

Tuesday, June 29, 2004

EDITORIAL

Stakes are raised as conservatives back Nader

In a paradoxical display of partisan weirdness, activist and former Green Party candidate Ralph Nader's bid to sit on the 2004 Oregon presidential ballot has found an unlikely ally: several state conservative groups. The organizations — including the Oregon Family Council and Citizens for a Sound Economy — phoned members, asking them to attend the Nader's June 26 convention to help the perennial third-party candidate find a space on the ballot.

The motive for this seemingly counterintuitive gambit? Some Republican planners believe (rightly, if 2000 presidential election figures are any indication) that having Nader on the ballot would draw more votes from would-be John Kerry voters than President Bush supporters. And in a year when many states — Oregon included — might see narrow margins of victory in November's presidential election, a rogue factor like Nader might swing states from the blue column to the red. (In 2000, former Vice President Al Gore won Oregon's seven electoral votes by a margin of 6,765 votes — a pittance compared to the 77,357 voters that turned out for Nader.)

The OFC isn't shy about its efforts to draft conservatives to secure Nader a place on the ballot.

"We'd like to take a few votes away from John Kerry if it would be possible," OFC's Tim Nashif said.

Democrats are understandably displeased: Kerry spokeswoman Laura Capps blasted the efforts in an interview with The Oregonian, saying that it is a "shame the Bush camp has to resort to such tactics to lure their base to support a third-party candidate."

But what shouldn't be lost in all this is that voters are ultimately responsible for their own fate: Simply because another check box or tab is available on a ballot, voters aren't excused from the responsibility of decision.

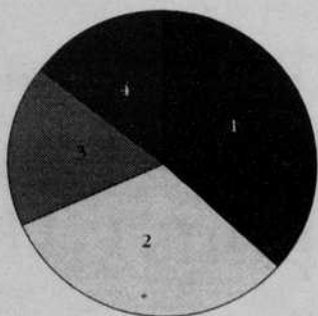
No matter who your political inclination, educate yourself about the issues and vote — election day is less than five months away.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

ONLINE POLL

THIS WEEK'S POLL RESULTS



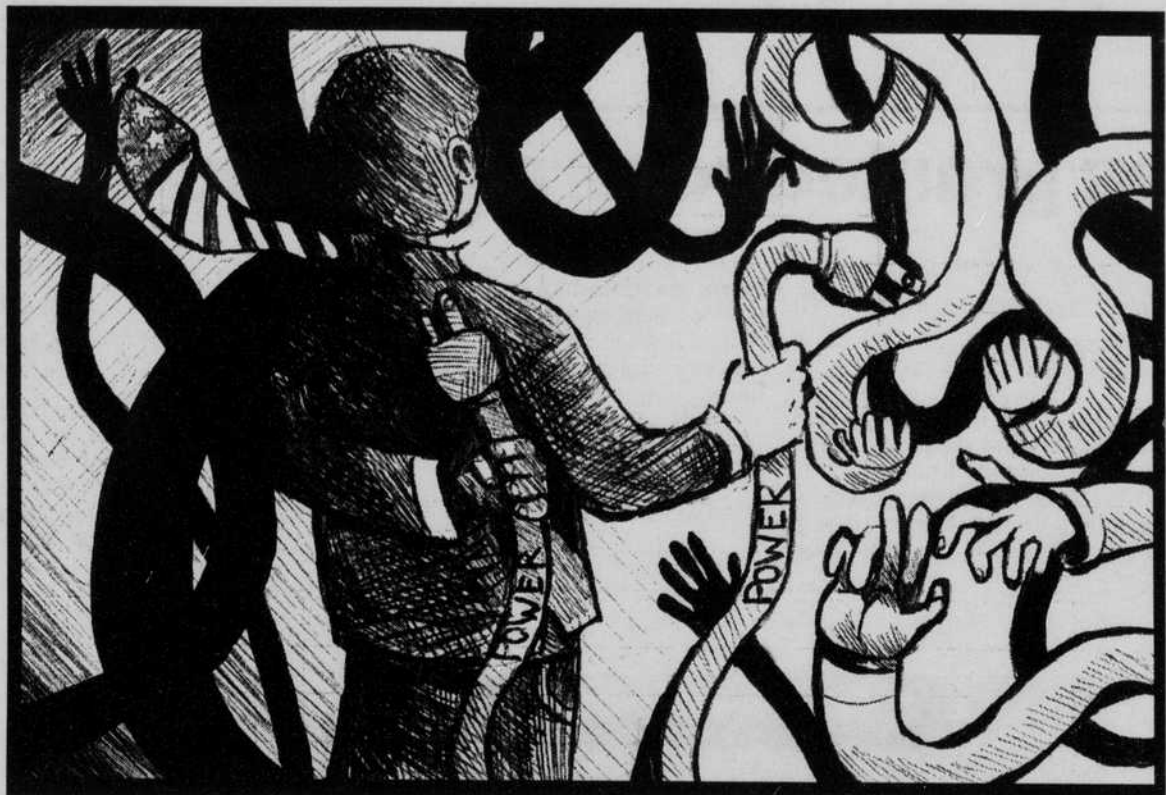
Should media organizations show the graphic photos of the beheaded corpse of U.S. hostage Paul Johnson? (41 votes)

1. Yes — The images make the violence more real and understandable 36.6 percent
2. No — It brings publicity to the murderers 31.7 percent
3. No — The images are distasteful 17.1 percent
4. Yes — It's the media's job to inform the public, regardless of how graphic 14.6 percent

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION

Is it fair that conservative special interest groups are trying to help Nader get on the Oregon ballot? Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

- Yes — They want Bush, their candidate, to win, and they are doing everything they can to ensure it.
- Yes — They are not breaking any laws, so who cares?
- No — It is unethical for them to try to hijack Nader's campaign.
- No — It undermines the spirit of democracy.



Aaron Sullivan Illustration

When war is necessary

In March 2003, only days before the United States began lobbing missiles into Baghdad in an attempt to kill Saddam Hussein and his top officials, I wrote an opinion piece in support of then-imminent Gulf War II.

Now, after the official handover of power in Iraq, I want to bring up a point that seems to have been ignored in the rush to point out President Bush's many shortcomings.

The war was a just war. I'll admit we never found the smoking gun, the nuclear weapons or the large cache of biological or chemical weapons that would have proven Bush's prewar rhetoric correct. And critics are quick to point out that Bush's administration either lied to Americans or ignorantly guided the course of our national policy with the hand of blind presumption. Those critics are right.

But, second only to the Bush administration's failures is the equally disgusting way in which many of these anti-war activists have willfully swept Saddam's past atrocities under the carpet, choosing to ignore the fact that he was as cruel as Stalin or Hitler, with fewer resources at his disposal.

In March 1988, thousands of men, woman and children died violent, painful deaths after Saddam deployed chemical weapons in the largely Kurdish city of Halabja.

Media from around the world recorded this infamous massacre, putting Saddam's brutality in the spotlight. But, this incident was, in reality, only one of many. Through his Anfal campaigns in the 1980s, Saddam murdered an estimated 100,000 of his own citizens.

Saddam also flagrantly violated international law when it came to deploying those



JARED PABEN
 HELP WANTED

elusive weapons of mass destruction, which weren't so elusive to tens of thousands of Iraqis. Throughout Saddam's eight-year war with Iran, which he started by invading his neighbor, he used chemical weapons such as sarin and mustard gas on waves of Iranian troops. He also possessed VX, a nerve agent so advanced that a few drops on the skin can kill, and botulinum, a poison so dangerous a billionth of a gram can be deadly. As early as 1983, intelligence reports showed he was using chemical weapons every day. As late as 1992, he attempted to drop biological weapons on Israel, but his fighter jets were shot down over the Persian Gulf en route.

Despicably, America sold him many of these chemical and biological weapons and — in violation of international law — helped him use them against the Iraqis. But, the fact remains that he still willfully used them.

Saddam was unarguably a threat to world security. He started two wars in a region that houses some of the world's largest oil reserves, attempted to drop biological weapons on Israel and planned to assassinate President George H.W. Bush during a visit to Kuwait in April 1993. In addition to this, Iraq has harbored and aided Palestinian terrorists, offering monetary

rewards to the families of suicide bombers.

The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections didn't work, either. Iraqis frequently blocked UN inspectors from suspicious sites, including a biological weapons site in 1997, in violations of UN resolutions. In July 1998, the Iraqis also seized inspectors' documents that showed Iraq had lied about its weapons capabilities. The Iraqis were so uncooperative, UNSCOM was even forced to leave the country on multiple occasions.

The Iraqis frequently shot at our jets flying in the no-fly zones and nearly downed a U.S. spy plane in July 2001. They succeeded in shooting down two drone planes in August and September 2001. Saddam even offered a \$15,000 bounty to any military unit that successfully shoots down a U.S. plane.

When it came to punishing Saddam for these crimes, the United Nations wavered, never authorizing multilateral military action. Our "allies" always preferred to strike bargains and play games with a madman whose only concept of leadership is by the use of raw, brutal power, an unreasonable man who knows no compromise.

Time after time the United States and United Kingdom were the only countries with the resolve to do what was necessary in Iraq. Despite our terrible two-faced foreign policy, we've taken steps to make the world a safer place, and largely without thanks or anything more than token assistance from the rest of the world.

Now, we need to take the next step and execute Saddam for his crimes. Just like the war, his execution would be a just one.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Abuse shows 'moral chaos' of war

The revelations of prisoner abuse coming out of Iraq have sent waves of outraged revulsion throughout the world. I grieve on many levels; for the brutality and cruelty shown these people; for the profound betrayals of trust; for those in our forces now unjustly linked to such evil; that the honor of our nation has been so stained.

I cannot adequately describe my pride in the courage, determination and honor shown by our military. It is equally difficult

to forget the images of humiliation, degradation and perversion that now characterize all Americans in the minds of many. Lois Bujold, an author whose perspective I respect, sees clearly here. "Any community's arm of force — military, police, security — needs people in it who can do the necessary evil, and yet not be made evil by it."

To do only the necessary, and no more. To constantly question the assumptions, to stop the slide into atrocity."

I also grieve for those who have abandoned decency and humanity to become such ugly representatives of us. The moral

chaos that accompanies a war is inevitable. Indeed, much depends on soldiers possessing a sense of what is unshakably true and right to guide choices and actions. In our "anything goes" society, such guides are, sadly, rare. What is not rare are the cheapening and destructive forces that our moral climate produces.

May God give grace to all concerned, that those who have suffered so greatly may find the courage of heart to abandon hatred, to forgive — and so find a measure of healing.

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