

Should Perot be excluded from presidential debates? Third party adds variety **PROCON** Exclude circus from debate

Columnist



Jon Appgar
Sophomore
journalism major

attention all future third party candidates for president: Any attempt to reach the public is futile and will be met with resistance. A non-partisan commission recently enforced this idea by irresponsibly excluding H. Ross Perot from the presidential debates this fall.

Their one success from this decision is advancement of the two-party system stereotype in America.

Why did they vote to exclude Perot? Their assumption is for the most part correct. Perot currently boasts about a 5 percent standing in the polls with the election less than seven weeks away.

However, this decision is a terrible one. Just because he has little chance of winning doesn't mean he should be denied the right to debate. After all, he is a presidential candidate representing a legitimate party.

What happened to Perot's First Amendment rights? Perot has threatened a federal lawsuit to allow him to debate Dole and Clinton, but experts say it will have little effect on his chances.

Dole and his Republican cohorts are overjoyed that the sharp-tongued Texan is being banned from the general meeting at the White House. Perot's involvement would most likely benefit the Democrats and hurt the GOP.

Perot, like many informed folks, is critical of Dole's proposed 15 percent tax cut. And seeing as Perot's campaign is built on economics, this issue would be a rehabilitation at 7 percent one for Dole in the course of a debate.

For more information on this issue, contact the Casey Barton committee which is non-binding, meaning that the Clinton and Dole campaigns are in negotiations over Perot's involvement.

Not surprisingly, Dole wants nothing to do with Perot. If it were up to Dole, Perot would probably be sent to the nether regions of Siberia until Nov. 5.

Clinton, on the other hand, would like to include Perot in the debates, for the obvious fact that Perot would probably trip up Dole at some point. And Perot would probably bring in more votes from the Republicans than the Democrats, either. Moreover, Clinton has made the shaky claim that he actually enjoyed debating Perot in the 1992 elections. I wonder if he would say that had he met George Bush.

The near certain fact that Perot will garner less than 10 percent of the vote should have no bearing on his inclusion in the debates.

Obviously, not every presidential candidate can

be allowed to debate. There are simply too many. Yet Perot did something in 1992 no other third party candidate has done. He proved he can run with the big dogs in a national debate. If Perot has experience like that, then he should be allowed to participate.

Perot usually has more one-liners than legitimate political stances. But one must admit, he provides a little comedy in the overly-dramatic presidential race.

He might even get Dole to crack a smile. Another downside to this decision is that Perot will have to resort to other means of campaigning.

You'll know this means a barrage of infomercials on the major networks, scores of colorful charts that whiz across the screen and his familiar yet piercing voice. This can be avoided if the Republican and Democratic campaigns agree to allow Perot to participate in the debates.

However, the prospect of that is dim. Meanwhile, Perot is left to fend for himself because the commission violated his rights and made it even harder for third-party candidates to reach the American people.

Walk away. Let it go. Please step away from the podium, Mr. Perot. The Mayor of Munchkinland was denied participatory privileges in the upcoming presidential debates by a bi-partisan panel last week.

The panel's decision was the right one, no matter how much any of us would like to hear the backwoods anecdotes that endeared Perot to the nation in 1992.

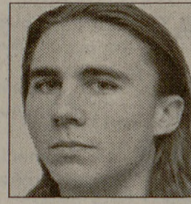
Now, fact of the matter is, now you see, now, how 'bout this, Perot's got a snowball's chance on a sizzlin' Texas day on a hot tin barn roof under a 1,000 watt light bulb, of winning the election this November — which is the only reason needed to exclude him.

In the last election, in which Perot was included in the debates, he consistently received 20 to 25 percent in the polls but finished the election with only 19 percent of the vote and no electoral college votes.

This year, he is only getting about 5 percent in the polls (and not much more in Texas, where voters are usually stupid.) That substantial drop was reason enough for the debate panel not to include him.

He is on the ballot in enough states to garner the

Columnist



Mason Jackson
Senior
marketing major

270 electoral votes necessary to be elected, but so are other minor party candidates. If you include Perot, do you exclude them just because they aren't billionaires with outgoing personalities? No, that would imply that money buys power, and no one believes that.

If you include everyone who technically has a chance to win, would the debates turn into a circus act unfit for deciding who will be lambasted by the media for the next four years? Yes.

Some people say including Perot would make the debates more lively, but to quote the debate panel, "Participation is not extended to candidates because they might prove interesting or entertaining."

As far as the vice-presidential debates go, Perot's current running mate, Pat Choate (rhymes with fat goat), would bring more to the debates than Perot's last sidekick, "Colonel Gridlock."

But the debates don't need to be more lively or entertaining. They need to be less so. Fewer sound bites and more complete thoughts. Less rhetoric and more substance. And no more easily manipulated pie charts.

This brings us to Perot's infomercials. It is said that everyone gets 15 minutes of fame. But Perot has purchased his fame in several half-hour installments.

In 1992 (the year he got no electoral votes) Perot's infomercials were watched by many millions and aired during prime time. This year his spots have only been seen by dedicated masochists and have aired after reruns of "Welcome Back Kotter."

It all adds up to having debates exclusively with the Democratic and Republican contenders. And how do the chosen ones feel about Perot? Clinton wants him included so he will siphon off some of the Dole voters who only support Dole because he isn't Clinton.

In a move that would have reeked of shameless self-promotion, Dole was not quoted as saying, "I was scared, but I fought on, just like I did in World War II. By the way, have I told you I've got two purple hearts?"

Cheap shots aside, Perot has no business being included in the debates. He should continue to gather support in other ways. Then maybe the two-party system will take notice of what it is the Perot supporters want (other than a power-hungry, borderline psychotic leader who isn't very aerodynamic.)

But let's not make this election into more of a circus than need be. It's a two-clown race, and don't pretend otherwise.



MAIL CALL

Lady Aggie volleyball moving on up

Dig 'em! The Lady Aggie Volleyball Team is blockin', settin' and spikin' its way to the top of the polls this season. The Lady Aggie Volleyball Team is set for conference play next week.

What better way to start off the brand new, Big 12 Conference than against t.u.? If you watched some of the Post Oak Mall Invitational, you know how thrilling and exciting it is to watch these girls dismantle their hopeless opponents. I hope to see all you Ags at G. Rollie come Wednesday, Sept. 25.

Scott Trcka
Class of '98

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.

Costs of Bonfire outweigh benefits

Two years ago, I was called to the emergency room of St. Joseph's Hospital to pick up a friend of mine. Because of an accident at the fire cut site, he had his upper left leg cut back on and five of his ribs replaced.

On Sunday night, I was again called to St. Joseph's, this time to see a friend of mine who lay unconscious in the ICU, hooked up to life support because of an auto accident that occurred while he was climbing from Bonfire cut site.

I think that Aggie tradition and the fire are wonderful, but I'm tired of seeing my friends injured in the name of tradition. Is the fire really worth the blood and tears spilt? Maybe it's time that we stop cutting trees and start saving our losses.

Danny Holwerda
Class of '97

Homosexuals don't deserve equality

Regarding Bryan Goodwin's Sept. 17 column, "Congress takes step back in time."

In my opinion, Goodwin's article on same-sex marriages was way off base.

His statement that "homosexuals are fundamentally the same as heterosexuals," shows the backward beliefs and ideas of liberals in this country.

Homosexuality is not normal, and homosexual couples certainly should not be granted the right to marry legally, raise children or receive federal financial aid.

The facts are simple — God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. I feel that Bryan's ideas would be more warmly embraced a few miles down the road at that other school in Austin.

Thomas S. Meriwether
Class of '00

Nice girls put on endangered list

Columnist



Bryan Goodwin
Junior English major

I have long been on a quest more noble and more difficult than finding the Holy Grail, with, apparently, a poorer chance of panning out. Can anyone tell me what caused the disappearance of the nice girl?

"Hey, now," thousands scream in unison, "I AM a nice girl!" Well, perhaps. Perhaps you even exist in greater numbers than I imagine. But those who are bravely go against the image the media has provided for them.

According to current popular culture, I (as a male) should be smart, witty, charming and driven. Females should be good-looking and, shall we say, agreeable to my any suggestion.

Before the line forms to burn me in effigy, let me say that's not how I think it should be. But our biggest female celebrities are people who have posed for Playboy and those who act like them.

Turn on the tube and go channel surfing. The mother of all waves is MTV. Try watching for ten minutes and not finding some utterly disgusting stereotype. For example, who's the big female star of MTV these days? Kennedy, with her glasses and witticisms and not-universally-drool-worthy appearance? No.

Miss Success is Jenny McCarthy. Great. She's intelligent and funny and unannoying ... not. She's insightful and courteous ... nope. Her only "qualification" is a chest size that rivals the national debt. Her job is flailing around, cracking not-funny jokes and making guys' body temperatures shoot up.

But giving her the benefit of the doubt, it's entirely possible that, in person, she's clever and well-informed. So much the worse, then, that she plays out the dumb blonde stereotype on television.

As a reward, she's about to get her own show. Until then, she co-hosts the modernized dating game, Singled Out, in which guys regularly judge gals based on the size of their endowment (I'm not talking finances here), and women judge men based on their ... "Members Only."

Anyone remember that old adage about nice girls

not kissing on the first date? Out the window. Now nice girls provide the condoms. If I see that "I'm a Trojan woman" commercial one more time, I'm going to throw my set out the window and join a monastery.

At the movies it's unavoidable as well. Jenny's fellow Playmate, Pamela Anderson Lee, has her own feature film. Doubtless, she wasn't cast in Barb Wire for her accomplishments as a thespian.

Even actresses who live up to the title have given in to stereotypes. I'm sure we're all aware that Demi Moore starred as a mother-turned-showgirl in Striptease.

There's a movie for the whole family.

No wonder things are so awry: The message here is one that equates nudity and sexual accessibility with real-world success.

When did it become uncool to be a conservative, nice girl? It's long been worthy of heckling to be a traditional nice guy, but the development of females following suit has occurred much more recently.

We sit and search for the causes of moral decay in our country, the things that have made casual sex a virtue and led the way to the epidemic of violence one can witness on our streets. Ironically, the answers were prophesied long ago.

Television, rock and roll, men's magazines — the list goes on and on. In retrospect, everything people warned our parents and grandparents about has indeed come to wreak havoc on our society.

The way females are portrayed in these medium creates a role for the masses to fill. But perhaps women actually want to be portrayed that way. Perhaps all the dumb blonde characters on TV aren't acting. Is Miss McCarthy a product of negative stereotypes, or a collaborator helping to perpetuate them?

Perhaps the answer is more complex. And perhaps someday we'll look back at this period in the same way people now look back at blaxploitation films. I certainly hope so. For now, I'll keep plodding on, ever on the lookout for the rare nice girl.



Editorial Roundup

(AP)—A sampling of editorial opinion from Texas newspapers: *Beaumont Enterprise on Perot and presidential debates:*

The Commission on Presidential Debates was absolutely correct to recommend that Ross Perot be excluded from the showdown between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. Simply put, Perot has no realistic chance of winning in November, and as such, should not clutter up the stage holding the only two men who could prevail.

The debates should be focused on the candidates who could win in November, and unlike 1992 when he got 19 percent of the vote, Perot isn't in that group this time.

The important thing is to let Clinton and Dole face each other one-on-one in a fair format. For many Americans, the presidential

debates are the single most important factor that helps them make up their minds.

The Victoria Advocate on Gulf War chemical exposures:

Were U.S. troops exposed to Iraqi chemical weapons during the Persian Gulf War? And if they were, is that exposure responsible for the post-war illnesses reported by thousands of American men and women who served in the region during the conflict?

In June, the Pentagon's Persian Gulf Veterans Illness Investigation Team reported, on the basis of surveys by U.N. weapons inspectors, that 400 soldiers could have been exposed to chemical agents when the United States destroyed an Iraqi forward-area munitions storage site in March 1991.

As important as the question of

exposure is the medical issue of what, if any, long-term health effects can occur from nonacute contact with chemical agents. A 1994 Defense Science Board task force, led by Nobel Prize scientist Joshua Lederberg, and the Gulf War investigation team have both reviewed scientific studies on exposure to chemical agents. Those studies, involving both controlled trials and accidental exposures, show no evidence of long-term health effects.

Taken together, the evidence so far suggests that chemical exposure won't turn out to be the major explanation for the illnesses Gulf War veterans have suffered. But the Pentagon owed it to those who served in the war, and who are now sick, to chase the possibility much more diligently than it has, even if it turns out to be a dead end.