

# Editorial

## Voters need change

"Hi Wally, whatcha readin'?"  
 "It's my dumb ole civics book, Beaver. Professor Rollins says we gotta read 20 pages about elections."  
 "Gee, no kiddin'? He must be the meanest teacher in the whole school."  
 "Yeah, what if he is, I still gotta read it."  
 "Gee Wally, who ya gonna vote for?"  
 "I dunno Beev, I wonder if my vote really counts at all. I'm not sure if I'm gonna vote."  
 "Well, gee Wally, I don't wanna sound creepy or nothin', but doncha think ya oughta decide?"  
 "Yeah, I guess so. I'm just sorta confused about this electoral college thing. I don't know what to think maybe I'll ask Dad about it tomorrow."  
 "Gee whiz Wally, why doncha ask Dad about it now, whaddaya chicken or somethin'?"  
 "Heck no, I ain't chicken. C'mon let's go ask him before I clobber ya one."  
 Chances are, Ward Cleaver would have known how to explain the electoral college. But then, Ward always had the benefit of television writers and simple answers. There are no simple answers about the electoral college, but there are a lot of questions — questions voters should ask themselves in this election year.

Take this simple test:

- What exactly is the electoral college?
- Where is it located?
- When does it meet?
- What are electors and what is their significance?
- How does the electoral college affect people's votes?

Unsure of the last question? Welcome to the club — so are most Americans. And this is our democratic system? Of the people, by the people and for the people, that shall not perish from the face of the earth? Rest assured Wally, our democracy has not perished, it's just been buried under years of political gobbledygook. No, Beaver, I guess our votes don't count for that much after all.

For the record the electoral college is comprised of presidential electors from each state who meet in their respective state capitals, following their popular election, and cast ballots for president and vice president. It never meets as a national body. Our votes do not elect the president, theirs do.

But in the grim light of reality, the electoral college is an anachronism. It has become what former Indiana Sen. Birch Bayh has called "a state-by-state collection of political hacks and fat cats." A far cry from the wise and benevolent elders assumed by its creators.

One of its big problems is the unit-vote system that awards all of a state's electoral votes (Nebraska has five) to the winner of the state popular vote regardless of the margin. The result? Millions of voters have their political voices squelched. Millions of voters, in effect, are disenfranchised when they vote for a losing candidate, because the full voting power of their state — its electoral vote — is awarded to the candidate they opposed. This is fair? My Aunt Minnie.

It's time to quit telling everyone, with grandiose democratic voices, that U.S. citizens have a duty and a right to vote and that every vote counts. The truth is that voters have a duty to understand their system and a right to feel like they are a part of it. The electoral college denies voters that opportunity.

In sum, if we are to remain truly democratic, the electoral college must be exposed as a monster. The monster threatens the democratic process and refuses to die even amidst mounting evidence that it is patently undemocratic, outdated and dangerous.

So far there are no solutions, just problems; no answers, just questions. We are desperately in need of someone to overhaul the electoral college system. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm going to ask Ward Cleaver.

Jim Fussell

## Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the summer 1984 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this summer's editor in chief, Lauri Hopple. Other staff members will write editorials throughout the summer. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

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## Feminists await up choice

If you'd never seen a snowball in July, consider the case of Geraldine Ferraro. On Tuesday, the representative from Queens nearly rolled into her Minnesota interview with Walter Mondale, backed by Tip O'Neill, endorsed by three congresswomen and carrying favorite daughter wishes from the weekend convention of the National Organization for Women.

At times it wasn't clear whether Ferraro was in control of this growing snowball, or running to catch up with it. But even the normally cautious Ann Lewis, political director of the Democratic National Committee, enthused: "She is our Sally Ride. She's carrying into that meeting the hopes of so many women."

Well, the day-after analysis of the chemistry between Mondale and Ferraro ranged from "okay" to "pretty good." The meeting between past and hopeful vice president was given a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10.

Whatever their personal relationship, it appeared that the very "pressure" for a woman vice president had begun to melt the snowball a bit around the edges.

The campaign for a woman vice president seems to have run into a classic double bind that often ensnares women pursuing power. If women sit around waiting for their sex to be promoted, anointed, or called, they often lose because they're ignored. If they make noise, organize and confront, they often lose because they're considered too pushy.

It's tricky enough to regulate the pressure valves that can make these changes in the business world, or in mainstream politics. But it takes a particularly delicate touch to influence a man who is essentially making his choice for the post of junior partner.

The president of NOW, Judy Goldsmith, is one who fell into both the passive and aggressive traps this political season. In two easy lessons of what not to do, NOW went from taking a trust walk with Mondale to calling for a confrontation.

In the fall, NOW prematurely endorsed Mondale. The largest feminist organization in the country began sounding like the National Organization for Women. Then at the annual convention, Goldsmith warned of "thunderstorms" and convention walkouts if Mondale didn't choose "a woman."

Until very recently, the idea of nominating a woman to be vice president was part of risk strategy. Mondale is way down in the polls. A few precincts here and there aren't going to make the difference. If he wants to show some glitter, some

imagination, some "newness," the argument ran, he should go for a woman.

Now it is being said that choosing a woman would look like he is trying to avoid risk, the risk of a walkout or a floor fight. Instead of standing

Ellen Goodman

up for women, could Mondale be accused of caving in to women?

The charge is, on the face of it, absurd. "People are reacting," says Ann Lewis, "as if it were a keenly orchestrated campaign to put a woman in. It's not as if half-a-dozen strategists got in a back room and said, 'It's time to increase the pressure.' The issue achieved momentum from the grassroots. It's a genuine grassroots movement."

But deep in the public subconscious and, for all we know, in Mondale's subconscious, lurks the fear of pushy broads and wimpy men. Even Mondale adviser Anne Wexler, who has been excited about the possibility of Ferraro, drove to work one day last week wondering, "Have we pushed too hard? Have we blown it?"

Wexler is well aware of the double bind of women and power: "It's a position we've always been in. It's like walking through a mine field. Part of the political game is understanding how to play it."

Women, and certainly Geraldine Ferraro, began this election year as the vice president longshot because there was no pressure, no constituency, no lobbying. It would be ironic if they fall back to a long shot because the pressure, the constituency, the lobbying became so intense.

Long experience in double binds suggests that they are used by people looking for any tool to obstruct change. Nobody is worried about the Hart lobby. The people who seem most concerned about the negative effect of pressure are those who, deep down, don't believe that Mondale will choose Ferraro, or any other woman.

My guess is that Mondale will simply choose someone with whom he is personally comfortable. Vice president was his old job and he thinks he was pretty good at it. He'll look for a vice president who will be to him as he was to Jimmy Carter. But then, July was never a very good season for snowballs.

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