

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Tolerance ensues as sole option

Throw him in the fountain! Throw him in the fountain!" So went the cheers of a crowd that had gathered around the evangelist in front of the Nebraska Union last week.

They had tightly crowded around the preacher so he could barely move. They didn't throw him in, but it seemed like they might for a while.

Later I saw another person scream in the evangelist's face and try to pick a fight with him. A nice fistfight would apparently have solved whatever theological argument they were having.

Some of the people gathered around seemed glad to see these things. I heard one person say it was about time someone tried to shut the preacher up.

There was nothing to be glad about, though. Embarrassment would have been a better emotion, considering the ignorance that was being displayed.

I certainly did not agree with what our visiting "saviors" had to say. They were insensitive to the extreme, not to mention insulting.

Their brand of religion, full of contempt for women and many others, is not one I am familiar with.

But no matter how much I disagreed with their message, they had a right to speak.

The first amendment, as everyone knows, says so: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech."

It doesn't say: "People can say anything they want as long as it doesn't offend anyone or make them slightly uneasy." It says people have a right to speak their minds, regardless of how many people they offend.

That's a tough rule to live by. It's easy to stand behind it when we agree with what is being said. It's much more difficult — but even more important — to defend ideas that of-

ferend us. Tolerance of offensive ideas is the greatest challenge faced by the citizens of a democracy. A society that does not tolerate all ideas cannot claim to be free.

We cannot say we believe in freedom except for terribly annoying preachers or art that we find offensive or whatever. We cannot have freedom and democracy in one area and not in another.

They are all or nothing concepts. You either have them or you don't. And whether we have them is a decision made by ordinary citizens like us. How we respond to the daily challenges of tolerance determines what kind of a country we have.

The scene that was played in front of the fountain last week was not a first for the United States. A struggle between First Amendment rights and those who would silence anyone they do agree with is a constant theme in our history.

In one of my English classes this semester, we are studying Walt Whitman. During his lifetime, many people considered Whitman's work obscene.

Some people thought they could do everyone a favor by banning or censoring Whitman's work. They undoubtedly felt the world would have been a better place without such offensive ideas.

Fortunately for us, they did not succeed in silencing him. We now recognize Whitman as one of America's greatest poets.

If the people who tried to intimidate the evangelists into silence thought they were doing everyone a favor, they also were wrong. All they did was make fools of themselves.

I doubt our traveling evangelists will be recognized in the future as great contributors to the United States like Whitman. But true artists are able to survive in our society because we tolerate all opinions — popular or not.

Establishing a precedent that some beliefs are right and some are wrong

is a dangerous thing. It runs contrary to everything a democracy is about.

Who would decide what is and isn't acceptable in such a system? Would it be a crowd like the one that was intimidating the evangelist last week?

If a system like that would have been in place when Whitman was alive, we would not have his poetry now. If it was in place today, we might be without Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, or many other great authors who have been called offensive or obscene for one reason or another.

The people who are opposed to those authors undoubtedly mean well. The people who thought about throwing the evangelist into the fountain probably did as well.

All the same, we would all be better off without their help.

"The greatest dangers to liberty," Louis Brandeis said, "lurk in insidious encroachments by men of zeal, well meaning but without understanding."

Like people who would silence an offensive preacher, for instance.

The authors of the Constitution found a good way to prevent such encroachments. "The Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech." Protect all speech and none of it will be in danger.

That does not mean we have to like or agree with everything we read or hear.

But it does mean we must tolerate others' ideas, no matter how offensive they may be to us personally. That way we are assured of our ideas being protected, even if other people find them offensive.

And it's not as if we are forced to listen to anything we don't want to hear. We always have a choice, the same one the people angry with the evangelists had.

We can walk away.

Fitzpatrick is a junior political science major, a sports reporter and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

CRAIG HECKMAN

Perot entry could force answers

By the time this column is in print we still might not know for certain if Ross Perot has re-entered the presidential race.

His re-emergence as a candidate has several ramifications for both President Bush and Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. Not the least of which is getting the candidates to discuss, not soundbite, the important issues.

Given that Perot has no realistic chance of winning in November, at least according to the experts, this may be exactly what he intends.

Recent national polls found Perot trailing both Clinton and Bush. Newsweek magazine showed him with 9 percent — compared to 46 percent for Clinton and 37 percent for Bush. A Time Magazine-CNN poll found him with 17 percent if he re-entered the race, with Clinton having 43 percent and Bush 32 percent.

While these numbers are bound to change as Perot spends his way into the campaign, this essentially indicates that the national impact Perot had before he dropped out may be gone.

The alienation Perot created when he quit his unannounced candidacy will not be easily forgotten by his past supporters. Supporters that are now backing Clinton, and to a lesser extent, Bush, may be unwilling to make another switch. What remains are pockets of support in several regional areas.

Perot will in all likelihood make Bush's chance of winning both Texas and Florida, already slim at best, nearly impossible. Perot, as a fellow Texan who actually lives there, will substantially erode Bush's support in that state.

Bush also faces tough questions from many Floridians because of his handling of Hurricane Andrew. Many of these people, who in the past voted

Republican, may now support Perot.

Perot could also impact Clinton's chances at winning the industrial Midwest states of Ohio, Illinois and possibly Michigan. Although Clinton has attempted to move closer to these voters, many distrust his policies. Perot may benefit from this distrust.

Clinton can probably still win the election without these Midwest states if he can hold Texas and Florida — a realistic goal with or without Perot.

What this portends for a beleaguered Bush campaign, already essentially writing off both California and New York, is that it may be impossible to win the election. The Bush campaign expected a huge influx of energy when James Baker joined up. Instead Bush has continued to float along seemingly without purpose or drive.

Bush will be in the position of having not one, but two candidates attack, and rightly so, his domestic agenda, or more accurately, his lack thereof. There will now be an additional voice to decry Bush's blatant use of pork barrel electioneering.

In the midst of a campaign as apparently dysfunctional as Bush's, the wild card of Perot cannot be taken as anything other than bad.

On the other hand, Perot's appearance should, if anything, help Clinton in getting Bush to discuss some real answers to domestic problems.

It will also allow Clinton, should he choose it, the higher road. If Perot sharply attacks Bush positions, Clinton can sit back and stay above the mudslinging. Conversely, if Perot attacks Clinton's plans, Clinton can fire back as strongly as necessary. The fallout of strongly attacking a third-party candidate is less harmful than may result in attacking Bush.

Bush, in hindsight, miscalculated the costs of not debating Clinton in East Lansing, Mich., last week or Louisville, Ky., this week.

If Perot becomes an official candidate, he should be included in any national debate. Perot will, in all likelihood, insist on the single-moderator debate similar to that proposed by the non-partisan committee and rejected by Bush.

The president cannot risk sitting out a national debate that, with Perot's entrance, would take place with or without him.

Bush's unwillingness to appear on television in a setting that required real answers and permitted interplay and serious discussion now appears shallow and ignorant. If a debate of this style finally occurs, we should thank Perot for forcing the issue and giving the voters this opportunity rather than being forced to watch a debate format, which has proven itself to be a glorified news conference.

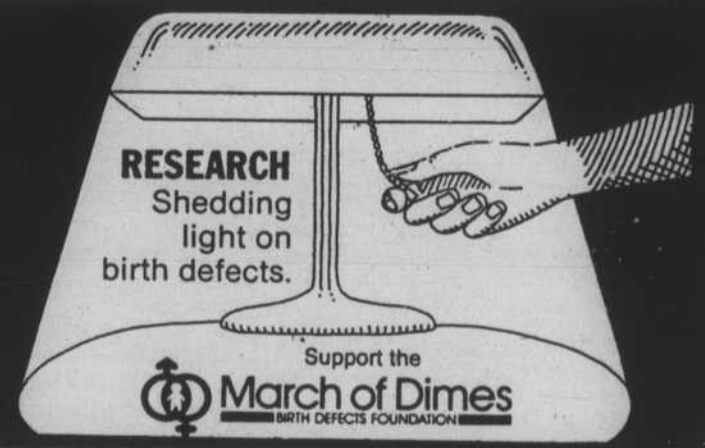
What is ironic about Perot's re-entrance is that he claims to force Bush and Clinton into confronting the real issues facing the United States. When Perot first became a non-candidate, he presented no specific policy plans. When he did, he found out what all politicians know all too well: Any position taken or plan outlined will negatively affect some segment of voters, these voters will now be less inclined to support your candidacy.

Perot, and in reality any candidate, is much more appealing before they say what they would do if elected. This is one of the fundamental campaign problems that Perot was unable to handle last time around. Perhaps he may find better luck in his new role.

Maybe we will learn more about economic policies of the candidates and who should pay for the various new programs proposed.

Perot's campaign will force both Bush and Clinton to answer the tough questions that voters ask. It will hopefully result in a better president for United States. We could do worse.

Heckman is a graduate student in political science and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



Are You Late?

- Free Pregnancy testing
- Options counseling
- Abortion procedures to 14 weeks
- Saturday appointments available
- Student discounts
- Visa, Mastercard

Women's Medical Center of Nebraska
4930 "L" Street
Omaha, NE 68117
(402) 734-7500
Toll free (800) 877-6337

WE'RE HISTORY At 13th & "Q" Dec. '92

Irresistible Prices Til We're Gone

DINE IN OR CARRY OUT ONLY - 7 DAYS A WEEK

MON & WED
Spaghetti w/meatballs & Garlic Cheese Rolls **\$2.49 ea**

TUES & THURS
Any 6" Hot Hoagie **\$1.99**
Any 12" Hot Hoagie **\$2.99**
8" Cheese Steak **\$2.49**
12" Cheese Steak **\$3.49**

FRI. SAT & SUN
PIZZA SPECIALS
16" Lg. 1-item **\$6.99**
12" Med. 1-item **\$4.99**
6" Mini 1-item **\$1.99**

daVinci's

Dine in or carryout call 434-7055
DELIVERY AVAILABLE FROM OUR OTHER 5 LOCATIONS

For Senior Nursing Students

NURSING HORIZONS

A seminar to help you prepare for personal and professional decisions.
October 16 & 17, 1992
Mayo Medical Center ■ Rochester, Minnesota

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

- Transition: From New Graduate to Expert Nurse
- The Future Nurses of Oz

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- Financial Planning
- Preparing for Your Job Search
- Collaborative Practice - What It Is And What It Isn't
- State Boards: Are You Ready?

Your \$10 registration fee covers sessions, instruction materials and food. Mayo Medical Center will cover the cost of lodging for out-of-town participants.

Deadline for registration is October 9, 1992

Call 1-800-545-0357 for registration information and brochure.

mayo Nursing Horizons is sponsored by Mayo Center for Nursing Rochester, Minnesota 55905

Mayo Foundation is an affirmative action and equal opportunity educator and employer. A smoke-free institution.