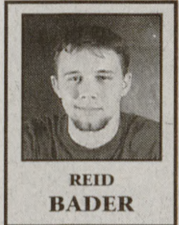


For members only

Debates should be opened to all receiving public funds

In Boston on Oct. 3, the first of three presidential debates between presidential nominees Vice President Al Gore and Gov. George W. Bush will be held.



REID BADER

Third party candidates will be missing from all debates. Apparently, the debates' sponsor — the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) — is not the nonpartisan commission it claims to be.

Rather, it is a bipartisan effort by the Democrats and Republicans to monopolize presidential debates and promote their candidates.

The CPD's tactics of suppressing third-party candidates should be stopped immediately.

The CPD was founded in 1987, on the basis of two reports, "Electing the President: A Program for Reform," by the Commission on National Elections, and "For Great Debates: A New Plan for Future Presidential TV Debates," by Newton N. Minnow and Clifford M. Sloan.

"Electing the President" states "candidate forums in the pre-nomination period have now become a fact of political life. The process of selecting presidential nominees can be enhanced by using them more rather than less. ... Popular interest can be increased by testing the candidates in a variety of ways."

"To achieve this goal, the commission urges the two parties to set up a mechanism, such as a joint committee."

The second report, "For Great Debates," encouraged much the same plan as "Electing the President: The Democratic and Republican parties should establish a bipartisan Presidential Debates Organization now

to administer the 1988 debates."

The report also addressed the role the third parties would play. "The question of third-party candidates should not undermine the goal of institutionalizing debates between the Democratic and Republican Party candidates."

The CPD Website states, "Following the recommendations of these two respected panels, the Commission on Presidential Debates was established in 1987. A nonpartisan, nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation, the CPD is not affiliated with any political party."

It is ironic that although the CPD was founded on clearly bipartisan ideas, it still sustains that it is nonpartisan.

Further evidence of the bipartisan stance is its co-commissioners, Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr. was the former head of the Republican National Committee, and Paul G. Kirk Jr. is the Chairman of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

To ensure that third-party candidates could not participate in their debates, the CPD said a presidential candidate must hold at least 15 percentage points in national polls.

This threshold effectively eliminates any third-party candidate from participating.

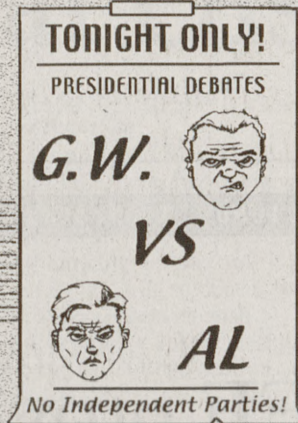
The CPD justifies the 15 percentage point threshold by stating, "The purpose of the criteria is to identify those candidates who have achieved a level of electoral support such that they realistically are considered to be among the principal rivals for the presidency."

The elimination of the third-party is an attempt to ensure that third party candidates do not take percentage points away from the Democratic and Republican candidates.

John Zogby, a nonpartisan pollster, stat-



JOE PEDIN/THE BATTALION



denly, the 7 percent of the country that could possibly vote for a third party becomes more important than the CPD would like.

Third parties are important, and they must be allowed to participate with major candidates in debates.

The limit against third-party candidates must be eliminated.

In its place should be a system that allows candidates to participate if they are on the ballot in enough states to have a mathematical chance at winning.

Reid Bader is a junior political science major.

Temptation

Vending of condoms a bad idea, avoids real problem



MATT LOFTIS

The A&M HIV/AIDS Committee is advocating a proposal to set up vending machines in residence halls. They are intended to peddle condoms and other "medicinal items" to students.

These machines would cater to the spontaneity of a sexual encounter and essentially cover up the irresponsible nature of such behavior.

However, supporters, including officials at A.P. Beutel Health Center, are forced to focus strictly on numbers and statistics in contemplating such a move.

Hypothetically, numerous sexually transmitted diseases could be prevented, and unplanned pregnancies could be curtailed to some degree, but this impersonal solution does not realistically address the health of students.

Condom machines do not belong in dormitories. Easy access to condoms is not the way to keep students safe.

Supporters of the proposal are fooling themselves if they believe presenting the condom is the answer to many sex-related problems on campus.

The idea is a clear endorsement for condoms, which unavoidably and unfairly endorses premarital sex. In fact, placing condom machines in hallways makes an immediate demand on the moral character of resident students.

To allow condom machines in dorms is to advocate them and their usage. If the University displays them in the places students live, it is clearly endorsing their use. While it seems reasonable to have convenient access to condoms because they reduce risk in spur-of-the-moment sexual encounters, how much more often will it encourage sexual activity?

It seems to be a greater injustice to tempt abstaining students than to force those who choose to have sex in a dormitory to provide their own protection.

Condom machines do not belong in dormitories. Easy access to condoms is not the way to keep students safe.

Premarital sex is not, by any objective measurement, a good thing. Condoms are not perfect; there are too many STD patients and unplanned pregnancies to place trust in their infallibility.

The element of danger is never absent from sex before marriage. It is impossible to avoid wondering if an unwanted pregnancy or an unknown disease will result.

In addition to the risk involved, studies show Americans are not as happy with sex outside of marriage as they are within a marriage.

A 1994 study by the University of Chicago titled "The Social Organization of Sexuality" reports that married couples experience the greatest enjoyment and quantity of sex.

The survey also states that about 40 percent of married people report having sex twice a week, compared with 25 percent for singles. Married couples also indicated a far greater enjoyment than unmarried couples.

If sex is more fulfilling and frequent within the context of a marriage, then why should Texas A&M feel the need to justify the hormone-driven lack of willpower in our residence halls?

A&M must also consider the impact condom machines in residence halls will have on incoming freshmen in future years.

Decisions the University makes establish norms for those entering A&M. Students intending to enter school and establish themselves as members of the student body will inevitably follow the lead their school has set for them.

Condom machines are a silent, yet unmistakable pressure on students who are in the process of entering a college atmosphere — just like everyone else.

Suggestions to install condom dispensers in residence halls should be ignored and set aside.

If A&M is truly interested in protecting students from the spread of diseases and possible unwanted pregnancies, students should realize the people having sex now do not represent a majority, nor do they represent a happy and satisfied minority.

Matt Loftis is a sophomore journalism and French major.

Better than the Giff Dennis Miller worthy of MNF

When ABC announced the lineup for the 2000-2001 season of long-running sports broadcast "Monday Night Football," one could almost hear the jaws dropping around breakfast tables in America.



MARCUS WHITE

"Monday Night Football," long beloved by sports bars and sports fanatics alike, was going to break the mold this season with the addition of foul-mouthed comic Dennis Miller.

Critics around the country voiced their opinions, confident that Miller had no knowledge of the game of football and that his unique form of nomenclature would have Americans scratching their heads and censors covering their ears.

Finally, three games into the 2000 season, it seems ABC has accomplished its goal of spicing up the weekly broadcast. Basically, Miller has begun to silence those disheartening voices.

Miller is a welcome addition to the world of sports broadcasting and should be supported. His quick-witted and intelligent quips have helped to liven up what was once a dull and drab broadcast.

Miller first gained the laughter and love of his many devoted fans through the widely popular television series, "Saturday Night Live." It was during his 1985-1991 SNL career when he anchored the recurring skit "Weekend Update," that the public began to notice Miller's knack for humorous sarcasm.

His current project, HBO's "Dennis Miller Live," features Miller's love for political satire and scrutiny.

Now co-hosting "Monday Night Football," Miller has made apparent to the nation that he is more than a talented social critic and walking dictionary — he is also a credible sports nut.

Miller is very familiar with all the rules and regulations of professional football, and he is no slouch with recognizing players and making references to past football greats.

Many critics feared that Miller would be left speechless during the fast-paced action. Miller could not have proven them more wrong. He is always quick to comment on the action, and he does not monopolize the camera.

Often, the laughter of co-commentators Dan Fouts and "Monday Night Football" veteran Al Michaels can be heard over the action after many of Miller's hilarious comments.

During last Monday's broadcast, Miller made references to

everything from Dante's "Inferno" to Eminem's "Slim Shady." Miller, a true aficionado of history and literature, showed he is not unfamiliar with pop-culture.

Miller's sly wittiness with the conventional stylings of Fouts and Michaels has proven to be a winning combination. The comedic commentary Miller provides fits

architecture to 19th century literature may leave some viewers wrinkling their foreheads, he never ceases to add some sort of comedic element to each and every comment he makes.

Those who do not understand Miller's historical references and language can turn to ABC's Website which features a link to the "Encyclopedia Britannica." Once there, viewers can look up Miller's comments from the past week's broadcast and learn the history and vocabulary behind them.

As for the concern about Miller's tendency toward foul language, ABC censors have yet to edit any of Miller's comments.

What Miller brings to the "Monday Night Football" lineup is timely comments, insightfully inspired by the action. ABC Sports has made a step in the right direction by following the good example of ESPN's "Sportscenter," and allowing Miller to do what he does best for "Monday Night Football."

His innovative style of commentary blends well with the more traditional styles of Fouts and Michaels, giving "Monday Night Football" a balanced and refreshing brand of good sports commentary and hilarious comic relief.

Marcus White is a sophomore general studies major.



Some have speculated that Miller's complicated comparisons might clash with the traditional manner in which Fouts and Michaels tend to handle the football action.

While it is true that Miller's seemingly random remarks and allusions to everything from ar-

well with the system of play-by-play and statistics that has grown static in the world of sports broadcasting.

Mail Call

Praising Bowen alludes to breach of integrity

In response to Melissa Bedsole's Sept. 22 column.

It seems to me that most of *The Battalion* staff has sold their integrity to a higher authority — Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen.

A number of articles have been written in past weeks exalting Bowen to the status of savior. I think many students do not share *The Battalion's* views. Bedsole's column seemed to sum up all of the one-sided views supporting Bowen.

It seems everyone in a position which allows them to speak to the student body are sucking up to Bowen — i.e. Student Senate, Student Body President and *Battalion* columnists.

I think Bowen should not be around to make any decisions for our school. A&M was found to be negligent and partially re-

sponsible for the Bonfire collapse. I recall Bowen promising to step down if A&M were found responsible. I am still waiting.

Bedsole writes that by not obeying Bowen's "directive," Keep the Fire Burning (KTFB) is not respecting the tradition of Bonfire and disrespecting the victims.

It is good to know that Bowen is the real-life manifestation of the spirit of Bonfire and the sole representative of all the victims. Thus, "As Aggies and human beings, it is important to respect his decision and stand behind him in support."

I always thought that as a human being, I had to follow only one law. I guess not while at A&M.

Bedsole also writes, "The people disrespecting other Aggies and the campus have yet to realize exactly what they are doing."

I agree, but then Bedsole goes on to call KTFB members rebels, (obviously because they do not worship Bowen).

Apparently, she alludes to the idea that they would be sub-human if they did not give Bowen their undying support. Who is

disrespecting who? Students should ask themselves, "What has Bowen done for this school that has been so great?"

Tom Nowak
Class of '02

Editor's Note — Allegations concerning the journalistic integrity of *Battalion* staff members are taken very seriously. In this case, the allegations are unfounded.

Unlike student newspapers at private-funded universities, *The Battalion* enjoys complete editorial freedom from University administrators.

For example, Bowen submitted a guest column on Sept. 3 for publication. The *Battalion* editors deemed this as unacceptable — to honor his request would give the University some semblance of editorial control.

Ultimately, Bowen's letter was edited down and published under Mail Call — no different than any letter sent in by a student. Therefore, any support or criticism con-

cerning the administration by columnists are personal views only and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other *Battalion* staff members.

— David Lee

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less 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 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
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