

Generation of kissing rears

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Contributing Writer

Politics is a dying religion. Corrupt politicians stand at the pulpit, preaching to empty pews. The era of kissing babies is over; ours is the generation of kissing rears.

I think some of the best entertainment this time of year, every four years, is the presidential debates. Candidates talk circles around themselves and their opponents, minutes upon hours on end without really saying anything at all.

Mediator: "Why would you make a better president?"

Candidate: "I totally agree."

The whole scene reminds me of a Miss America Pageant. All that's missing is

the swimsuit competition. Personally, I'm glad that part of the contest is left out.

There are a number of reasons people don't vote anymore. The primary reason: they don't care. And, if it doesn't directly concern them, why should they take time out to vote?

Which leads directly to another reason: they're too busy. And many people don't vote because they don't think they can make a difference with one vote. Despite all the "well, in this case, one vote really did make a difference" scenarios you paint, what are the odds? How can one vote make a difference if we really don't vote for the president ourselves?

I mean, a whole other group of nameless individuals vote for the seat, and

whichever clone has the better smile and prettiest eyes gets the vote.

Politicians are a breed apart, destined forever to be cast as older, pot-bellied, balding or graying, sniveling, shrewd, lying, empty-eyed givers of faith; planting the seed in a different spot maybe, but if and after he/she is re-elected, sitting back and watching it fade away again.

And who, by any stretch of the imagination, is allowed to choose the candidates? I mean, anyone with any common sense would choose people with likewise abilities. Somewhere out there, a group of hopelessly bored individuals, or terminally insane inmates, make a long list of everyone they've ever heard of on television or read about in any magazines,

including Charles Manson, Dick VanDyke, Kathy Lee Gifford, and the Marlboro Man.

Then they flip a coin to see who should run and for what office.

And what if an ordinary person wanted such a coveted seat as the presidency? Is there some small-print rule that states one must be related to a former president, or have worked under one?

If so, watch out, I can see a certain former intern on the horizon. And after that rule, is there another one, in two-point type, that states all candidates must sell their soul to a pre-approved advisory board on lease from a personality-challenged Hell?

Interesting fact from a fun political history: in almost every case, the taller candidate gets the vote. Pre-approved points of view aside, the taller one is simply

less weak and feeble than his/her vertically challenged opponent.

In this case, size does matter.

From my experience, candidates say more by keeping their mouths shut than when they do finally open them to utter a few useless monosyllables. Example from the presidential debates:

Mediator: "What is your foreign policy for military action?"

Candidate: "Uh huh, that's right."

In truth, he has no plan for action. If the time comes for him to act his part, he speed dials his old weed or war buddies from college to roll the die on who to head up his new foreign actions advisory council.

On any real issues such as abortion or the unsure future

of Social Security, the candidate is brainwashed for days on end to evade the question and talk circles around it until time is called.

Penalty for those who show any form of emotion or mental preference is watching the same episode of Gilligan's Island for three days straight. Which, I am sure, would drive just about anyone crazy.

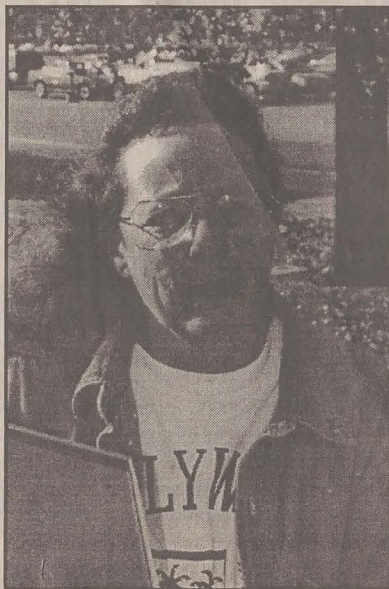
For his/her next job, that candidate can be a dice roller for the next election. Or he/she can always put in an application to the Personality-Challenged Advisory Board.

Politics in America is in a downward spiral. A dirty taboo with no clean-slate relief in sight, politicians strive for election in a non-voting society. As for myself, I'll trip over to the voting booths and utilize the write-in ballot.

Lumberjack voices: Who do you hope wins the election?



Chris Kline
"Some girl in my science class"



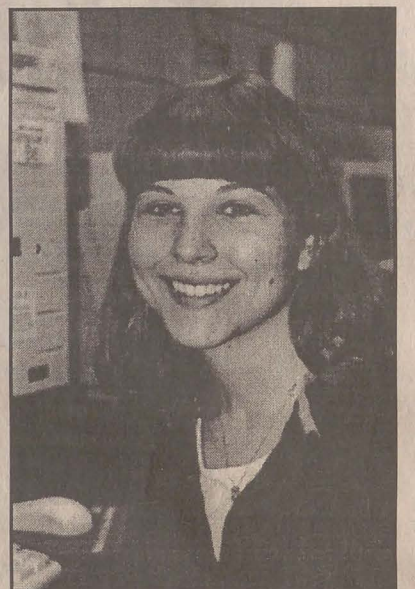
Kate Splitt
"I'd just as soon it be Ralph Nader. But a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush so I'm going to have to vote for Gore."



Josh Brage
"I think Bush will win... next time Hilary Clinton will be running for the Democrats."



Heather Cotter
"I'm voting for George Bush. I just think he would do the job better. I don't really like Al Gore that much."



Lisa Budnik
"I think Al Gore. I don't watch TV so I don't really follow political stands right now."

Financial aid needs reform

RICHELLE SIELAND
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First of a two-part column

"If a nation seeks to be ignorant and free it expects

what never was and never will be. Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

--Thomas Jefferson to

Dr. Price, 1789.

I remember standing in the cashier line at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City. As I glanced at my receipt an unnerving shrill of anxiety raced through me. I didn't have enough money for my classes. My dad assumed most of my college would be



paid for through financial aid. He wrote out a check for \$6,000 to cover the rest of my bill.

Due to lack of communication and information, I was forced to

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accept a hard lesson in my life. Money is one of the most important reasons that I have not finished college yet. I am still learning to understand the system and how it works.

This could be an important political issue for financial aid reform. The present system is backwards. Dr. Michael T. Nettles, is a higher education professor at U of M. His article 'Pursuing Broader Participation and Greater Benefit from Federal College Student Financial Aid' looks at the history of the system' and some interesting statistics.

The rising cost of post secondary education has increased more than student income and the packages of federal and state assistance. School costs 90% more than

it did in 1980. Financial aid pays for less. Financial grant in aid awards will pay less than 23% of college costs. More college students are dependent on the government to pay for schooling and are constrained by an unequal balance of grants and loans.

The amount of debt that students have accumulated is confounding. But if you desire the life that an education may bring, that is just the way it is -like it or not. Debt has become a necessity in our consumer economy.

Federal aid programs are possible through the Title IV higher education act of 1965. The idea behind Title 4 is to help every student in America have the opportunity to attend college. But as most of us know this opportunity

and the criteria to afford it are two different things.

Another area of concern is student withdrawal from college for the financial aid system and for the taxpayer. An amazing point is that a figure for college drop out rates is not known but estimated high. This raises questions about the system of how the money is distributed and why student withdrawal is not easily calculated.

Loans must be repaid after the grace period. But if financial aid is in the form of a grant it may not have to be repaid. This depends on the policies set between federal, state and the local school. New laws are changing the policies for financial aid and students who withdraw.

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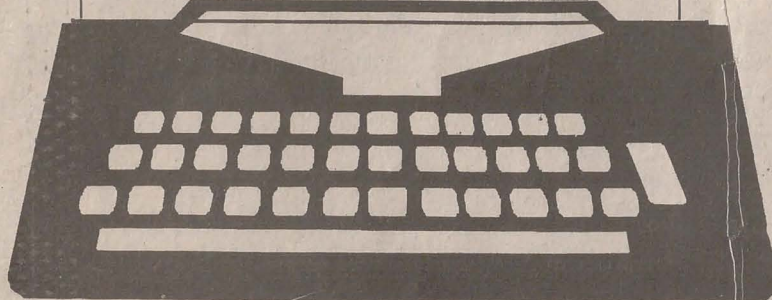
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Fun With Ed

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