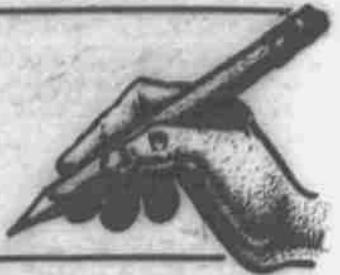


opinion



letters

Statistics can say anything at all or, in this case, nothing at all

THE debates offered ultimate proof statistics can say anything the interpreter wants them to. And Thursday night, statistics did most of the talking.

The statistics, on unemployment: It's up to 20 per cent in the construction industry. This is way too high, Jimmy Carter said, because he is aiming for a three per cent adult unemployment—not to be confused with a four to four and one half overall unemployment rate. And, if these figures are realized, the mathematical result would be a four to six per cent economic growth rate.

When Carter was asked if all this money poured into the economy via paychecks wouldn't cause a horrendous inflation, more statistics came to the rescue. At our present 7.9 per cent overall unemployment rate (the 20 per cent figure applies only to construction) we are utilizing only 73 per cent of our productive capacity. Clear? As mud.

Carter calculated Thursday night the extra money available for his proposed tax relief and employment programs would be \$60 billion by 1981. But President Ford told the audience he estimates the programs will cost from \$100 to 200 billion and questioner Elizabeth Drew, armed with statistics of her own, declared that no matter what the cost, only \$5 billion could be saved by 1981.

The audience got more of the same on energy, federal spending, etc. Figures were a dime a —ahem.

Carter memorized enough figures to attack Ford's veto record. Ford dug far enough through Georgia's state records to be able to attack government expenditures during Carter's term as governor.

It seems Ford and Carter, both so quick to declare their willingness to debate, memorized an hour and a half's worth of statistics and molded their ready-made answers around whatever questions happened to be forthcoming.

We get the idea we would have heard those figures no matter what the questions would have been. Neither candidate showed a good debater's ability to improvise, —which made the single spontaneous episode of the evening—the 27-minute gap—the news of the night.

By letting statistics speak for them, Ford and Carter ended up saying almost nothing at all.

A local poll shows 34.4 per cent of the viewers thought Ford won the debates and 31.8 per cent thought Carter won. These statistics, like all the others connected with the debates, mean nothing at all the polltakers go on to say. You see, there is a 2.9 per cent err rate.

Optimists are saying the next debates (scheduled for Oct. 6) will find the candidates much more at ease, and that the two will come out from behind their memorized answers. Let's hope so. Viewers should not have to sit down with their calculators to figure out what the debaters are saying.

Where else?

I agree with the first part of Chris Ewing's Sept. 24 letter which states that it is nice to see all of the lawns and flora around campus. However, the claim that the "natural beauty" around the Sheldon, Ferguson and Westbrook Bldgs. has been ruined by the sculptures is incorrect.

She was correct when she suggested that her "aesthetic values are screwed around." The sculptures are not ugly. They are in good taste and the area is relaxing. And she can't say that the "natural beauty" of the area has been ruined by the sculptures because the landscaping there is about as natural as a test tube baby or electrified music.

If Chris wants natural beauty she should go hiking in a forest or canoeing in Canada. She won't find it at this campus, in this city, or in this state—where all of the natural vegetation has been replaced by corn and wheat.

So because we walk on grounds that have been remodeled by bulldozers and shovels Chris shouldn't complain about walking amidst objects created by welding torches and hammers.

Besides, where else were they going to put the sculptures?

Ron Ahrens



Much ado about nothing:

Reaction to Carter's Playboy confession

By Nicholas Von Hoffman

"Off the cuff, that's a very foolish thing for anyone to say," the Rev. George Docherty, pastor emeritus of Washington's New York Avenue Church, was quoted in The Washington Post when invited to discuss fellow clergyman Jimmy Carter's interpretation of the Commandment about adultery. "There is a distinction between witting lust and unwitting lust. It is not holier-than-thou to condemn another man for shacking down with another man's wife."

sidewise

The only news here is that while Baptists and others customarily shack up, Presbyterians apparently shack down. It is a distinction in moral theology which may rival the terrible controversy which raged among the fourth century Fathers of the Church over whether the Homoiousians or the Homocousians were right. Since the two political parties are having such Sturm and Drang trying to find an issue on which they clearly disagree, the Rev. Mr. Docherty may have saved the election from absolute meaninglessness by having come up with one.

In Rev. Carter's interview in Playboy, where he refused to come out in favor of depriving proven adulterers of their civil rights, he revealed himself to be an up-shacker. At least he is quoted as refusing to condemn a man "Who not only looks upon a woman with lust (i.e. ogles) but who leaves his wife and shacks up with somebody out of wedlock."

Fuzzy ups and downs

Ron Nessen, President Gerald Ford's media spokesperson, pointed out that Carter had hidden his upshacker tendencies throughout the entire primary campaign. This is another example of Carter's fuzziness, Nessen indicated.

When asked the President's position on the issue, Nessen said there would be no White House statement on the matter and directed reporters to examine Ford's long record on the question. Ford has long been considered a down-shacker, so that members of the White House press corps taken by surprise when the President said that if he ever caught daddy's little girl Suzy shacking up or down, "I'd protest in most vigorous way and I'd counsel her." It was not immediately clear whether Ford meant by counseling her that he'd send Henry Kissinger over on a shuttle to give her sex education or what.

There is a tumescent feeling in the Republican camp that the voting public will react very badly that Carter, a duly ordained peanut, would confess to concupiscence, hard breathing, dry mouth and hankering after. Carter didn't say in his Playboy interview if he'd gone as far as fantasizing, although Bob Dole told a convention of indicted grain dealers in Memphis that Carter's fantasies are so rich that he had no chance of balancing the budget. Carter's wife, Rosalynn, told NBC news that she stands by her husband and considers Sen. Dole's imputations to excessive fantasizing personally offensive and no credit to Dole a divorced, recently remarried man. Carter's mother was quoted by the Associated Press saying, "Outta here, you sex-crazed, Northern white trash reporter." The second Mrs. Dole also issued a statement saying she would stand by her husband although she refused to explain why.

It is known that Secretary of the Treasury William Simon is urging President Ford to widen his proposed anti-abortion amendment to bar pre- and extra-marital sex. By placing sex under the direct jurisdiction of the federal government, Simon argues, the ground will be cut out from under administration critics who're saying this is a crock topic which doesn't belong in a presidential campaign. Attorney General Edward Levi is siding with Simon because he thinks if screwing (it's Carter's word) and they printed it on page one of The Washington Post) is made a violation of the federal criminal code it will help pull up FBI arrest statistics. Levi's theory is that flatfoot Kelley

and his interior decorators will find busting kids under bushes in the park more on their skill level than getting the goods on the Mafia.

Most confessin'est family

Another suggestion being mulled over in the White House campaign headquarters is to send the Ford kids out across the country enumerating all the sins they haven't committed. The press will be nudged to contrast the Ford family's unremittingly virginal innocence to Rosalynn Carter's recent confession that sons confessed to her that they'd smoked pot. the Carters are the most confessin'est family ever to run for the Presidency. If they don't cut it out soon they may end up confessin' themselves back to the peanut farm.

Some Ford strategists are not so sure the my-family-is-gooder-than-your-family approach is the right one. Not that they're worried any member of the Ford family ever did anything wrong, but they don't know how to deal with Amy Carter. The public thinks Amy is a nice little girl and they may think Senator Dole has pushed partisanship too far when he accuses Amy of shortchanging the media when she sells them lemonade. On the other hand, given the Carter family's predilection for baring the chest and confessing all, don't be surprised if the next issue of the Girl Scout magazine has an exclusive interview with Amy wherein she admits she's a heroin addict. If the script goes true to form, her mother will say she doesn't mind what her children do as long as they come and tell her. The Fords will stick bars of butter in their mouths and say they don't do such things.

Another possibility is that the Ford and Carter kids all shut up and go back to school; that the Carter and Ford wives either run for office on their own or pipe down too; and that Mrs. Sen. Dole goes back to her job at the Federal Trade Commission; and, most of all, may the press stop writing about other peoples libidos and limit their interest in sex to cheating on their wives and husbands as they traipse around after the candidates in chartered planes.