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OUR VIEW

Undebatable Perot has no business in candidates' forum

Picture this. It's late September. The last carefree day of summer has come and gone. A certain crispness in the air signals that fall is here, and it's time to start getting serious — about school and work and deciding whom you're going to vote for when election time rolls around.

On this night, you're in luck. You flip on the television and find that the first presidential debate of the season is in full swing.

But something doesn't seem quite right. President Clinton is there. Bob Dole is there, too. But who are the rest of those people?

There's Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader, who just seems a little too excited about this whole spotted owl thing. U.S. Taxpayers Party candidate Howard Phillips is burning his W-4 form, and Libertarian Harry Browne joins in the protest, volunteering to "call in" one of his "Michigan boys" to "pay a little visit" to the Internal Revenue Service.

John Hagelin, the Natural Law Party candidate, is humming quietly behind his podium, having exhausted himself explaining how Transcendental Meditation will help lower the national debt.

And then there's Ross Perot, ya see, spouting off about his crazy aunt in the basement who's got a penchant for Mexican tomatoes or something.

"And exactly HOW is this helping me?" you ask.

This scenario is exaggerated, but the point is valid.

Presidential debates are intended to give the American people a head-to-head comparison of the viable candidates for the job.

"Participation is not extended to candidates because they might prove interesting or entertaining," said the Commission on Presidential Debates in its decision Tuesday that Clinton and Dole should square off against only each other in this year's contest.

With hundreds of presidential candidates on ballots nationwide, clearly a line must be drawn somewhere in deciding who should participate in nationally televised debates.

In excluding all but the two major party candidates — the only ones with a realistic chance to claim the presidency this year — the commission drew that line in exactly the right place.

If any third-party or independent candidate has reason to be included in the debates, it may be Perot. But the Ross Perot of 1996, who barely registers in public opinion polls, is clearly not the Ross Perot of 1992, who won 19 percent of the popular vote.

It's also important to remember that Perot failed to win a single Electoral College vote in the last election. With an even smaller support base this year, his chances seem even more grim.

On Nov. 5, one of only two men will be elected president — Bill Clinton or Bob Dole. The debates are serious business. They should be left to the serious contenders.

MEHSLING'S VIEW

YEEE HAWW!!! HOOTIN
TOOTIN!!! TIL WHIP THOSE YELLERED
BELLED... BUT... SAP SOCKERS....
WHAT'D YA MEAN IM NOT ALLOWED
IN THE NATIONAL
DEBATE?

SEEMS YOU HAVE NO
REASONABLE CHANCE
OF WINNING.



MEHSLING'S
DAILY NEBRASKAN

LETTERS

HISTORICAL DECISION

Nick Wiltgen somehow, somewhere managed to miss one of history's major tragedies, which continues to this day: that in all times and places, many families' "framework of values" for when their kids should go to work has been simply, "We're desperately poor and everybody who can walk in this family has to work." Child labor — and we're speaking of elementary-age kids too — has had kids in dangerous and exploitive jobs for centuries. The government's hand in this didn't come out of some bureaucratic urge to meddle. It came from community outrage at a repugnant situation.

Now, for the 13-year-old wanting a job, I know Hy-Vee isn't exactly a dark, dangerous sweatshop. But I also know that plenty of businesses couldn't care less if someone's schoolwork, health and social or family life suffer if they can get by with capitalizing on a teenager's desire to have some real dollars of their own. "Nothing special happens the instant a person turns 16, 18, or 21." No, not in that instance. But an enormous amount of growth in judgment, maturity and reasoning ability occurs between 16 and 21. Our society — not our government — decided that some things, like selecting leaders, using alcohol responsibly, or making employment choices that impact a whole life, ought to have the benefit of a certain level of maturity. Age limits are arbitrary, but they are not unreasonable. They evolved from the experiences of our communities.

Paul Marxhausen
Electronics Technician III



JIM MEHSLING/DN

handcuff a napping man and pull another out of a shower at gun point? Neither of them were in threatening positions to command such a strong reaction.

The answer seems to lie in Sgt. Art Bandar's response, which indicated the police assumed the worst and advanced with weapons drawn because people of color are not usually seen in Thompson's neighborhood.

Since when is it a crime for people of color to walk anywhere in the city of Lincoln? This is a free country. All people, visitors or residents, have the right to be in any neighborhood in this city... without being confronted by police with weapons drawn.

What do we call this kind of behavior where people of color are automatically suspect when seen in places where they "aren't supposed to be"? That is racism. It is present in the fabric of our society. It is present in our institutions. And it is raising its ugly head in the Lincoln police force as well.

Did we learn nothing from the tragedy of the Renteria incident? Just because all parties were exonerated, does that mean that the police can return to business as usual? What happened to the recommendations of the mayor's Conciliation Committee?

UNWARRANTED ACTIONS

We were very disturbed by the incident described in the Lincoln Journal Star on Sept. 6 about Steve Thompson and his two Japanese guests. Why would the police

It is time we quit defending our police and cut to the source of the problem. We feel like we must defend them, because by defending them, we defend ourselves. We are, after all, "good" people who don't want to face the racism that lies deep within us. But the fact is that racism is not simply isolated in the Lincoln Police Department or in a few hate crimes. It is hidden (not very well) in the very fabric of the Lincoln community. We not only are called to condemn the actions of the Lincoln police, but we also are called to take our own blinders off and ask how we have allowed and contributed to these attitudes.

Revs. Melissa Draper and Steve Ratzlaff
Lincoln Community Peacemakers

NEWS SLANT

UPI White House Bureau Chief Helen Thomas takes the stage at Nebraska Wesleyan University to proclaim the virtues of Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party (DN, Friday, Sept. 13), and the Daily Nebraskan reports that as news?

It is not news to most folks in this country that such self-proclaimed "objective" reporters as Thomas are as blatantly and arrogantly biased toward the left as they are. What is news is that the Daily Nebraskan would have the courage to run such a story.

Kudos to DN staff reporter Erin Gibson for getting the story right!

I've grown accustomed to the slanted offerings of today's media elite. Still it never fails to warm my heart to see fellow members of that media correctly identify those obviously prejudiced reporters like Thomas.

I don't expect the media to become more objective. I simply want it to be aboveboard about its lack thereof. In that regard, the DN has taken the first step.

Thomas K. Eads
president
UNL Second Amendment Students' Association

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P.S. Write Back

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