

Thursday, August 7, 2003

EDITORIAL

Candidacies Terminate sane politics

Politics these days are a journey into the absurd. And nothing can prove it better than when television personalities and action movie stars start eyeing offices in the U.S. government.

Much to the chagrin of anybody still taking the bureaucracy seriously, resident strongman Arnold Schwarzenegger announced Wednesday his intention to run for governor of California in the upcoming recall election.

The broadcast media chased the story like it was the apocalypse, and Schwarzenegger delivered the goods in his choppy but ruggedly eloquent style. The anticipation rocketed toward the end of his speech, however, as giddy journalists everywhere wondered: "Will he say it? I wonder if he'll say it? I bet he's gonna say it!"

He said it: "I'll be back." Then he gave a thumbs up and a grin.

Suddenly, these three simple words squashed all hope for mankind. What's next? How about the campaign slogan, "Vote for me or I will Terminate you." Don't worry, you can say it Ah-nold style.

But the day included more than Arnold's much-awaited announcement, first made during the filming of Wednesday's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno." Infamous instigator Jerry Springer also announced whether he will run for the U.S. Senate, a topic of discussion we hoped had died long ago. We were wrong.

His answer? Not if he can't keep bringing chain saw nuns to meet their secret lovers on his nationally-televised show. Despite Springer's insistence that he just wants to help people, he apparently felt that letting an audience of unqualified elitists degrade less-fortunate people would let him more effectively do that than holding an esteemed office in the government and serving hundreds of millions of constituents.

Springer — the former mayor of Cincinnati who resigned after being caught paying for a prostitute's services — also said that during his time of tenderly poking his toes to test the political waters, he found the general public in Ohio couldn't take his message seriously if he kept letting Black Panthers have it out with Ku Klux Klan members while a raucous crowd cheered him on.

Hmm ... We would have never guessed.

Possibly the most unlikely candidate to announce his intention to run, however, is porn king Larry Flynt, who publishes "Hustler" and "Barely Legal" magazines. During his announcement Monday, Flynt suggested that his slogan be "Vote for a Smut-Peddler Who Cares."

At least he's honest. But while any true defenders of the First Amendment hold Flynt in high regard, he may not be the ideal spokesman for an entire state given the small matter of his entire empire being built by exposing naked female bodies to the masses.

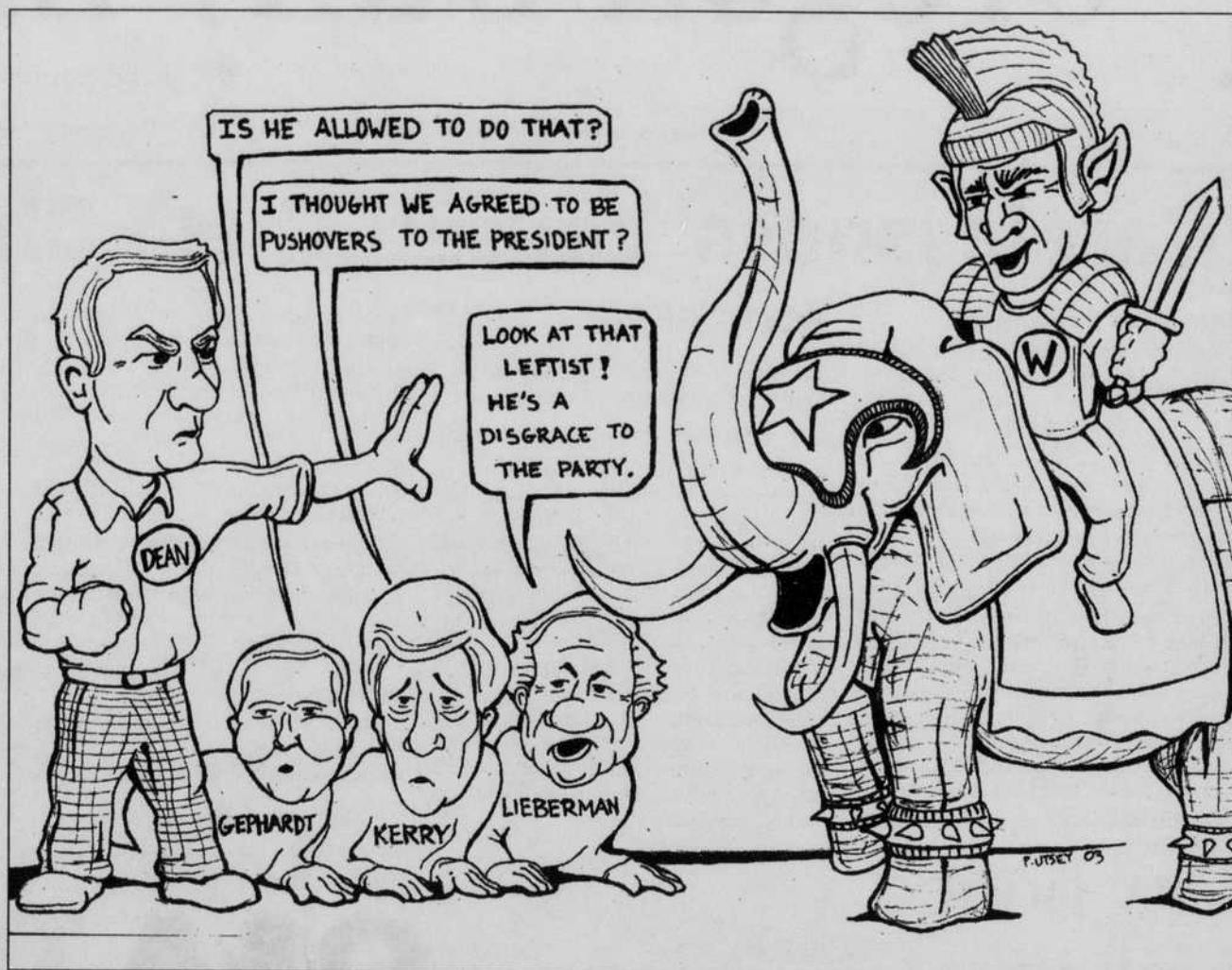
The influx of candidates that only the most gullible Americans will take seriously could be a sign of decaying American politics, or it could simply be America's increasing reliance on entertainment for answers to the ills of society.

After all, if Schwarzenegger can fight to the death (twice) to keep the world from being destroyed by killer robots, then he must be fit to run the most populated state in the union.

And, hell, if Springer can find the only person in existence who is both a mother and a grandfather and exploit them, then obviously he has the clout and ability to vote on key social issues.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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Peter Utsey for the Emerald

Defense projects are 'disturbing'

What is most disturbing about the recent information gathering and analysis projects of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is not the possibility of grossly invading privacy or compromising civil liberties. The Total Information Awareness Program — now conveniently referred to by the Department of Defense as the Terrorism Information Program in order to dispel any misconceptions about the aim of the program — and the recent proposal of including "terrorism futures" in the market are frightening because they reveal a fundamental inability for government agencies to develop a legitimate plan for protecting United States citizens from terrorism.

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Certainly, the idea of monitoring financial transactions in order to gain greater access to "insider" knowledge about terrorist threats and regime changes is a wonderful academic exercise in considering a possible application of game theory to predicting real-world events. Similarly, monitoring suspicious financial transactions through TIA (feel free to choose its true moniker) to improve investigation ef-

iciency is clearly not a ludicrous concept.

My confusion, due perhaps to my inexperience with complex systems analysis, lies in interpreting the predicative power of systems that have become public knowledge and monitor deviations from the status quo. For, certainly, terrorists that are savvy enough to learn how to fly airplanes are most likely also capable of masking aberrant financial transactions and/or manipulating financial markets. In the latter case, the fact that participants in the proposed terrorism futures market would have had their identities protected implied that inspiring fear by mastering marketing strategies would not only be easier — it would also be profitable! Plus, should we really trust the Department of Defense to monitor everyone's finances when it has failed to properly account for the paltry sum of, oh, several billion dollars?

And, while I don't pretend to suggest that profitability is a factor that national leaders consider in pioneering defense research, there certainly is more than a little likelihood that creating computer programs to monitor such dynamic databases and multiple languages might create a little demand. Similarly, it might be ever so slightly possible for members

close to the intelligence community to have conflicts of interest. Then again, I might be mistaking altruism for good old American capitalism.

Still, what is most disgusting about both proposals is not their potential for abuse or misuse but rather the lack of foresight and consideration that should be present in the agendas of the nation's elite defense strategists. Should any member of the Department of Defense consider implementing more realistic programs to ensure the safety of Americans, perhaps they will consider encouraging investment in the increasing number of impoverished Americans (who, according to detailed character profiles, are most likely to become future terrorists, remember?). Or, perhaps, they might suggest getting to know our neighbors and sponsor community potlucks. God forbid a little friendly cooperation should induce flashbacks of the Cold War communists.

Thank god for Senator Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and his refusal to let reality disappear behind the cap and gown of overly academic analysts.

Ryan Ziols is a graduate student studying journalism.

UO should review East Campus policy

Thanks to the Eugene Weekly for shedding some light on the disgusting policies the University is now enforcing as part of its new East Campus development plan. The twelve blocks of University-owned student family housing is now not allowed flower pots, bikes, toys or garage sales in their yards and could be subject to eviction. Another policy in the new East Campus development plan disallows yard art. New rules against yard art are likely included in this new plan because the 70 home removals the plan facilitates are likely to

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bring a strong reaction from residents of the homes — like big signs against the University posted in their yards.

When acres of the Amazon low-income historic housing were targeted for demolition in the 1980s, residents challenged the University with huge yard signs, a rent strike, and successfully had their neighborhood added to the historic national register. Elderly residents were dragged from their neighborhoods and jailed while peacefully standing up against the University tearing down their neighborhood. University top brass responded by dozing the whole area and paying the related fines. The same administrators are still involved and the desired goal is to get

the low-income families off the East Campus land as soon as possible.

In the past, East Campus housing has been affordable; however, in the last two years rents have nearly doubled and long waiting lists still exist as empty, unused homes continue to be boarded up. The new East Campus development policy has residential home removals and 35 conversions to offices, which will remove the scourge of low-income families and will create space for the University's latest get-rich-quick scheme to fund stadiums — turning it into a nanotechnology campus.

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