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In my opinion

America sets a *bad* example

The whole world will watch intently tonight as American voters decide the fate of the country — and to some extent the world — for the next four years. It's sad that in a country that claims to be a model for democracy we can't conduct our elections better. Once again, the presidential campaign has been guided by misinformation and dirty tricks.

The entire Swift Boat debacle was ridiculous. Somehow, conservative activists funded by rich Texans managed to land questions about John Kerry's war record on the front page of just about every major American newspaper for weeks on end. Even after military records contradicted the accounts given by the woefully misnamed Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, the controversy refused to die. It was a simple and successful misinformation campaign that had a significant effect on the race.

President Bush also contributed to misleading the electorate by willfully distorting Kerry's views on use of force, implying that he'd leave American security to "old Europe" despite Kerry's repeated assurances to the contrary. Bush continued the pattern of deception by attacking Kerry's health care plan as an intrusive government monolith, which it isn't.

To be fair, the misinformation has flown from both sides. Kerry warned in mid-October that there's "great potential" of a military draft if Bush wins reelection, and Howard Dean voiced the same concerns during his visit to campus on Oct. 1. Both sides do what they feel they need to do to rouse their base. Republicans, as Dean likes to say, harp on "guns, God, gays and abortion" while Democrats attempt



CHUCK SLOTHOWER
TAKING ISSUE

to scare their base with the specter of a draft. I believe that political realities will likely prevent Bush from instituting a draft and that Democrats know this.

While partisan rhetorical nonsense can be expected, it has been more depressing to see the extent to which the electorate is misinformed this year. Polls indicate that a majority of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and a significant relationship with Al Qaeda despite



BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

strong and much-publicized evidence to the contrary. If only a few Americans believed this, one could attribute it to hard-core Bush supporters who couldn't admit the truth to themselves. But when half the country doesn't know the outcome of the two strongest rationales for invading Iraq, we have a problem.

It would be easy to blame the media for this, but anyone who reads a daily newspaper would know that we haven't found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or significant ties between Hussein and Al Qaeda. Perhaps if you got your information from Fox News, you might be forgiven for thinking otherwise (a survey showed Fox News viewers to be the most ill-informed American news consumers).

Also, the Bush administration deserves some blame for keeping these myths alive. Dick Cheney has been particularly mendacious about repeating discredited charges, and the entire administration has tried to conflate the war in Iraq with the war against Islamic terrorism. However, the final responsibility to inform oneself lies with the citizen. American democracy demands a lot on the part of the citizen, and it's the citizen's duty to fulfill that obligation. I have little sympathy for those who whine about how long it takes to inform oneself about the issues. It's an insult to your forefathers who fought for the right to vote and the literally billions of humans who still don't have the right to vote.

Speaking of the right to vote, The Washington Post reported last week that Republicans in Ohio and Wisconsin have mounted legal challenges to tens of thousands of voter registrations in those key states. Of course partisans want their side to win. But at what point do ethics enter the mix, and at what point does one consider the health of the republic?

Just like you, I'll be glued to the television tonight with liquor close at hand. Best of luck to all of us, and to the health of the republic.

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Editorial

Post-election America as seen through Emerald eyes

Prediction: Bush wins the election and liberal idealists who believed their votes could change the world will instantly grow cynical and bitter. Sweet apathy will be popular once again. Hundreds of students will decide to give up on their dreams of ethical careers and go into advertising.

Prediction: North Korea's Kim Jong Il will be the last of the evildoers to endorse a candidate for president. He will back Ralph Nader, who will then eagerly ask the dictator for a campaign donation.

Prediction: The ASUO will break the law, again.

Prediction: Kerry will win both the popular and electoral vote, but, after consulting with Al Gore, will concede the election, at which point Howard Dean's head will explode. In his concession speech Kerry will apologize for criticizing the president and will beg for his forgiveness. In an act of contrition, Congressional Democrats will bend over in unison during a joint meeting of the House and Senate and let the Republican's "filibuster" them. Observers will comment that these Democrats still put up more of a fight than they did in 2000. Liberals will later blame the defeat on Ralph Nader.

Prediction: Kerry will receive zero votes in Ohio. The mainstream media will blame an "accidental" malfunction of every electronic voting machine in the state. By 10 p.m. Republican pundits will accuse angry Democrats of being "conspiracy theorists" and will tell them to "get over it." But in a surprising moment of candor, Diebold Inc. chief executive Walden O'Dell will admit, "Yeah, we probably could have been more subtle about that one, but we decided, what the hell? It's not like anybody can do anything about it." The Democrats will then bend over.

Prediction: After a massive flood from an unexpected hurricane wipes out the eastern seaboard killing Bush and Kerry at their respective polling stations, Ralph Nader will win the election with help from late-voting left-coast liberals. The newspaper headline on the Nov. 3 New York Times reads: "Pigs fly, hell freezes over."

Prediction: Kerry wins the election by a highly-contested, razor-thin margin, but is inaugurated thanks to a court decision. The nation is split down the middle. The country is still at war, and young Americans die faster and faster. Conservative think-tanks claim the economy has officially jumped the shark and begin ballyhooing the "Kerry recession." Television anchors ask, "Does my hair look alright?" The country enters a second cold-war-like era, emerges briefly in 40 years, takes a breath and dives back into war.

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Prediction: Bush wins the election by a highly-contested, razor-thin margin despite losing the popular vote, thanks to a Supreme Court decision. The country is highly polarized. After an uneventful first 100 days under the Bush administration the country is attacked, giving the president carte blanche to terrorize his constituents and fellow citizens with bogeyman depictions of evil terrorists while he simultaneously drags the country to war based on slipshod evidence buttressed by fundamentalist-like zealotry in neo-conservatism. Uhhh — nevermind.

INBOX

Use intellectual diversity in clash of political ideas

Being new to Eugene and the University, this is my first political season here. Having spent 13 of the last 27 years abroad, I have lived on both coasts of the United States, and in six countries on three continents overseas, but I have never lived in a more culturally and ethnically homogeneous than this one. Nor have I ever lived in one that talks more often or more loudly about diversity!

The cultural and ethnic diversity that so many on this campus claim to cherish is, conveniently, exactly the kind of diversity that you will never actually have to face as long as you stay in Eugene. Meanwhile, the diversity that you do have the opportunity to engage with on a daily basis, intellectual diversity, seems to terrify you so much that most of you can find no better response than to retreat to the knee-jerk reactions of all bigots (liberal or conservative): mockery, derision and intimidation.

The next time you meet a person with a Bush/Cheney button on their

backpack, try something new: Rather than mocking them, offer to buy them a cup of coffee and try to engage in a civil and rational exchange of ideas — no campaign slogans allowed. While it may be that no one's vote will be changed, at least you'll finally have an opportunity to put that highly vaunted appreciation for diversity into practice, and if you do it with honesty and sincerity, that can only be a good thing.

Paul Tucker
Eugene

Vote no on 34 and 37 to protect forests

I agree with your editorial board that Measure 34 is a terrible idea. However, it is essential that voters also know about another serious threat to our forests and farmland: Measure 37.

Measure 37 is a misleading and dangerous measure that would roll back Oregon's safeguards that protect forests and farmland from being converted into stripmalls and sprawl. That's why leading environ-

mental groups including the Sierra Club, OSPIRG and the League of Conservation Voters are against it.

The timber industry has already spent \$750,000 for the Yes on 37 campaign because they know the law will allow them to do more clear-cutting, unless taxpayers pay them hundreds of millions of dollars not to. That's not fair.

Measure 37 is also extremely expensive. The State Treasury estimates it would cost \$344 million just to process the claims, not to mention all the money it would take to pay out the claims. This measure will gut the already meager state budget, which will mean cuts to education and all the other programs we care about.

To protect our environment and our state budget, vote no on Measure 37. For information go to www.NOon37.com or contact the author at margie_klein@lcv.org or 646-408-6160.

Margie Klein
Project Democracy
League of Conservation
Voters Education Fund

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