

DAVID LEVINE

TIM BISH

(He works construction; drives truck, lays pipe "and everything else," he says. He "pulls for the underdog; the weak, meek, disheartened and anyone struggling to reach the top, because I'm one of them.")

I think the 2000 election was such an intense thing — it was so important, sought after and fought over when it happened. Since then the controversy has died and nobody talks about it.

Next time this snafu comes back — and it will come back — people will use it as an excuse not to vote. I talk to people in my age group (I'm in my early 40s), and they use what happened as a reason to stop voting.

The largest percentage of eligible voters fall into those who are young and middleaged — if we all voted we would take everything. Yet of those who do vote, we are the smallest percentage. Older people vote every election because so many issues are important to them. But young people don't vote, and that's what concerns me.

If you don't like the system, get involved, change it. Don't walk away.

FLORENCE SAGE

(She is a teacher and poet, and hosts the weekly "Monday Mike" recitations of poems and stories by local writers at Astoria's River Theater.)

The 2000 Presidential election was an ethical mess. Neither candidate acted like a statesman for democracy, seeking the greatest good for the greatest number or respecting our much admired system of government.

Did they care about voters in a democracy?

Did they care about how the world would view us all?

Did it cross their minds that uncertainty was causing the retirement funds of working Americans to plummet? Did it cross their hearts? Did compassion play any part?

No, it was all about ambition — for Bush, for Gore, for Kathryn Harris (Florida Secretary of State) — for the majority of the Supreme Court. Do the right thing? Nah. I'm ambitious. I owe people.

We have to accept imperfection — we're not equipped to unflinchingly sustain our ideals. Bad ballots, bad lists, fuzzy wording, undertrained volunteers... We try. We get so much right. Fix mistakes when we can. Forgive.

But to be an administrator of government, a Justice of the Supreme Court, a man who claims to be fit and ready to help the country become what the majority wants it to be, and to leave out ethics, to not do "the right thing" for the country — I don't forgive that, and there are lots of people still shaking their heads.

MICHAEL METZNER (aka 'SHEKI')

(He is a musician; piano, guitar, accordion, drums, etc. He is a member of 'Los Comatosis' and has played with the Bond St. Blues Band and was drummer for 'Shanghai'd in Astoria.)

I was in England during the 2000 election. I was a bit miffed about people who voted for Ralph Nader: the election wasn't just about the environment. And you have to be a statesman if you want to be President. Nader's not a statesman.. Nader never had a chance. If he had got into office he would probably have been assassinated by an oil man.

We vote for the less worse. Gore or Bush.

I voted before I left for England. I expected to watch the election on television in a Dublin pub but the plane was routed to Manchester, England.

I was waiting at a friend's house in England for the election returns. First it was Gore, then it was Bush, then Gore again. It gave fuel to the 'Ugly American' thing. People couldn't believe we would be so stupid to elect Bush.

A Nottingham newspaper had a headline: "PLEASE DON'T UNLEASH 'W ON US!'"

I love this country and I'm proud of being an American, but it's very hard to defend this country when we elect an idiot like Bush.

The first thing Bush signed was to relax standards on toxic wastes. He's an oil man and would like to see an oil well in every yard. He wants to drill in Alaska. He wouldn't sign the Kyoto Treaty. People don't know how close to a serious war with China we were over that spy plane they shot down.

We will be lucky to get out of this Presidency without some terrible disaster, a war or an environmental disaster.

Bush is a horrible President. He's an embarrassment, and it's embarrassing trying to explain to Europeans how he got to be President.

PEGGY NIKKILA

(She is a special education teacher and longtime Clatsop County resident.)

I am horrified by our President.

Having been in Europe recently I was somewhat embarrassed by our country's stand on the Kyoto Treaty — even though we are the biggest polluters in the world we are unable to join other countries in cutting industrial emissions

'GET OFF THE BUS!'

INTERVIEWS BY
MICHAEL McCUSKER

The dilemma of the legitimacy of the current Presidency continues. So do the questions. They are the same asked of everyone interviewed for these pages and previous editions:

Do you think the extraordinary election of 2000 was legitimate and fair?

What do think might be the consequences of the election?

Another frame on the issue might be the question not asked: **If the Presidency of George Bush Jr. violates Constitutional law because of an illegally conducted campaign, would taking the Presidential oath automatically make him eligible for impeachment?**

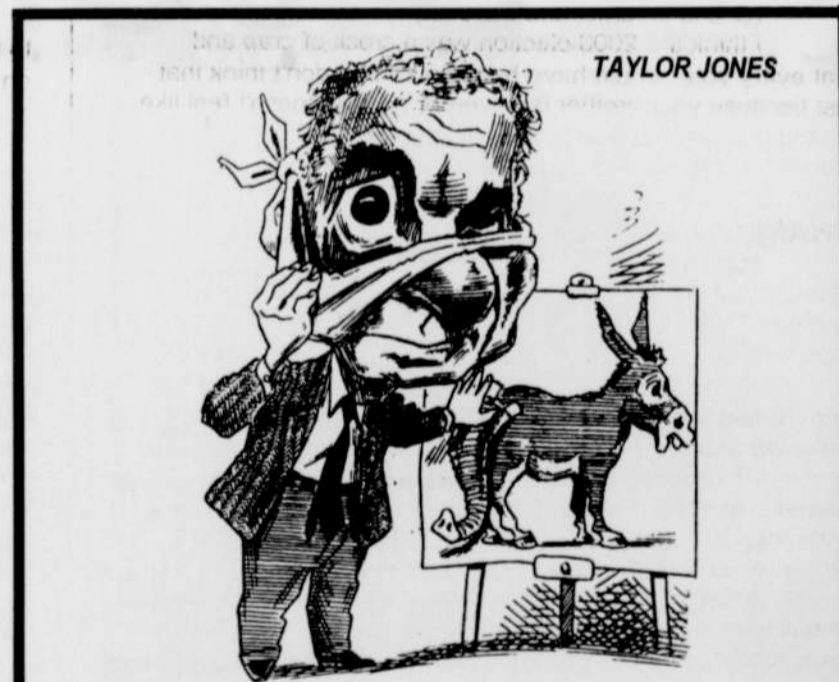
because we might lose jobs and our electricity bills might go up. The newspapers in Europe were filled with the impact of global warming on daily lives; the health issues, how water is covering island lands. It made us look like money hungry polluters.

When Bush, who wants to put up Star Wars, said the "IRA should get rid of their guns," newspapers in England and Ireland had his quote in photographs with missiles blasting off in the background.

RON BALDWIN

(He is a singer — 'Bond St. Blues Band, etc., coffee stand partner — 'Lido Cafe', and operates a sound events company — 'Red Raven Audio'.)

The 2000 election was an unnatural disaster. I think it has been a step backward for all kinds of different things,



TAYLOR JONES

TURN ON TO POLITICS

When people tell me that I'm wrecking the Democratic Party, I ask them what's left to wreck? The Democratic Party isn't going to heal itself. If it went and stood in a cold shower for the next four years, maybe it would think of something to do and say that isn't already being said and done by the Republican Party. The Democratic Party has shifted its thinking and policies so far to the right that the only difference between Bush and Gore is the relative velocity with which their knees hit the floor when the big corporations knock on the door.

Other critics tell me that I ought to work 'within the system', but people 'within the system' don't welcome new ideas. They like to talk about social change, but when it comes to actually doing something, they remember social change is outrageous, un-American, and wrong. Look at the history of the country. I don't care whether you're talking about the Revolution of 1776, or abolitionists forcing the issue of slavery in the 1850s, about women's suffrage, the late 19th century populist revolt against the eastern banks and railroads, the trade-union movement, Social Security, meat inspection, civil rights. The change invariably begins with people whom the defenders of the status quo denounce as agitators, communists, hippies, weirdos. And then, 10 or 20 years later, after the changes have taken place, the chamber of commerce discovers that everybody's profits have improved. The captains of industry never seem to realize that a free democracy is the precondition of a free market; try to turn the equation the other way around, and you end up with an economy like the one in Indonesia.

One of the ways to define freedom is as taking part, even a small part, in the dispositions of political power. The oligarchy never wants anyone to know what, or how much, ordinary citizens can accomplish if they learn to use the power of their own laws. Apathy is good for business-as-usual; so is cynicism. The lie that all the worthy causes are dead is like the lie that art is dead. Both lies serve the interests of entrenched mediocrity. Convince the kids that all the wars are over, that history is at an end, that nothing important remains to be discovered, done or said, and maybe they won't ask why a corporate CEO receives a salary 400 times greater than that of the lowest paid worker in his own company. I hear young people saying that they're not turned on to politics, and I tell them that if you do not turn on to politics, politics will turn on you.

~RALPH NADER

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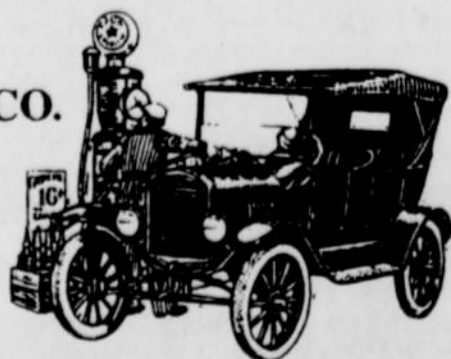
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