

EDITORIAL

Debatable values

Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale was poised, well-informed and clearly the winner in Sunday's debate with President Reagan.

Conversely, Reagan was tentative, groped for words and was virtually incoherent at times.

Most commentators declared Mondale the winner - a call later backed up by most opinion polls.

So what?

When asked if the debate would change the way they would vote in November, most Americans said no.

When asked who was better capable of dealing with the country's problems, most Americans still said Reagan.

Ronald Reagan emerged from the debate unscathed; his campaign for re-election still on track.

New York Times columnist Tom Wicker said he judged the debate on the basis of points and perception. Wicker's formula may provide the clue as to why Reagan lost the debate and yet will win in November.

On points, Mondale was self-assured and "scored" effectively on issue statements, while Reagan mumbled vague generalities and was out on his feet.

However, points are unimportant in these exercises: the crucial test is how the public perceives the debaters.

And in terms of perception Reagan won. The American public perceives Reagan as a competent and accomplished leader. Walter Mondale doesn't even register.

The American public remains willing to forgive Reagan his poor grasp of reality and his part-time approach to the job, because the Reagan image is so appealing to them.

And image is what Americans are buying in this election. They are choosing between a rather nondescript workmanlike politician and a "glamorous" 73-year-old who has succeeded in making Americans feel good about themselves again.

The debate was a temporary side-show where substance tried to compete with the show-business "reality" of a national campaign. But now it's back to normal.

Reagan survived the storm.

Neal Watson

Do-it-yourself salvation

My friends, I have come here today to discuss our theory of the week: the supermarket theory of religion.

In studies of our fellow man, we have seen the trials and tribulations, and the damning and salvation of thousands of immortal souls. Everyone of these souls went to heaven, because they knew how to cheat the Devil and beat the odds. They entered the game of supermarket religion.

The game is one of the simplest devised. The rules are yours, and with luck and a good public relations firm, they will become the rules of others. This is termed growth of the congregation; with each new member you can collect \$200.00, but you cannot pass go. Eventually, you can accumulate sufficient tax-free wealth that you can control even those who do not follow your rules through economic rather than moral suasion. This is cheating, and leads to inquisitions, wars, and other penalty situations. Fortunately, most religions do not reach this control point.

Rules are clearly the key to this game. Consistency in application is important, and it is requisite that the rules have a basis in moral theory (any moral theory will do.)

How do you formulate your own rules? The historical favorite is to tell the leader of your current religion that they are insensitive, lacking in understanding and compassion, and the Devil Himself in disguise. You then take those current religious rules that you feel appropriate and add to these your own, unique 'new rules'.

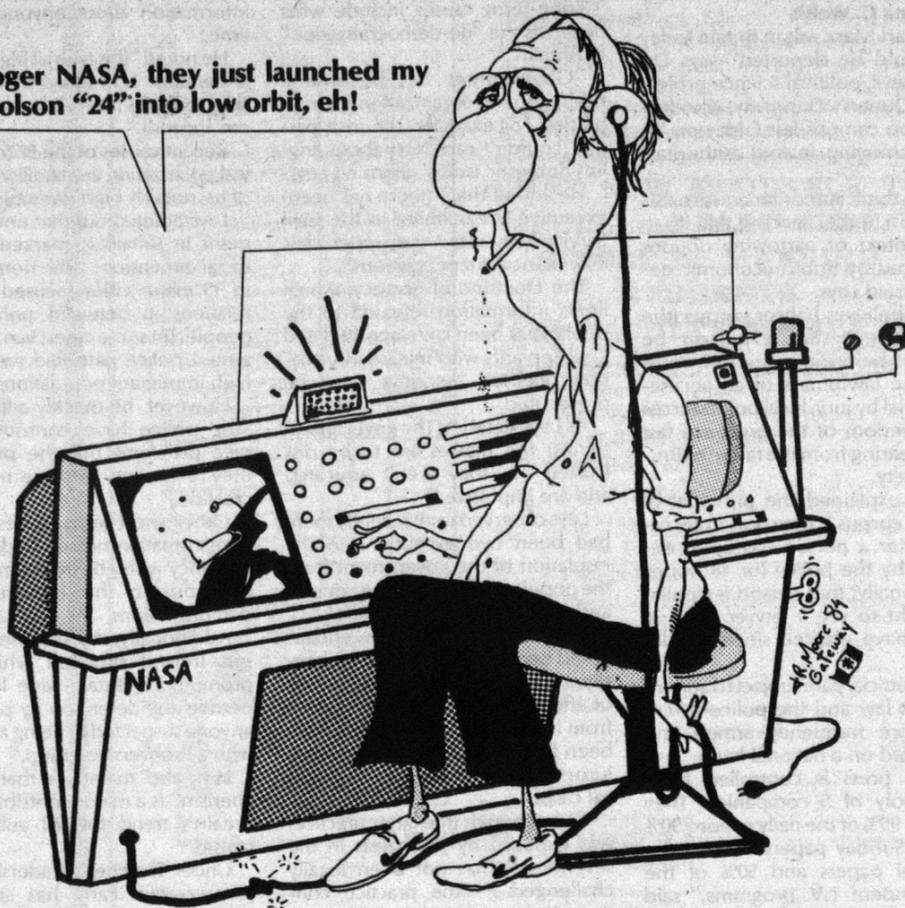
If you adhere to this revised set of rules, and find some compatriots to share in your beliefs, you will be designated (for tax purposes, at least) as a church. The most difficult part has been completed; the rules are now set, and a congregation can be encouraged to join.

There are great social advantages to this system of religion, where you simply line up the rules and pick the ones that you like. You cannot be characterized as a fanatic (you eliminate the appropriate rule from your guidebook), and you are, most importantly guaranteed a place in heaven. You cannot go elsewhere since you have included the requirements common to all other religions. Of course, those additional, unique rules which only apply to your religion guarantee you special treatment. But that's only fair, since your religion is clearly superior.

So if your favor abortion, birth control, and saving baby seals, and are currently a member of a congregation that disagrees, we suggest that you drop by your local soul food store, and check out the new rules for tomorrow. There's nothing better than a new prime time religion.

Suzette C. Chan
John Algard
Gilbert Bouchard

Roger NASA, they just launched my Molson "24" into low orbit, eh!



LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Clarification

It is with some regret that I feel I must comment on the singularly illiterate and uninformative article signed by Kerry Hoffer in Tuesday's paper, which purports to describe a forum at which Professor F.C. Engelmann and I commented on the Mulroney government. I will not comment on the treatment accorded to my colleague, except to point out that his name was consistently misspelled throughout the article. I must note, however, that my own comments were presented in such a garbled fashion as to be unintelligible to any reader of this article, and the writer's illiteracies were at times placed in quotation marks as though I had been responsible for them. For example:

- I did not say that the cabinet should "serve as a collective action for discussion," whatever that is supposed to mean.

- I criticized the appointment of 13 ministers of state, not thirteen ministers as stated in the article.

- I did not accuse Mr. Clark of naivety in international relations, and in fact I welcomed his appointment. What I did was to draw a parallel between Mr. Mulroney's approach to relations with the United States and Mr. Clark's approach (five years ago) to relations with the provincial premiers.

- Although I said that Mr. Mulroney may feel that silence on international relations is a necessary price to pay for good relations with the United States, this is certainly not my own opinion, as implied by the quotation marks in the article.

- I specifically said that there would probably not be cutbacks in universal social programs. The article says the opposite.

- I did not refer to "a referendum on capital punishment in Parliament" since a referendum, by definition, is outside of Parliament. The report confused two remarks that I attributed to Mr. Mulroney: He will not hold a referendum at all, and there will not be a free vote in the present session.

- The gist of my remarks on federal-provincial relations was that there will be little change, and that since new governments always talk about improving such relations their rhetoric should not be taken seriously. The story quotes me as saying that the new government will be "more conciliatory."

- I do not know what is meant by "the communication and technology industries" which will allegedly be the subject of dramatic developments at the next first ministers' conference, but I did not say this. What I did say was that there might eventually (not at the conference) be some compromise with Quebec regarding jurisdiction over communications.

- I did not say that the Liberals "lost national unity" because of the Conservative victory in Quebec, but rather that they lost the ability to exploit the issue of national unity.

- I did not conclude by saying that things could get worse. What I said was that things could be worse; in other words my conclusion was mildly optimistic.

Since anyone reading the original article, and not present at the forum, might legitimately wonder how I managed to be appointed with tenure in a department of political science, I hope you will set the record straight by printing this letter in its entirety.

Garth Stevenson
Professor of Political Science

The Gateway

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The Gilbertologists return as Gilbert rises from the dead. Lord Algard, riding on horseback from Damascus, Saskatchewan, sees the light. The incorporeal, but still substantial Gilbert appears in a revelation to the huddled Gilbertologists hiding in a board room on the second floor of SUB. Don Teplysk gasps, "Pass the peas" upon seeing this miracle. Hans Becker and Shane Berg pass carrots instead. Jim Moore, always trying to be different, passes wind. "That's disgusting," screamed Shona Welsh, Kerry Hoffer and Warren Opheim, while Dean Bennett, Melanie Klimchuk and Greg Owens lick the cheese sauce off the nachos. Scott Keeler and Mike Evans probe the wounds of the great idol while Eva Pendszich, Brenda Waddle and Anna Borowieck probe Jens Andersen instead. Bernie Poltras cries out: "That's sacrilegious!" And Linda Derksen, Janine McDade, and Bosco Chang reply "Sack of what?" Meanwhile Doug Olsen, Anny Krishner and Bruce Alton are negotiating the movie rights. Elisabeth Eid is speaking in tongues and Erin the Walking Bureau has enough trouble with one, thank you very much, while Markie Moose, doing play by play for CJSR, prays to Gilbert for the souls of all his cousins who used to live near the Hydro Quebec dam. "This will have deep ramifications on all future staff boxes," quipped Tim Shea, the Fashion Slut. And the Gilbertologists return with a vengeance!