

Debateless gubernatorial race cheats voters

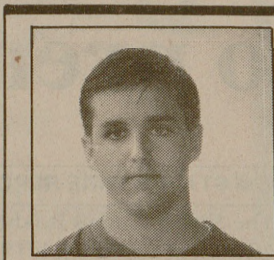
As the November election draws near, the campaign rhetoric begins to intensify. Each campaign commercial attests to a candidate's loyalty, patriotism, past achievements or revolutionary fiscal ideas. Either that or the commercial tries to drag the opposition's record through the mud.

So how is a voter to decide what candidate to vote for? One cannot be asked to support a candidate merely by watching a few commercials, can he?

Politicians would say that a voter should make an informed decision; gather the facts about the candidates for a respective office, review them, and make their decision. Yet the facts are hard to gather. The slick brochures that most candidates carry around with them are as carefully prepared as any commercial, if not more so. With political consulting firms available to the candidate with enough money, it's hard for a citizen to find out how a candidate really thinks and operates.

This is why almost every statewide candidate has agreed to debate their opponent. That is, except one of our gubernatorial candidates. The League of Women Voters, the group that usually sponsors debates ranging from the presidential election to mayor's races, announced Monday that Ann Richards and Clayton Williams will not be debating Oct. 30 as tentatively planned. Spokesperson for the League said that Williams would not agree to a debate unless Richards signed a pledge to stop all negative television ads.

Understandably, Richards refused saying that she doesn't trust Williams to hold up his side of the pledge and that the pledge would have no effect on the attitude of the campaign since it only addressed television advertisements. What's really going on here is Williams attempting to find a justifiable excuse for not debating Richards. If his real



Patrick Nolan
Columnist

motive was to put a halt to the mudslinging, he could start with his own camp.

It boils down to this: Williams, the drugstore cowboy we see gallantly roping cattle at his ranch is afraid to go head-to-head with a 56-year-old grandmother. If Williams can't handle her, how does he plan to crack down on all those drug dealers he wants to catch if he gets in office?

Yes, one can say that Williams is only doing the politically smart thing by refusing to debate Richards; the leader in the polls has nothing to gain and everything to lose by debating his or her opponent. Yet even George Bush, never known for his political courage, debated Michael Dukakis during the 1988 presidential campaign. Dukakis was supposed to run all over Bush in those debates; he was a debate champion in his college days. Yet Bush held his own in the first debate and many believe he won the second.

Yes, one could also say that a debate serves no legitimate way for a voter to decide what candidate is best since all their remarks are prepared. True, but the voter should also have the right to see how the candidates react under pressure.

There is a big difference between speaking at the Grove with 200 drooling Aggies at your feet and defending your position on statewide television. It

allows the voters to see just what makes a candidate tick. Dukakis' response to the question of whether he would support the death penalty if his wife had been raped and killed chilled many voters who had not yet decided between him or Bush.

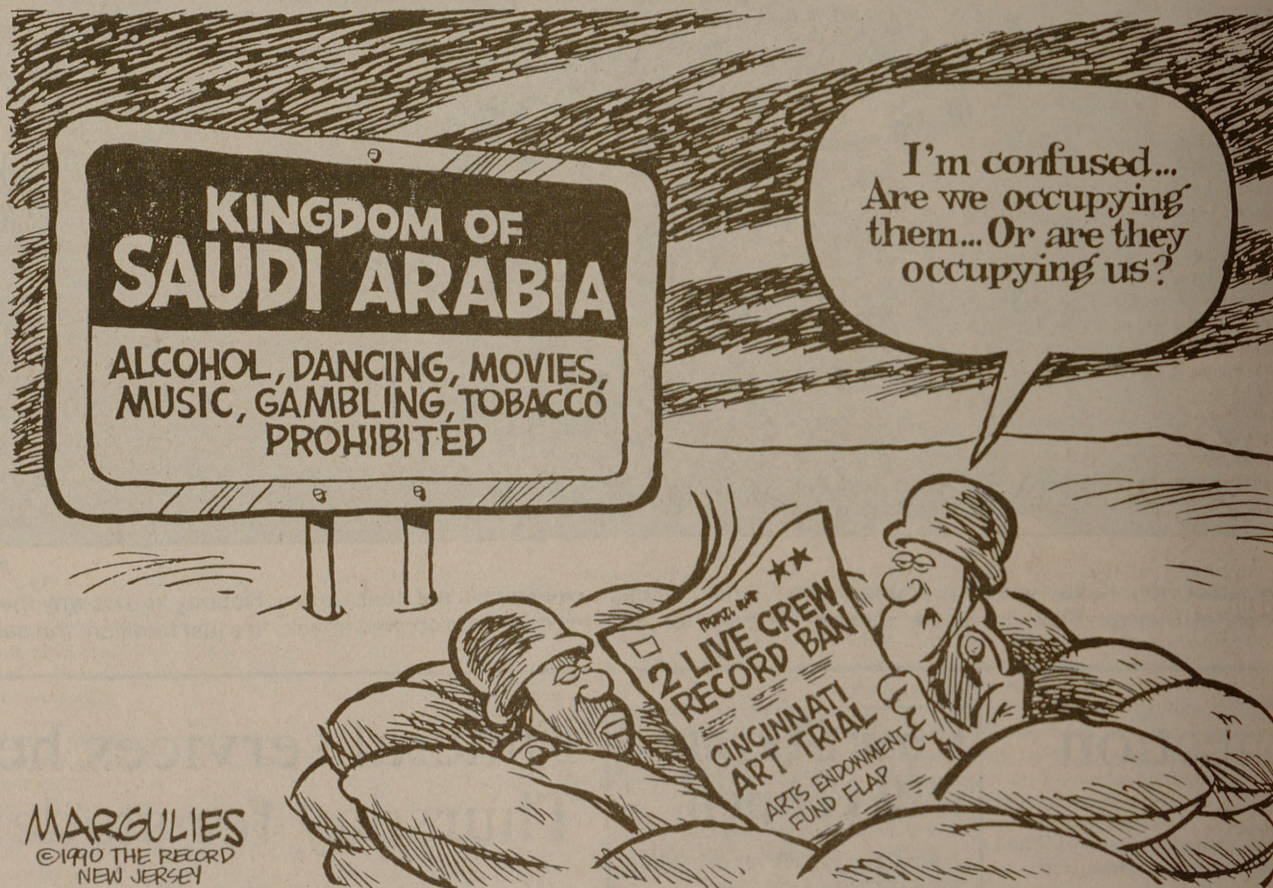
It is questions like these that get to the heart of the matter. But you really can't blame Williams for chickening out; considering his past performance when it comes to answering questions on the

spot, a debate with Richards could prove disastrous.

It is the voters, however, who are the real losers. For lack of a debate, many people may be undecided with regard to the candidate they want to support. Another loser is the campus of Texas A&M — Richards had agreed to debate Williams right here at his Alma Mater. Just think how neat it would have been to have the two candidates on the stage at Rudder Auditorium.

What does this say about our Aggie alumnus and probable governor? How he reacts to adversity? If Williams thinks Richards might be tough, what until he meets the Democratic Legislature headed by a Democratic Lieutenant Governor. President Truman put it best: If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Patrick Nolan is a senior economics major.



Mail Call

PTTS officers eyes, ears of UPD

EDITOR:

Regarding the column headlined "PTTS, get new uniforms," as authored by Opinion Page Editor Ellen Hobbs, I would like to make two observations that were overlooked.

The enforcement officers of Parking, Transit and Traffic Services, walking through the numerous parking lots and along the streets of campus represent what every law enforcement agency wish they had more of — the extra eyes and ears to detect and report suspicious activity. These officers of PTTS have portable radios that permit them to communicate such information to our police dispatcher, and, on more than one occasion, they have done so.

Also, Ellen noted that the public might be confused by the wearing of the "police" blue uniform by PTTS enforcement officers, but, I can assure you, so are those inclined toward criminality. None of the criminals I have dealt with in the 39 years of wearing the badge have knowingly committed their dirty deed in the presence of a uniformed officer.

In conclusion, while I am appreciative of Ellen's com-

ments concerning the University Police Department, in absolute fairness, the men and women of the PTTS, who wear their enforcement officer uniform, really do create that additional police appearance, which acts both as a deterrent to the "bad guys" and, I'm sure, as a comfort to the student walking alone through a vast parking area.

I welcome their presence, their uniformed appearance and their performance of a necessary duty that very few of us could endure for very long.

Robert E. Wiatt, director of security and University Police

PTTS provides needed service

EDITOR:

I feel compelled to respond to the article written by Ellen Hobbs on October 2, 1990, because the article is a demeaning attack on hardworking employees who are trying to provide a very needed service.

Yes, parking tickets are written, but only to protect the rights of the individuals who have paid to park on campus. I,

for one, appreciate this service. However, the duties of a parking services officer extend far beyond writing tickets. My mail is full of letters of commendation on the performance, helpfulness, and professionalism of the PSO's. Not only are the officers trained to perform their duties, they are also trained to perform them in a courteous manner, respecting the dignity of other people.

Regarding the uniform of the PSO's, this is the same uniform they have worn for many years, long before the establishment of the security force. Both the University Police Department and the Department of Parking, Transit, and Traffic Services agreed that police officers, PSO's, and the newly acquired security officers should wear uniforms that resemble one another to signify that they are all officers who are available to help. All carry radios and can be in instant contact with UPD if necessary. As for knowing whether parking is an entity of UPD, all it takes is reading the material you were provided when you received your parking permit.

Mary E. Miller
assistant vice president for finance and administration

The Battalion

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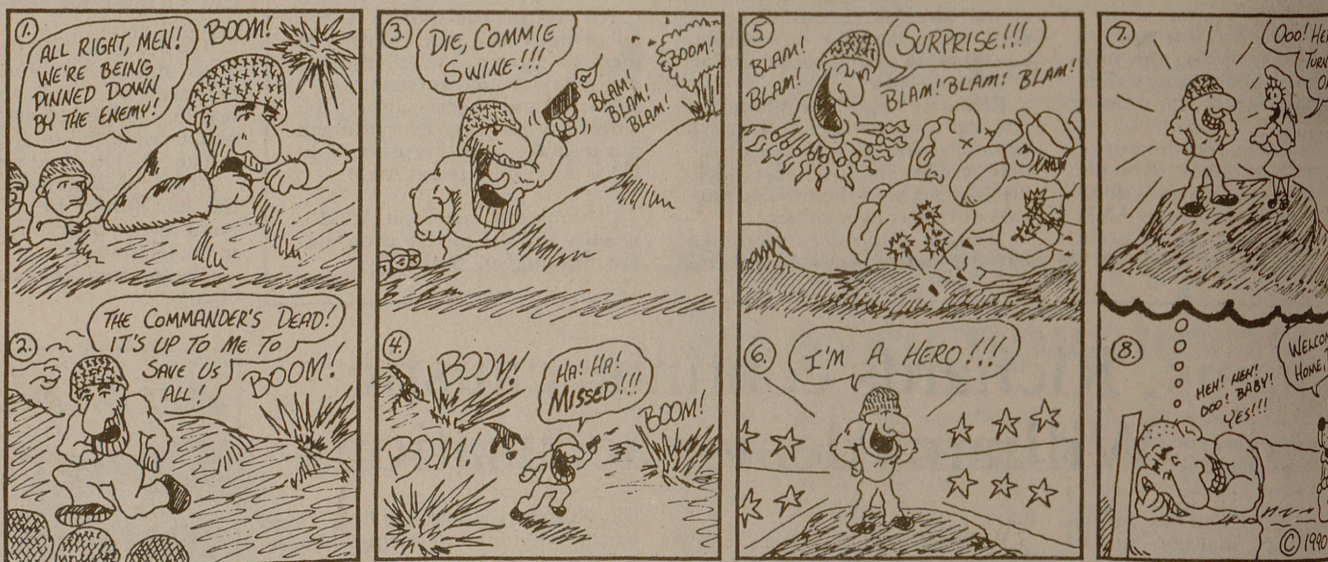
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by Don Atkinson



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