

Editorial

Old political plays could do in Democrats

Back in the old days, in the 300s B.C.E. (Before Common Era), politicians played the same games they are playing today.

An Athenian orator — Demosthenes was his name — was a hawk, and sought war with the mighty Macedonian, Philip. Aeschines was his rival in rhetoric, advocating peaceful coexistence with the Macedonian empire.

Demosthenes spent a lot of time trying to impeach Aeschines on the grounds that he was a cohort of Philip, because he advocated peace. Hence he must have been a traitor.

Aeschines was wily. Instead of answering Demosthenes' fact-filled harangues with facts and reasoning, he attacked one of Demosthenes' compatriots as a sexual deviant. Demosthenes' case, needless to say, was ruined.

Nowadays, in these times of Democratic crisis, the two front-running candidates have deserted the facts and the ideals, and instead spend their time nitpicking, insulting and discrediting each other.

Gary Hart has gone so far as to say Walter Mondale's attitudes about Central America would lead to dead American boys. He also says Mondale is old and outdated and tries to discredit him by mentioning the Carter administration.

Mondale has attacked Hart's voting record on civil rights and oil interests, as well as his shiny "new" image.

The two candidates harped on each other throughout a nationally televised debate last week. The Rev. Jesse Jackson was the only candidate discussing the issues. Hart and Mondale only complained about early other's

stances. When Jackson asked moderator Dan Rather to do something about the two's incessant bickering, he received the evening's greatest round of applause.

Neither Hart nor Mondale can justify attacking each other. Their attitudes are very similar.

But like Aeschines, they think the best approach is the personal attack.

Back in Athens, Aeschines' ploy merely saved his skin — he was not impeached. But eventually Demosthenes did discredit him.

Hart and Mondale are deeply scarring each other and the Democratic party with their petty, yet damaging, bickering.

Even with the "sleaze factor" of the Reagan administration, particularly the Ed Meese case, the Democratic candidate will stand little chance

against Reagan.

Without the bickering, the Democratic chances would be slim. With it, they are positively skinny.

It's unfortunate. With four more years, and no hope of being re-elected, who knows what that crazy, conservative president of ours could do. His social policies will continue to hack away at the poor and his hard-line rhetoric will continue to widen the gap between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Although neither Hart nor Mondale offer fantastic hope, either would be a vast improvement over Reagan. It's sad to watch the two Democrats tear each other apart, while Reagan smiles in the wings, waiting to finish off the torn and tattered victor.

— Chris Welsch



Customers can be 'total jerks'

For years, a basic tenet of business has been "the customer is always right." What that means is that even when merchants disagree with a customer's complaints, it is good business to go along with the customer and try to rectify the situation.



Bob Greene

These days that philosophy still seems to be in force in many places. In a recent magazine interview, Charles Indermuhle, executive vice president of a hotel chain called Thunderbird Red Lion Inns, was quoted as saying, "The guest is never wrong."

That kind of statement, and the philosophy behind it, is designed to instill customer confidence in the business enterprise that endorses it.

But it would seem far healthier — for businesses and for other customers — if companies adopted a different slogan:

"Sometimes the customer is a total jerk. When he is, we don't want his business. We don't even want him around here."

This came to mind the other day while I was on a trip to Denver. I flew on a United Airlines jet from Chicago; en route one fellow passenger was especially obnoxious. He was part of a group that was taking a ski trip; he was loud and boisterous the whole way west, always walking around the cabin and kneeling in the aisles to start conversations and ordering his drink refilled.

We landed at Stapleton Airport in Denver; we were still a good distance from the terminal. A flight attendant made an announcement asking everyone to stay in their seats until we were parked at the gate.

Immediately, this man got up from his seat, walked forward several yards and opened one of the overhead bins. He started taking his suitcase out.

As travelers know, this is always a sign of the true idiot. The reason passengers are asked to stay in

their seats is that as long as the airplane is moving, safety precautions are still necessary. The plane often moves past several active runways on its way to the terminal; there are more than 100 people inside a multi-ton machine carrying highly volatile fuel, and that multi-ton machine is in motion.

But this guy, with the plane rolling along, was babbling away and struggling to pull his suitcase down.

"Sir," a flight attendant said, walking up to him, "we're not stopped yet."

"I know, I know," he said, and patted her on the shoulder. He kept wrestling with his suitcase.

"Sir," she said, her voice becoming perturbed, "I have to ask you to sit down *right now*."

And then the man did something fairly amazing. He grabbed the flight attendant and kissed her.

Her face turned red. The man's wife — who had been sitting and watching all this — said to the flight attendant, "Don't mind him. He's like this all the time."

The flight attendant appeared so angry that she probably wanted to throttle the man. But what she did is say, "You devil."

She didn't say it because she meant that he was being cute and devilish. She said it — or so it seemed — because if she didn't say something to defuse the situation, she was in danger of losing her cool and really going after the man.

Now, I could imagine what was going through her head: Here was a man purposely violating safety procedures. (By the way, this was precisely the kind of jerk who — had the plane hit a bumpy stretch of runway and knocked him off his feet — would be the first to file a lawsuit against United.) When he kissed her, he also violated all rules of acceptable social conduct.

But if she had told him exactly what she was thinking, he was the kind of guy who also might have complained to United's corporate headquarters about the "inexcusable rudeness" of a flight attendant. So she said, "You devil," and let it go.

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Flatulent aliens battle with whoopee cushions

Once upon a time, on the planet Large Special, in a universe semi-parallel to ours, in a galaxy not surprisingly quite like ours, two societies, Erks and Blottsdamjln, vied for planetary supremacy.

Erks had a red flag, Blottsdamjln a blue. That, as far as anyone knows, was the sole difference between the warring peoples and was the major bone of



Christopher Burbach

contention in their conflict.

Blppphht Boot, first president of Blottsdamjln, set the precedent for relations between his nation and the land of Erks with this message he had inscribed on a nerve gas whoopee cushion he sent to that country's chieftain, Earnest Eek: "Your flag's red, ours is blue. That is why we hate you."

Eek's reply, "Blppphht, aaauugh!" followed by silence, was taken as a refusal to negotiate. Thus was begat the Fluff War, which saw both sides develop larger and larger stockpiles of increasingly lethal whoopee cushions.

The race reached a point of 'overfluff'; that is, each side possessed terrifically larger amounts of the deadly weapons than it needed to wipe the entire planet from the annals of the living.

Why? Earnest Eek II explained it. "It's the recurrence factor. You see, these weapons are completely out of hand. The Fluff War is beyond any hope of control. It will certainly end in the cessation of the existence of this planet and all aboard, which, consequently, will spell the end of the nerve gas whoopee cushion as a weapon of war, which consequently, will guarantee the universe against the recurrence of this horrible evil. Besides that, Blottsdamjln has blue flags. Ours are red."

The Fluff War was, as you may have by now surmised, a rather sticky dilemma for the inhabitants of Large Special. However, it took a back seat to what appeared, at least on the surface, to be a game designed to consume inordinate amounts of sick leave accrued by fat rich old male inhabitants of the planet.

This 'game' was called Killthealienwiththebloatedstomach. Based on a Risk board which fell through a time-space-recreation warp, from our own world, Killthealienwiththebloatedstomach was a contest between the two superpowers of Large Special to see who could plant the most of their particular shade of flags on the proper soils of various poor nations. Extra points were given for each inhabitant of each poor nation who was impaled on the flagpoles.

Earnest Eek said this of his strategy, "Speak softly and carry a big flagpole." The Erksians rushed in and stuck as many natives as they could right away, then continued to compile points by training the natives to do it to each other.

The Blottsdamjlnians, however, were more subtle in their approach, which Blppht Boot described as a plan for world unity. The Boot plan, at last reckoning, was much more effective than the Eek plan, although the latter scored heavily.

The inhabitants of Large Special, while fun creatures very adept at assassination, are not considered to be among any universe's more intelligent life forms. In fact, they are, or were, regarded as quite stupid. It isn't much of a surprise that they went the way of stupid species.

The moral of the story is... Blppphht aaauughhhh

Once upon a time, on the planet Earth, in a universe semi-parallel to ours...