

Don't run, Ralph

If Nader runs in presidential election, it could split the liberal vote and help Bush



COLLINS EZEANYIM

As of mid-February, the U.S. death toll in Iraq was 545 Americans. Make no mistake about it; those solely responsible for these murders are the cowardly terrorists who continue to fight against the ideals of a democratic Iraq. But it should not be forgotten that it was President George W. Bush who put U.S. troops in their current predicament. It should also not be forgotten that it was Ralph Nader who gave Bush

the power to launch an expensive and unjust war. Much to the chagrin of Democrats, progressives and others, on Feb. 22 Nader announced he was running for president, this time as an independent. Nader probably will not have as much impact on the presidential race as he did in 2000. Still, he should heed the advice of just about everyone who wants to see Bush evicted from the White House: Get out of the race now.

During the 2000 presidential election, many progressive voters were torn between the decision to vote for Nader, a third-party candidate who was more reflective of their values, or Gore, who was considered to be the lesser of two evils. Essentially, it boiled down to whether their pro-Nader sentiments were stronger than their anti-Bush feelings.

Four years later, no such consideration is necessary. Many Americans are appalled at the irresponsible policies enacted by Bush. Not the least of which is the current war in Iraq, launched unnecessarily while using faulty evidence as justification. If Al Gore had been president, a preemptive attack on Iraq may have never occurred. America would also be absent of the Patriot Act and the projected trillions of dollars in deficit largely due to Bush's tax cuts.

Despite this, Nader still had the temerity to refer the Democrats on NBC News' Meet the Press as one-half of a "two-party duopoly" that is converging more and more, where the towering similarities dwarf the dwindling real differences that the Democrats are willing to fight over.

The numbers that made the difference between a Bush presidency and a Gore White House were close. In fact, so close that there is no doubt a Nader candidacy tipped the scales in Bush's favor. This is most apparent in Florida where Bush won

by an almost negligible 537 votes, according to The New York Times. Considering Nader received 97,488 votes in Florida and surveys showing 45 percent of Nader voters would have voted for Gore if Nader had not been on the ballot, it is easy to see that Gore would have carried Florida and won the presidency. The same scenario holds true for New Hampshire, where Bush carried the state by only 7,211 votes and Nader was able to gain 22,198 votes.

Nader's impact will not be as big in 2004. For

a presidential candidate who is not an incumbent, he is starting incredibly late. He is no longer running as a Green Party candidate, which means less access to automatic resources such as ballot access and campaign organization. Still, he has the potential to do major damage to a Democratic candidacy. He could still steal crucial votes from states such as New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, New Hampshire and, yes, even Florida.

Nader's candidacy could not come at a worse possible time. The Democratic Party is finally energized and united. Democratic primary voters have a decision between two appealing candidates, the two Johns: Kerry and Edwards. Plus, polls show Bush is vulnerable on major issues. For example, in Ohio, perhaps the biggest possible swing state for the 2004 election, a University of Cincinnati poll found 58 percent of Ohioans disapprove of Bush's handling of the economy, according to The Houston Chronicle.

Now Democrats must deal with a Nader candidacy that could either prove a minor distraction or a truly destructive force. They will have to divert resources meant to wage a campaign against Bush toward convincing Nader-inclined voters that they should stick with their party.

So what is making Nader run, despite the protests of so many, including many former supporters? Nader has a super-sized ego that cannot allow him to fairly assess the political situation around him. Therefore, he believes he is the solution to a mythical "two-party duopoly" that exists only in his head.

What makes the Nader candidacy particularly tragic is its potential to erase the many positive contributions he has made to American society. As an incredibly effective consumer advocate, he is essentially responsible for airbags in vehicles, the Freedom of Information Act and dozens of other invaluable contributions too long to list. How sad it would be if this legacy was erased and he would simply be known as the man who gave America eight years of President George W. Bush.



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Right to fair use must be nationally protected

Technology is a driving force in this age, and it is especially impressive in the field of personal computing. Faster processors, more compact memory and better media are invented every day and quickly become affordable for most consumers.



MIKE WALTERS

making a backup copy for one's own private use, yet Illston doesn't seem to care. 321 Studios complied with the court order last Friday because it had no choice, but the fight isn't over yet. Nor should it be.

"We are so firm in our belief in the principle of fair use that we will appeal this ruling immediately," Robert Moore, founder and president of 321 Studios, told NewsFactor. "And we will take our fight all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, if that's what it takes to win."

"What a criminal can twist to become a tool for his crimes is irrelevant — property rights cannot be tossed aside by whim, and Americans should not let it happen."

However, the U.S. government is treating this technology not as a thing to increase citizens' pleasure and productivity, but as a runaway train bent on spreading lawlessness. Unable to deal with changing technology and pressured by special interest groups, the U.S. government uses its monopoly to halt these advancements without considering individual rights.

Sadly, this is exactly what's going on in the case of current legal proceedings involving the makers of DVD X Copy. The government is intentionally violating the property rights of its citizens. In this case, it is the consumer's right to copy DVDs.

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston has ruled that 321 Studios is in violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and gave the company a deadline to remake its product, DVD X Copy, without the ability to descramble copy-protected DVDs. In the realm of business, no company may use force to destroy competitors and ruin a company, yet the government has this power and is using it. Other companies make similar devices with descrambling abilities, and their future, too, is in question.

A legally purchased DVD becomes the property of its owner, who may do anything he wishes with it so long as his uses are legal. This harks back to the landmark 1984 Supreme Court decision declaring personal use of the VCR to be legal. Making secondary copies of home movies and, as the Supreme Court put it, "time shifting" TV programs for later use is perfectly acceptable. By the same rationale, there is nothing illegal about buying a DVD and

The purpose of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act was to eliminate piracy, but Illston clearly steps beyond that purpose in this case. DVD X Copy gives consumers the ability to make a master copy of their purchased DVDs, because, face it, accidents happen. Leaving a DVD sitting out on the television, extensive use, spills and scratches can render a \$20 DVD useless. Having a backup copy can prevent that loss. 321 Studios, recognizing that need, created a product which The Associated Press reports has sold more than one million copies. But the government has turned what should be a "supply-and-demand" success story into an ordeal that may instead leave 321 Studios bankrupt.

"We haven't made any profits

yet," Moore said, "because we've been giving it to the lawyers."

Supporters of Illston's ruling may argue that while the program may save anyone prone to scratching their DVDs a few bucks, it is also a tool used to commit crimes. But to follow that logic, the government would consider the thousands of deaths caused by stab wounds and in response order Americans to all eat their steaks with sporks. Though considering the government's lack of empathy for the businessman, it probably wouldn't care about Outback Steakhouse going out of business.

What a criminal can twist to become a tool for his crimes is irrelevant — property rights cannot be tossed aside by whim, and Americans should not let it happen.

"The price of freedom," Thomas Jefferson said, "is eternal vigilance." If Americans want to keep the country away from the fate of a starving communist country such as exists in Cuba or the rule-by-thugs horror in Haiti, citizens must always be on guard when the government infringes on people's rights, however small that infraction.

March 1 began the "Five Days of Protest," during which consumers through 321-sponsored www.protectfairuse.org will be asked to write, call, e-mail or fax newspaper editors, Hollywood studios and federal lawmakers on the company's behalf. Anybody who cares about his own rights being cast away by freedom-hating Californian judges should visit that Web site, which allows you to email the senators and representatives in our area. By clicking on only a few buttons they will send a pre-written e-mail to those officials, urging them to protect the rights the founders fought and died for.

Given the stakes, it's worth a minute of your time. After all, they're your rights they're trying to take away.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

MAIL CALL

Scholarship is not just for white students

In response to a March 2 mail call:

A mail call yesterday demonstrated that there is much misunderstanding surrounding the Young Conservatives of Texas A&M \$10,000 essay scholarship contest. Misguided detractors and even some supporters miss the point of the scholarship: It is a race-neutral protest to racial preferences. Unlike yesterday's mail call suggests, the scholarship is not "whites-only." We encourage students of all backgrounds to apply and to tell us why they oppose affirmative action.

All too often, people on both the left and the right wrongly assume that all minorities benefit and appreciate racial preference programs. The "soft bigotry of low expectations," as racial preference programs are called by President Bush, do more to divide America and curb the possibilities of this generation than is justifiable. Race preferences in college admissions slap a band-aid on the problems of failing K-12 education, allowing legislators to avoid fixing the root problem. Race preference programs in scholarships force racial minorities to make the decision between the moral high-road of declining a scholarship based on race or being able to more easily finance their education. Racial preference policies, justifiably or not, lead to speculation on the merit of applicants admitted to programs by that individual and their peers. To top it off, not all racial minorities are valued equally by such preference programs.

It is this discrimination along with that against majority students that we are seeking to end and hope to read about in the applications for the scholarship.

Brannon Kroll
Weston Balch
Affirmative Action Co-Chairs
Young Conservative of Texas A&M

Dr. Gates made right decision on Hotard Hall

In response to a March 2 news article:

By deciding to keep Hotard Hall open for the upcoming school year, Dr. Gates has shown yet again a strong commitment to the student body and an understanding that progress need not cost us the traditions that make Texas A&M unique. His willingness to work with student leaders when it matters most is to be commended.

Matthew Wilkins
Class of 2005

Corps cannot continue to force beliefs on others

It seems that a few Aggies need an obvious lesson in social policy: Not everyone shares the same belief.

As I was sitting on the bus Monday afternoon, three sophomore Corps members came to stand in front of me. Standing behind them was a series of girls, all of whom were standing and ignoring the open seats between two people.

One of these corps members asked me if I would mind standing up, and I replied, "Why?" He retorted with, "So the lady can sit down," referring to a girl standing nearby. I glanced at the girl, then at the open seats nearby, and calmly refused.

Another member of the Corps leaned over to tap my shoulder: "Did you hear what he said?" "Of course I did," I responded. He again questioned why I wouldn't stand up. I explained to him there were plenty of open seats around and that I didn't see the need, nor the reason, I should stand up simply because she was of the opposite sex. The third Corps boy then had the audacity to actually make a scene, yelling out in a loud voice for me to do the right thing.

The right thing? I explained to him I believed differently and should not have to stand simply to meet their beliefs. Needless to say, the entire bus was staring at this point. Had the girl needed to sit (e.g. on crutches, sick, pregnant, etc.), I would have gladly given up my seat. However, gender alone is not a valid enough basis given the fact that a woman is no less fit to stand than a man, both physically and socially. And until these Corps members' beliefs become some sort of law, they need to learn to tolerate other beliefs.

Jason Ford
Class of 2004

Every student on campus represents the University

In response to Matt Rigney's March 2 mail call:

Everyone on campus should consider themselves "representatives" of the University and act accordingly. The Rigney piece should get lots of mail call responses, pro and con. Think Vision 2020!

George Engelbretson
System Software Specialist
College of Geosciences