



Nicholas Von Hoffman

Nader for President

From the Canadian to the Mexican border, from Bellingham, Washington, to San Diego, the conversational pattern is the same up and down the Pacific Coast. First they ask you if you've seen the bumperstickers, next they make a joke about the tapes, then they speculate on how much the oil companies paid Nixon to let them have a shortage, and after that they ask you who you think is going to be the next President.

There is no man who could be elected to the Presidency who knows more about how the United States government works on every level. He has fought it and studied it through nearly every department and agency as no other political figure in our time. Not only is his knowledge unique but he has trained scores of men and women who could be brought into a Nader administration to help run it. Nobody else can attract this kind of talent.

It's easier to say who, shouldn't be. The only qualification most of the leading contenders for the office have is that they haven't been convicted of a felony. Ronald Reagan would have to go into the campaign where Nixon leaves off explaining his income tax payments. Charles Percy is a closet Democrat who will never be nominated by any Republican convention. Rockefeller would be nearly 70, a spendthrift governor who has worked every side of every issue. Howard Baker's only achievement is being allowed to sit next to Sam Ervin when the TV cameras go on.

Since Franklin Roosevelt's first two terms our Presidents have been primarily occupied with foreign affairs, but the last ten years have shown that ultimately foreign success rests on domestic success. A discredited, dishonored President with a debased currency presiding over a citizenry that doesn't trust him enough to follow him has little choice but to take refuge in the Kremlin as Nixon has done. When Nixon says that he was too busy running his foreign policy to know what his own staff was doing he is making something of the same point. Whether it is oil, gold, wheat or bombers, his incapacity to govern effectively at home is bringing him to grief here and abroad. You can't have a foreign policy if you don't have a country, and Nixon has lost his.

The Democrats have little more to offer. Humphrey is no longer worth the time to denounce; Muskie has been publicly exposed as being exactly what he appears to be; only 5 percent of the electorate can still remember McGovern's name, and after him come the truly flashy candidates, Bayh of Indiana, that other Senator from Minnesota who's rumored to be so good, the governor of Illinois and assorted long shots.

Nader, on the other hand, has a studied program and approach on everything from taxes to monopoly. He can tell you exactly — not in the generalities they usually feed us — what he would do and how he would go about it. He knows what he thinks is needed and he knows how to communicate his ideas to our people. He's been doing it for ten years now without a public relations man or an advertising agency. Can you imagine what a different and better place this would be with Ralph Nader picking the members of the Federal regulatory agencies for eight years.

Standing to one side is Teddy, a man who has had to bear so many sorrows it's hard to tell him that he'd be doing himself and the rest of us a favor if he'd get out of the race now. Perhaps the only ones who will tell him so are those who fear that if he runs he will also be cut down by the Kennedy curse. They say they'll vote against him to protect him.

Nobody born with a belly button is perfect. Ralph Nader can be an abrasive unpolitic man; a stubborn character who sometimes disdains the most innocent, ethical and necessary of the political arts. He is the proud prototypical anti-baby kisser, but we're ready to accept that vice. We're ready for the troubles that a man of his lack of flexibility can bring on himself.

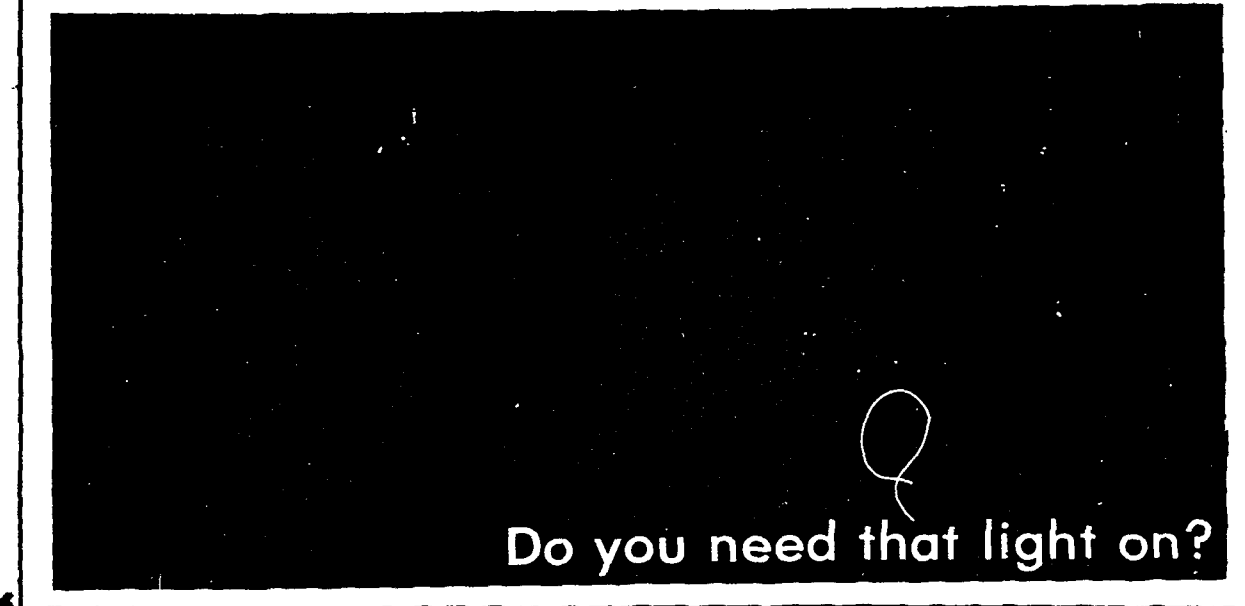
Millions more will vote against him because they think Chappaquiddick showed him to be a man who, at the very least, cracks under pressure. Believe what you want about him, but any Kennedy Presidential campaign will draw forth our ugliest side. Worst would be a Connally-Kennedy contest. While each was racing for the Presidency by telling the dreadful truth about each other the electorate would be racing for the bathroom.

We'll take that as the price you have to pay for a President who has two suits in his name, wears a brush cut and a 1957 narrow tie, but who will stay put in the White House, get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and work, and work 'til midnight. With Nader there'll be no golf, no pompous dances and theatricals, no Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis, no unseemly weddings, no pilfered Western White Houses, and the only people indicted may be the oil company executives.

Then the degradation of our politics would be complete. It need not be so. There is one man in public life who is clean enough, who has stature enough to restore respect for politics and public office, and that's Ralph Nader, our national ombudsman, the one person who is admired even when he is disgraced with.

With Nader in the White House we as a nation will not again have to bear the shame of hearing our President plead with us to believe he is not a crook. Ralph Nader is the one man whom we would buy a used car from but he won't sell us one.

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James J. Kilpatrick

Book burning by any name

Acting on instructions of the local school board, a custodian at the Drake, N.D., high school recently burned 32 paperback copies of Kurt Vonnegut's novel, "Slaughterhouse Five." The incident set off a firestorm of denunciation from liberal spokesmen, among them The New York Times. Permit me to contribute a bucket of cooling water.

Mind you, it was a stupid thing that the school board did. It appears that a young instructor in English had assigned the Vonnegut novel to his sophomore class. This was a reasonable literary judgment on his part. Vonnegut may not represent the richest harvest of contemporary American letters, but with the exception of Norman Mailer, the pickings are slim. An awareness of Vonnegut, if not indispensable to the education of high school students, is at least defensible.

The school board did not see it that way. By unanimous vote, the board ordered that the offending copies of "Slaughterhouse Five" be disposed of "like other trash." The custodian obediently burned them. The Authors League, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Education Association and the Times, in a snooty little editorial, thereupon instructed the school board of Drake, N.D., in the meaning of academic freedom and the rights of man.

Very well. I have been running these bases a long time. Some years ago, a few of us at the Richmond (Va.) News Leader founded the Beadle Bumble Fund. When

the school board of neighboring Hanover County undertook to ban "To Kill a Mockingbird," the Fund, which exists to combat the asininity of public officials, promptly offered a free paperback copy to any Hanover student who wrote in and requested one. I am authorized to say that the Fund now extends the same offer to sophomore students of Drake, N.D., as to "Slaughterhouse Five." Considering the publicity, and considering the insatiable curiosity of sophomores contemplating a putatively dirty book, most of them probably have copies already. They will survive the experience.

The point worth making is that book burning goes on all the time. The practice is seldom seen literally, as in North Dakota, but in one form or another it is a defensible and indeed an inescapable aspect of running a school system, a library, a televised news program or a daily paper. Someone has to make a decision that a particular book, or a particular news item, is worth shelving or worth printing. That responsibility embraces the authority to say that a book is worthless or an item is not fit to print. It is a thin smoky pall that separates "book burning" from "editorial judgment."

We saw an example of this last spring. On May 29, the U.S. Supreme Court entered a routine order in Case No. 72-1365, refusing for want of a "substantial constitutional question" to consider an appeal sought by Mrs. Lillian Bellison Alexanderson in a paternity

suit. The defendant in the suit was Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of The New York Times. According to the pleadings, without admitting paternity, he had provided support for the plaintiff's illegitimate son until the boy's 16th birthday. The Times killed the story. It carried not one word on the Supreme Court's action.

If the Court's order of May 29 was not "news" — news of interest to readers of the Times — I have wasted 33 years in the news business. Of course it was news. The Times' managing editor, A.M. Rosenthal, had a tough decision to make, and he blew it. Taking into account the sophistication of the Times editors, compared to the sophistication of the Drake, N.D., school board, which act of book burning was the greater blunder? Perhaps it depends on whose Ochs is gored.

In the same fashion, Walter Cronkite every afternoon effectively if metaphorically burns hundreds of stories before putting together the CBS evening news. I discard hundreds of column ideas every year as not worth discussion. Every editor, librarian, teacher and publisher in the land goes through the same decision-making process every day. The Drake board members still think they were right. Abe Rosenthal still thinks he was right. I think they both were wrong. But if such difficult decisions are to be attacked with snooty denunciations, suppose we spread the snootiness around.

the Collegian

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