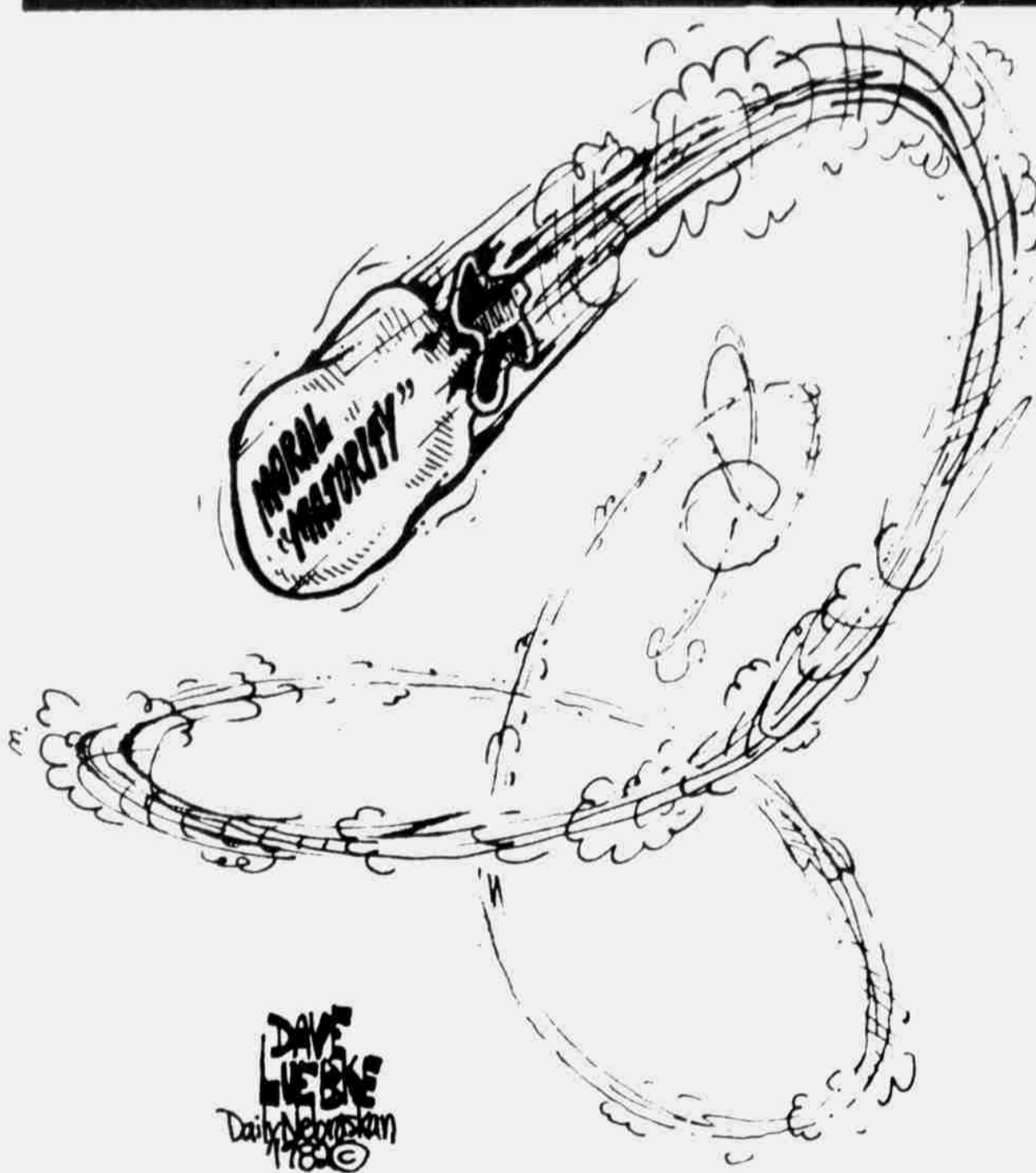


# Editorial



## Moral Majority loses in poll

The latest Harris Survey results indicate that whether or not the Moral Majority really is moral, it is not a majority. Survey respondents voted against the expressed stands of the Moral Majority on all but one of the issues in the survey: the lone exception was overwhelming support for prayer in classrooms.

While one poll shouldn't be taken as political gospel, the results are significant in light of the awesome power and grassroots support the Moral Majority claimed to have in the wake of the 1980 elections. Complete analysis of the 1980 elections and the Liberal Armageddon that resulted from them will probably take years, but the key is that everybody *thinks* the Moral Majority and conservative groups like it were the deciding factors in the election. That belief is what the Harris Survey results cast into serious doubt.

The issues in question, such as federal handgun registration, affirmative action programs for women and minorities, the proposed constitutional amendment to ban abortions and the aforementioned allowance of daily prayers in school classrooms, are the "social issues" at the very heart of the Moral Majority's existence.

As reported Monday in *The Lincoln Star*, Louis Harris himself said in an unusual summary statement, "It is possible that one of the more serious misreadings of public opinion in modern times has been made by the conservatives who claim massive backing for these issues and by the liberals who have publicly despaired at the

ideological size of the right and its followers."

All of this could spell considerable trouble for the Moral Majority as well as for candidates who base their campaigns on these issues. We might even find candidates in the unusual position of trying to avoid too obvious an alliance with the Moral Majority for fear of losing votes among those people who don't align with the organization.

The question that remains unanswered by the Harris Survey is whether the advantages indicated in these results will be translated into votes in the 1982 elections.

Even in 1980, a presidential election year, only a little more than half of the eligible voters went out and voted. This year, in the "off-year" elections, the total could be even lower. Further, conservative campaigners may decide to bury these potentially disastrous issues and focus instead on the latest developments in El Salvador or any sign of economic recovery, no matter how faint, that might be available by summer. The result could be that the electorate will vote in (or fail to vote out) legislators who disagree with them on social issues.

No doubt the Moral Majority will scoff at the Harris Survey results and contend that because of some combination of sampling error and slanted wording of the questions, the results are meaningless. There would be no question of a sampling error, though, if the opinions expressed in this survey in February are expressed again as votes in November.

## Reach out and touch those obscene phone calls

At 1 a.m. the phone rang. My initial thought was that somebody had died. What else could it be? Any sane person wouldn't call at this time unless it was a crisis.

My answering machine picked up the phone for me and let me hear the call.

Nobody had died. But I was right. The caller was not sane, just obscene. My faithful phone answerer wisely hung up on the child. I looked up what the phone book



had to say about harassing phone calls. It advises that if you get a phone call in which the caller doesn't identify himself after the second time you say hello or in which the caller says a dirty word or phrase, hang up, don't give any information until the caller identifies himself, and if the calls persist, contact your phone company representative or the police.

I thought about its suggestions. They were okay, but here are a few of my own:

- Don't hang up on the caller. Tell whoever is calling

to hold for a minute and then go back to bed. In the morning pick up the phone and announce that the call had been traced and the police are on their way. Be polite and thank the person for calling.

- If you are the sociable type, read to the caller from a boring textbook, such as the one from your geology class. After all, the caller has rocks in his head.

- Describe in great detail you aunt's gallbladder operation or, better yet, have your aunt describe it.

- Discuss the meaning of life or the elements of logic with the caller. (If you know a more boring subject, such as the love lives of virgin goldfish, discuss that with the caller.)

- Ask the caller to do something that is beyond his mentality. Counting to four will probably be too complicated for most callers, but play it safe - ask the caller to count to six.

- Psychologists say the general reason people make annoying calls is that the caller can't strike up a conversation with somebody in the normal manner. The caller then becomes frustrated. The frustration turns to anger. Then, the caller makes obscene calls to the person who is frustrating them.

If you're one of these frustrated callers, try these tactics instead of making obscene phone calls:

- Try placing an ad in the paper requesting a meeting at Union Square.

- Act stupid and ask to borrow notes if you have a class with this person, and then pretend their handwriting is too hard to read.

- Trip the person in the hall, and then help him or her to get up.

- Sing songs under the person's balcony - if he or she has a balcony.

- If all else fails, go up the person, look the person straight in the eye and say "Hi."

The worst you can get is a slap across the face. The best thing that can happen is you'll make a friend.

One more thing that you should know: Making obscene phone calls is a crime under both Nebraska law and federal laws, and the penalties for making harassing phone calls are six months in prison and/or a \$500 fine. And computer traces make it easy to catch a caller.

Surely there is a better way of reaching out and touching someone.

## What is the secret of life? Look in your desk

I refer now to all those jokes about the meaning of life. I refer to the jokes about how someone goes through the jungle and the desert and then climbs the Himalayas in search of the wise man who will tell him what life is. I know what life is. Life is a desk.

At least my life is like my desk. Sometimes I manage to get my desk almost cleared off - almost perfect. The mail gets done and things get stacked in neat little



piles. The press releases get placed in one pile, the drop-dead letters in another pile and the reasonable letters telling me how wonderful I am in another pile.

All this gets stacked and then taken care of - letter by letter. I take the articles I have clipped from the newspapers, try to remember why I have clipped them and usually wind up throwing them away. I work at this sort of thing for hours and hours, usually on a Saturday. But always, always, always, there are letters I cannot answer and clippings I just have to clip and, of course, a phone call I just have to make. So my desk never gets cleaned up.

It is the same with me. I am, I think, always close to perfection - not perfection in some goody-goody way, but perfection in the sense of self-knowledge. Occasionally, I get seized by fits of insight into myself and then I resolve to do things differently - better. Not only that, but I rue the fact that I did not know earlier in my life what I now know. It would have made things so much easier. I would be, without doubt, more popular and

richer and more successful and, there is always the chance, taller. Someday, I will be taller than I am now.

Anyway, always I think I am on the verge of just knowing all about myself, understanding me. But it never happens. Something comes along and I react to it in some strange or different way and then I have to conclude that I was not even close. I have to start all over again and then, after some work, I get closer and then closer still until, like the almost clean desk, I think I am on the verge of actually doing it - knowing precisely who I am.

Maybe there are people who know exactly who they are. I used to think that most people were like that. They are formed, complete, not always on the verge of getting somewhere, not - as someone once said of Bobby Kennedy - in a state of becoming, but already there. They got "there" in the Army or maybe at business or engineering school, but wherever they got it, they knew at 20 or 21 who they were - no ifs, ands or buts.

These were the people who knew very early on what they wanted to do in life. They got engaged to the person they dated in high school and they married that person exactly four years later. They had children on schedule and bought homes on schedule and became grandparents on schedule. They did not jog and think about dropping out and wonder what it would be like to be Burt Reynolds.

I think I see these people on the street and I imagine what their desks look like. They are neat. They make me wonder if you can tell all you need to know about a person from their desks. I don't think so, but I have a friend who thinks he can look at a married couple's bedroom and tell about their sex life. The grander the bedroom, the more ornate it is than the rest of the house, the worse

the sex life. I don't know if this is true, but I thought I would mention it as my way of helping the bedroom furniture industry.

Maybe this works with bedrooms and not with desks. Maybe, in fact, it works with garages or attics or closets. I don't know. All I know is that my desk suits me and that this is not the way I thought things would turn out.

When I was a kid, I thought adults knew everything with certainty. They knew - just knew - how to deal with headwaiters and how to make witty toasts and how to stay awake for the drive home after a dinner at some relative's house. Self-knowledge was also one of those things.

But this is not the case. The purely physical uncertainties of childhood have been replaced by mental ones. The body I had yesterday is the body I have today. It is the mind that I do not know. This is not the way I thought it would be. I thought by now I would know myself. Instead, I know something else. I know what life is. It's a desk.

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