the rights of its inhabitants, and if they hand over the criminals, then we can feel euphoria for the triumph of real democracy.

Ronald Wixman is a professor of geography at the University and a consultant to the U.S. State Department on Balkan politics.