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## ■ In my opinion

# The Voting Game

"Welcome!" proclaims the Host, scattering sequins as he sweeps his arm in an arc. "Welcome to The Election!"

The audience cheers madly as the smiling Host escorts a young voter onstage. She is blonde and beautiful, radiating an aura of enchanting naiveté.

"You all know how the game is played," the Host reminds the studio, leading the voter to her stool. "Two candidates sit in isolation booths, completely cut off from reality. Miss Voter will ask questions we wrote for her. She will then choose her favorite for a four-year-long date. Who will win ... THE ELECTION????!!!"

More applause. The two candidates settle inside twin cubicles.

"Candidate No. 1," Miss Voter says, clearing her throat. "If you were a bowl of soup, what kind would you be?"

"Well, Miss Voter," Candidate No. 1 purrs, "being a bowl of soup is hard work, but I promise I will hold up the honor and dignity of all things soup, and together, we can make our soup strong again. After September 11, I know how important it is to be a strong soup, a consistent soup — so I would be tomato, because tomato is red and patriotic, and while I don't question the patriotism of my opponent's soup, I know he would be chicken noodle."

There are hoots of agreement from the right side of the audience. Miss Voter clears her throat again. "Candidate No. 2, what kind of soup would you be?"

"That question has many deep and thoughtful nuances that must be elaborated upon," Candidate No. 2 says, reading the notes he scribbled furiously during his opponent's diatribe. "My opponent underestimates the strength of chicken and of noodles, missing the point of soup altogether. Though I would be soup, I would look outside the bowl. I would form a coalition with the bread and the cheese. And though my soup might taste gray and indistinct, you would say, 'That soup did not win a war only to lose the peace. That soup is the right soup at the right place at the right time.'"



JENNIFER MCBRIDE  
QUASHING DISSENT

"Er, OK." Miss Voter swaps cue cards as the left side of the theater cheers. "Candidate No. 1, if we were on a date, where would you take me?"

Candidate No. 1 scowls. "I reckon my opponent is wrong, Miss Voter. He's disrespectin' the allies, the sacrifices Tony Blair's soup has made —"

The toupee of the Host almost falls off as he intervenes, "I'm sorry, Candidate No. 1, but you must stick to the question."

"But ... Poland!"

"If you can't keep to the question we'll have no choice but —"

"Pola — er, what was the question again?"

"Perfect date."

"Right." Candidate No. 1 sits back down. "Well, I'd like to take you to a ranch. I would flout mislead you, but if we went down to the ranch and you didn't find what you were looking for, it would be OK because the ranch would be safer. Then we'd sit down for some apple pie, maybe watch a baseball game with the Cheney's (I'd offer you pretzels but I can't have any because Dick-who-I-did-not-choose-for-his-hair-do says I can't eat them anymore), and we'd share champagne and tax cuts. Then I'd take you back to bed and ride you like I rode Rummy. Yee-haw!"

Candidate No. 2 snorts. "I would not take you to that ranch, but I would have brought others to the ranch. And although I dislike the ranch, I would not ignore the ranch. I would have inspected the ranch and fixed it with the screwdriver of diplomacy instead of the hammer of war."

"I don't want to hear about your opponent," snaps Miss Voter. "I want to know what you bring to the table."

Candidate No. 2 looks mildly confused, as if trying to comprehend his existence outside the other. "Oh, we could throw a football around or something. Or go hunting. Because I need to prove my manliness in dumb photo-ops."

The swing side of the audience seems unconvinced.

"One last question," Miss Voter says. "Candidate No. 2, if we went on our date, and it turned out I was actually a man, what would you do?"

Candidate No. 2 ponders a moment. "I would respect you and your way of life, but I'd drop you like a hot potato. You'd still vote for me because I'm not the alternative."

Candidate No. 1 is incensed. "Dirty politics!" he spits. "I'd insult the other guy for bringing you into the campaign!"

"Ooh," says the audience.

"Aah," says the Host. "Well, Miss Voter, have you reached a decision?"

"Not really," she replies. "Isn't there another option?"

"Yes!" a man shouts.

"No," retorts the audience, and the man leaves, covered with wet tomato.

"Well," Miss Voter sighs, "if there really is no other option ..."

"Wait!" Suddenly, three men in black sweep onto the soundstage, scattering the audience as they grab Miss Voter. "We, the lawyers of Poly & Ticksonson, want to make sure you have your say."

"But I —"

"No," the lawyers reply in unison. "We have to protect you from yourself. We'll tell you who you'll go out with in a week or so."

"But this was supposed to be my choice!" Miss Voter squawks.

The lawyers gasp. "Are you criticizing democracy?"

"I just want —"

The curtain descends as everybody continues shouting. The Host smiles broadly as the theme music plays him out. "Well," he grins, "that's it for today's show. See you in another four years!"

*jennifermcbride@dailyemerald.com*

## ■ Editorial

# U.S. shifts to comfort zone with its choices

The Emerald was surprised and disappointed at John Kerry's poor showing in Tuesday's election. While the outcome still hinges on provisional ballots in Ohio, Kerry thoroughly lost the popular vote by almost 4 million at one point. It appears as if the terrorist attacks have had a more profound and lasting effect on the nation's psyche than we first realized. George W. Bush's strong showing is a testament to the fear still gripping the American people. This election should go down as the "Election of Fear."

After four years, President Bush has proven himself to be a poor leader who could not control government spending and a poor commander-in-chief who, even many supporters will concede, tragically botched the war in Iraq. Bush's approval rating on Nov. 1 was below 50 percent. With these massive failures, at another time in history, this president wouldn't stand a chance at re-election.

But we live in the post-Sept. 11 world, where Americans are so desperate for the comfort of Bush's macho rhetoric about the war on terrorism that they are willing to put up with his incompetence. Kerry's perceived flip-flopping created an air of uncertainty about the candidate. Swing voters feared Kerry's internationalism, which was further emphasized by Bush's misleading negative campaigning. Fear of the unknown kept swing voters from seeking the new direction that they ultimately desire.

In addition to a paralyzing fear of terrorism, the country also appears to be shifting socially conservative. For example, bans on same-sex marriage, which were on the ballot in Oregon and 10 other states, all passed, many overwhelmingly: In Kentucky and Georgia by 3-to-1 margins and in Mississippi by a 6-to-1 margin.

With Bush destined to appoint at least one, but probably more, justices to the Supreme Court, we will most likely have all three branches on the government controlled by Republicans, if he wins. So much for the separation of powers. This means that we are more than likely to see the end of a woman's right to choose and a further erosion in the separation of church and state. The neoconservative agenda to project American power in the world through military preemption and nation-building will continue. And, ironically, America will be less safe for it.

As we at the Emerald watched the election results trickle in Tuesday it became clear just how deeply and passionately divided we are as a nation. We are divided geographically and generationally. We are divided by race, ethnicity, religion and gender. Two fundamentally different groups of Americans with two fundamentally different world views are currently waging a fierce political war over the future of this country. And liberals are slowly losing ground.

It is still too early to tell if there was widespread voter fraud — or "hanky panky" as Wolf Blitzer called it — in swing states like Florida and Ohio. The Emerald still doesn't trust the electronic voting machines that counted about 30 percent of the votes this year. But assuming everything was legal, the country was able to come together and peacefully conduct the most important election of our lifetime. We did so without bloodshed or mass chaos. This alone is an accomplishment that the majority of nations in the world can only dream about. America went a long way toward repairing the negative impression left after the 2000 election. That is good news indeed.

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## INBOX

### Incidental fee misuse real issue of Sunriver retreat

While I appreciate the Emerald's reportage of the ASUO Sunriver incident, I do not agree with the focus of Monday's editorial ("ASUO's bad behavior is too much for us to swallow," ODE, Nov. 1). The editorial board's tirade fails to adequately address the most relevant issue of this "scandal": ASUO's use of incidental fees. While discovering the identity of the "mystery authors" might make for sensational press, it would surely deflect criticism away from the ASUO body as a whole, where the blame for this incident should lie.

My disappointment with the ASUO derives from the fact that its members spent an excessive amount of our incidental fees on a finance retreat. Yet, let us not forget that the ASUO has already publicly apologized for its inappropriate conduct, initiated a policy of

sobriety agreements on future retreats and plans to return \$3,200 to the University through community service. The vindictive language in Monday's editorial proves that in lieu of these reforms, the Emerald's editorial board continues to hunt for student faces to pin to this incident. The editorial board should return to writing about relevant issues that concern the student populace.

Oliver Hagan  
Eugene

### ASUO Sunriver spin strategy insulting, wrong

Let's be serious for a second. Does anybody not know what goes on at a "typical" Sunriver retreat? Participation isn't even required, and you can hear about these retreats from friends or random, picked-up conversations. These retreats are synonymous with drinking, smoking pot and hot tubs. Anyone with foreknowledge of the

ASUO retreat should have questioned its motivations and purposes. The ASUO officials were seen packing up their coolers and loading them into their cars behind the EMU for the trip.

I am insulted at the stupidity that the ASUO is assuming of the general student body, choosing to cover and spin rather than accept responsibility. How can applying your wages/stipends to cover the cost of the trip really make a difference when incidental fees pay those stipends? I don't feel comfortable with the weak, naive policy of self regulation in the matter.

I have a real solution. As a student who voted in the ASUO elections, I am calling for the immediate resignation of the members involved with the retreat, including the president and vice president. Doing the right thing is hard, but you will certainly gain more respect for it.

Samuel Lucas Crow  
Springfield

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