

Opinion

Time to cast 'phony' equal access votes

In the next two months you will be participating in the greatest election of your life. You will be voting for the long-distance telephone company of your choice.



Art Buchwald

This may be the most magnificent ballot you ever cast. People in the United States tend to take their right to choose a long-distance service for granted. They don't appreciate that in communist and socialist nations the phone service is run by the state. Soviets, Chinese, Cubans and Afghans have never heard the words, "Thank you for using AT&T." Faceless bureaucrats dictate what kinds of phones they will have. If they are overcharged or get a wrong number they are turned over to a communications commissar. If they complain, he comes into their home and yanks the phone line out of the wall.

In the United States the right to vote for your telephone company is the most precious gift you have. And to preserve this right, every citizen over the age of 18 must stand up and be counted. A large vote will send a message to our enemies around the globe that we in this country support our long-distance services whether they are right or wrong.

This year there are many long-distance services on the ballot. Some are spending millions of dollars to be elected. The incumbent, AT&T, is favored mainly because the company is running on Ma Bell's coattails. Cliff Robertson, TV spokesman for AT&T, is promising faster station-to-station calls, clearer reception and the reform of the telephone tax.

Burt Lancaster is spokesman for MCI. He is a firm, no-nonsense type who has challenged Cliff to a debate on who has the lowest long-distance prices. Lancaster has been pledging cheaper

night rates, friendlier operators and no-frill calls to Alaska.

Burt should get the older vote, as most of the senior citizens remember seeing his movies. They perceive him as someone who can be trusted to tell them to do the right thing when selecting a telephone company.

Then there is Joan Rivers, whose campaign for GTE Sprint consists of making fun of other phone companies. Joan's appeal is to those who don't take their long-distance calls too seriously. While attracting a tremendous following with her commercials, there is now a big question of whether she can keep her supporters after leaving the Johnny Carson show.

A telephone election analyst with the brokerage firm of Dial, Buzzer & Hold said, "Johnny Carson has a loyal constituency, and if people switch their votes because of Rivers' breakup with Johnny, you're going to see one helluva horse race."

There are many other long-distance services to vote for. A few are: Western Union, ITT, ALLNET and U.S. Telecom.

The important thing to know is that everyone has to have a long-distance line whether or not he or she wants it.

Some of you may be saying, "Why should I vote? I have no control over my long-distance destiny."

The reason is that if you don't send in your ballot, YOUR LOCAL PHONE COMPANY WILL CHOOSE A LONG-DISTANCE CARRIER FOR YOU.

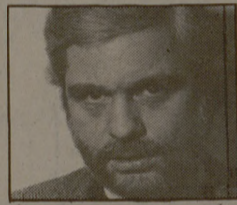
Can you imagine someone coming up the walk, knocking on the door and saying, "I'm from MCI and I have been assigned to make ALL your long-distance calls — whether you like it or not." Or how would you feel about receiving a phone call at 2 a.m. from a Western Union man who says, "If you don't call California immediately you will never see your Princess phone again."

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Soviet schools teach peace with lack of understanding

T B I L I S I, U.S.S.R. — Samantha Smith, dead in a New England plane crash, lives on here in Soviet Georgia.



Richard Cohen

There is a drawing of her, yellow hair and bright smile, on the wall of the room where English is taught in the first school, the city's oldest. Samantha holds an American flag and says, "We want peace and friendship." She is answered by the Russian girl who went to America, Katerina Lycheva. She wants peace and friendship, too.

But down the block from the school, there are different drawings. They show a wooden and mean-looking Uncle Sam holding blacks in chains. Other Uncle Sams are kicking people, Third World peoples, for whom the Russians have a much declared and superficial sympathy. From the looks Africans and Asians get on the street, it's clear many Soviets would much prefer the liberated peoples to stay precisely where they have been liberated.

In the school, though, the message is only of peace. In the English class, the teacher begins by saying, "Now children, the most important problem of the world is peace." With that, a young man, dressed like all the others in a blue uniform, pops to his feet. He has memorized a poem. It begins, "I want to live and not die."

On a table are albums sent from the United States. From my chair in the classroom, I can see the color photos of American children who smile from Georgia. It is a bit corny, this affinity of one Georgia for the other, but it seems

to work. The school is the Galloway in Atlanta and the album is called "Favorite Topics of the Galloway School." The teacher hands it to me. "It shows well that we want to be friendly with America," she says.

On a wall is a dove of peace. There are others in the hallway. The word peace in English can be seen time and again, although it is two languages removed for these kids. Their native tongue is Georgian, in which they are largely taught, but they have to know their Russian, too. One by one they rise to show their stuff.

I am serendipitated with Americana. The first song is "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," originally taught, I am told, by yet another visiting American journalist. Then comes "John Brown's Body" and then "This Land Is Your Land." The room pulses with the lyrical words of Woody Guthrie (no surprise to Guthrie's political enemies, I'm sure) and the words carry just a slight accent. Still, here in the exotic Caucasus, we are in California and the New York island, the redwood forest and the gulf-stream waters. . . . "this land was made for you and me."

What is to be made of this? Probably not much. Other rooms of the school are mini-museums — to the war, to earlier history, to the revolution. It is not possible for even a Georgian not to know that the Soviet Union, Russia especially, has time and time again been attacked by enemies. The display down the street shows that the United States could be one of those enemies. Vigilance is required.

Still, kids are kids and they are learning something — more about my country than I ever knew of theirs at age 14. It is impossible to know what the consequences are, though. When a boy recites

a short description of how he is governed, does he understand the role of the political parties he mentioned? Does he know that really governs and, if so, what he thinks of his own country?

In the kindergarten, they cut out color paper butterflies, all the time along to phonograph records the teacher plays, one is a Georgian tune. This kids stop and do a folk dance. Then the teacher puts on a record. It is 1970s style rock. A dove violet tots do the monkey. Later the butterfly is chosen as the prize. They disagree and, with a lot of giggles presented with all of them.

Back in the English room, the boy has turned to poetry. A boy walks in front of the room. From memory he recites Longfellow's "Hiawatha" words like "prairie" uttered without turn next to English literature. The boy stands to tell of Byron and Shakespeare, Marlow and Dickens. Others, he recites from memory. "The cause of much awful homerage by myself, I may have given these good reason to hate America."

Samantha Smith, dead in a New England plane crash, lives on here. Less, some will say she is being dead as she was in life — yet a prop of Soviet propaganda. That is the case. But she is not looking Uncle Sam and that is the thing. Any girl in the first school look at her and see just another That, Samantha might say, the whole idea.

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Mail Call

Diploma wanted

EDITOR:

Last December when I graduated I received my diploma. However my name was spelled incorrectly. A note with my diploma assured me I would receive a new one in about six weeks.

Unforeseen events since December have resulted in three address changes. I did notify the post master of each change of address and have received most of my mail.

About two weeks ago I called admissions and records at Heaton Hall to find out what happened to my diploma and was told it had been mailed out "on the 22nd."

Up until the point when it was determined that my new diploma had been mailed out, the people I spoke with had been courteous and helpful, but that quickly changed. I had to question the person I was speaking with to find out it had been mailed out in February.

Because the employee was seemingly unwilling to volunteer other information, I was forced to ask how I would go about getting another diploma. She coolly replied that the University would order another diploma but that I would have to pick it up in person. I calmly responded that that presented a problem as I now live in Indiana. In an even cooler tone the employee repeated I would have to pick up my diploma in person because the University would not mail it a second time.

Perhaps I should be more upset with the U.S. Postal Service, but the cool indifference I met with in the quest for my diploma made it much easier and more convenient to be angry with Texas A&M.

Perhaps part of the fault is mine for not letting admissions and records know of my new address each time I moved and for putting too much faith in the postal service to forward my mail correctly. On the other hand, maybe someone with a little understanding might realize

how easy it was for me to be more concerned at the time with finding a job, transportation and a place to live.

I can't help but think of the millions of times that I've heard people say A&M is different from anywhere else about all the traditions and supposedly how the University cares about its students.

I guess bureaucracy is bureaucracy no matter where you go. So I'll state my plea in terms best understood by those who work in Heaton Hall. 7812934 (14148689) would like his diploma!

John Hallett, Jr.

Happy campers

EDITOR:

I would personally like to thank all the people who made the 1986 Exec-n-Rec Retreat what it was — two of the most fun-filled days that I've had in a while.

We had a variety of people at Camp Olympia, but had one goal in common — to learn from each other and apply what we learned to become better student body leaders. I see a desire in Off-Campus Aggies, hall officers, area coordinators and advisers to make a 1986-87 a better year.

Last, but not least, thank you Nyla Ptomey, David McDowell and the rest of the RHA officers for your support.

Look out '86-'87 — here we come!

Arthur W. John
RHA Chaplain

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and include the address and telephone number of the writer.