

IT'S ALL POLITICS

In your article "Hear Our Voices" (8/5) is the example of Sarah Mitzel, a young non-voting mother. She was pleased that a friend taught her son the word "peace," doesn't listen to the news or read newspapers, and says "How we live is so much more complicated than politics. It is about how we relate to the world around us." She "expressed confidence that her son will continue to learn peace as he grows."

How does one counter the idea that "if I don't pay attention to it, it won't affect me?" How we live, and whether there is peace in our personal world, is directly affected by politics. When you are laid off, when your child has no health care, when the ceiling in his school leaks, when he's drafted at 18 and dies at 19 in a "pre-emptive strike against terrorists" — all those things affect you, even if you refuse to pay attention to the politics behind them.

The vote is every American's basic peaceful means of telling those in power what we want, and of putting in power those who are more likely to give it to us. The fact Sarah likes the idea of peace will not change the political forces that daily affect her life, her son's life, and the lives of others. Her vote for politicians she thinks most likely to work for peace — now that could have a worldwide impact.

*Harriett Smith
Eugene*

WHAT'S WITH RALPH?

I am continually amazed at Nader's strange methods of attempting to "change" America for the better. I keep hearing more

and more reports of Republicans working like the dickens to get Ralph on the ballot in states across the country. What strange bedfellows!

I remember Nader, not too many years ago, as a dedicated and respected consumer advocate who seemed truly concerned with the average person's well being. Boy, have things changed. Now I listen to his supporters carry on about how righteous Ralph is (never you mind the funding and support he's getting from those pesky Republicans). I have to wonder if the Naderites still believe, after four hellish years of Bush imperialism, that Kerry or Gore or, for that matter Bush, Inc. are still one in the same? If so, then they are living on a different planet!

Nader has become a destructive ego-maniac. If he truly cared about this country and this planet, he would recognize the perilous situation we are in, realize that he will never win the presidency and make himself heard loud and clear by aligning himself with other like-minded Democrats, a party that can win. Then he can work for change from the inside out.

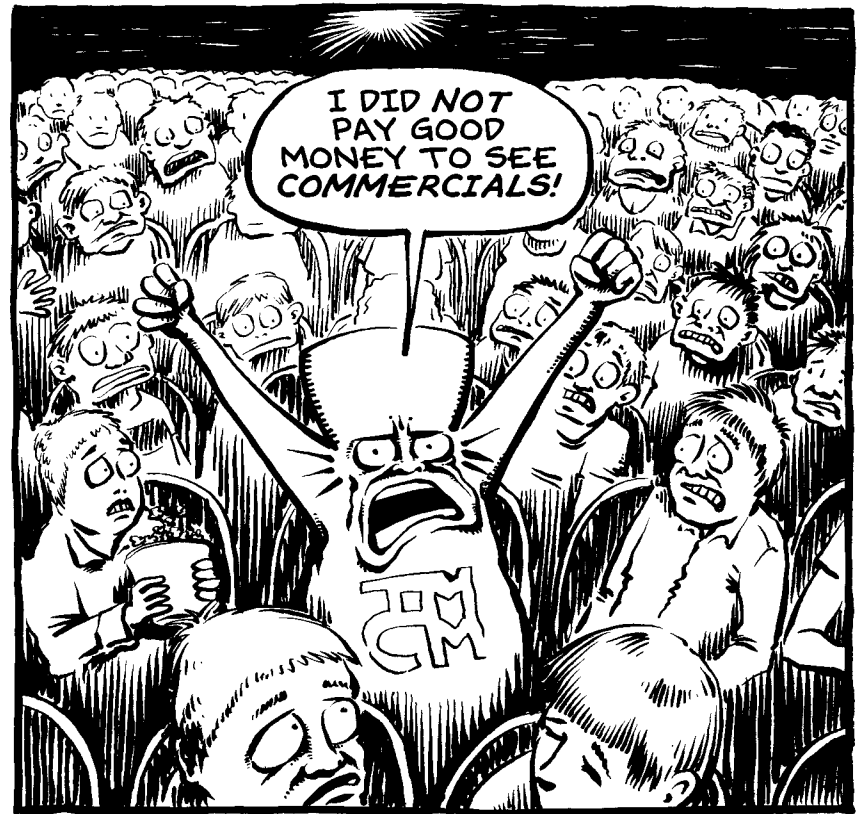
*Julie Claybaugh
Eugene*

FAIZULLA'S DISDAIN

I found Kera Abraham's conversations with Peshwaz Faizulla (cover story, 9/9) instructive more for what was alluded to and what was omitted than anything that was actually said.

Of course, I wasn't surprised by Faizulla's thinly veiled anti-Semitism, stating that "The foreign policy of America was to get a foothold in the Middle East. Especially next to

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



their beloved son, who is Israel." The only surprise was that he didn't use a term such as "Zionists."

Along the same vein, Faizulla states that "I don't think there is a good state in the Middle East that could be considered as a model of democracy and values and human rights." Like most Muslims, I am certain that he does not consider Israel to be a legitimate state. Regardless, it is the shining light of democracy in the Middle East, a place where not only is the standard of living astronomi-

cally higher than anywhere else in the area, but Muslims are treated better there than anywhere else in that region.

Something else I found telling was that Faizulla apparently has been in the U.S. for less than a year and has been in college the entire time. Does his disdain for how shallow Americans are speak more to the caliber of college students and professors, who tend to be very shallow, vain and partisan, as well as the city of Eugene itself and less for Americans as a whole?

Kumbaya Dammit BY DAN CAROL

Forget The Polls
Surveys don't factor the peeps turning out.

As I write this, George Bush has a 13-point advantage in the Gallup poll but his 12 point lead in last week's Pew poll is gone. Other polls have the two gents tied. Just what gives here? Well, the dirty little secret is that polling is less scientific than we're led on.

So I am here to tell you, as a supposed expert on politics, that the race will stay ugly and close to the end — no matter what the latest polls say. That plus this: we're gonna win, for sure. No matter what the polls say.

We all still have to put our heads down and do the work of getting our friends out to vote and winning over our undecided Aunt Sallys and Uncle Jacks to the fact that Donald Rumsfeld is incompetent and that George Bush has bankrupted their nephew's (or niece's) future. Plus please make sure that the people you know who think politics is stupid nonetheless register and vote, just this one time, because *you* asked them. Simply begging for Kerry votes is another fine option.

As for the polls, let me share some perspective to build your confidence level, starting with my own "private Idaho." Back in 1996, I was convinced I was about to knock off Larry Craig, the untouchable conservative U.S. Senator in my deftest campaign ever — my independent-minded candidate (that's how you describe Democrats in the Baked Potato state) was surging. Or so I thought. The campaign pollster had us dead even a week out and then as icing on the cake we got the biggest newspaper's endorsement, which Democrats seldom snagged in Boise. And then? We lost by 18 points!

According to our pollster, our polling wasn't wrong. It just that the assumed "average" amount of voter turnout being assumed in 1996 was way, way, WAY off. That meant the statistical model driving all extrapolations about the sampled population was also way off. In even nerdier language, right wing voter registration that year had unexpectedly gone way, way up, so that the poll's "margin of error" was overwhelmed by the greater variance in voter turnout.



Now one would think the media would care a little about looking stupid — but they just keep writing the checks for more and more polls. It seems trite to say that the press is hooked on them because it allows them to cover the horse race rather than the issues. But Purdue University researchers have actually complained how the 24-hour news machine is more interested in the headlines generated by polling shifts than they do in fixing the obvious variance errors they have discovered.

Of course, we the people all know there is one other key factor that drives polling shifts — it's the swing voters who love to toy with pollsters by changing their answers every night on whether they will vote, let alone for whom they will vote.

So you ask, what does it all mean if pollsters' predictions and voter turnout models are as stable as houses built on barrier islands? It means we need to watch carefully for the storm surges of voting behavior.

This year, plain and simple, is our year. But don't get cocky as I said — do the work that you can do. At the same time, don't be all whiney or moping either because Kerry is kind of lame. We are going to win. Here's why.

We have registered a lot of new people — three million nationally and counting. Here in Oregon, new Democratic registration is outpacing Republican signups by more than 3-1.

A big youth vote, perhaps exceeding 1992, also seems likely. Talk of "draft" among young people is no longer about beer keggers — it's about Iraq. Meanwhile, we've got prominent hip-hoppers like P Diddy amping up the vote, and a voter registration drive for every demographic.

In short, our peeps are coming out. The polls aren't fully factoring that in. And that's the stuff of quiet confidence. Wear it proudly.

So forget the polls — we got The Boss, The E Street Band and The Vote for Change tour. Forget the polls — we've got more canvassers and less couch potatoes. Forget the polls — because the only one that matters is Nov. 2.

Dan Carol is a Democratic political strategist and a founding partner of CTSG (www.ctsg.com), a progressive consulting firm based in Eugene and Washington, D.C.