

## The debates are over, and now the name calling begins

There was no knockout punch in the presidential debates, and neither George Bush or John Kerry was able to get a real advantage out of the post-debate polls.

There are two weeks left in the campaign, and it appears the thrust of the arguments we will listen to is Bush calling Kerry an "out-of-the-mainstream liberal," and Kerry is labeling Bush an "out-of-the-mainstream conservative." Both are using the labels as though they were somehow dirty words.

Bush began the "liberal" charge in the final debate, saying Kerry was even more liberal than Ted Kennedy, the other senator from Massachusetts. In another answer, Bush was saying how he had asked the Congress to pass the Medicare reform, and that even Kennedy had supported him.

Kerry said the Bush idea to privatize Social Security is a conservative move that will cut pension benefits, and raise the retirement age for those who are getting close to retirement age.

The labels of Liberal and Conservative have been used in different ways over the more than 200 years of American politics. In the elections since the beginning of the 20th century, the effort has been to paint all Democrats as liberal and all Republicans as conservative.

Reality is much different; there are liberals and conservatives in both parties, and people can be liberal on one issue and conservative on another.

The WordNet Dictionary defines a Liberal as: 1. [n] a person who favors a political philosophy of progress and reform and the protection of civil liberties. 2. [n] a person who favors an economic theory of laissez-faire and self-regulating markets. 3. [adj] tolerant of change; not bound by authoritarianism, orthodoxy, or tradition. 4. [adj] showing or characterized by broad-mindedness; "a broad political stance"; "generous and broad sympathies"; "a liberal newspaper"; "tolerant of his opponent's opinions."

WordNet defines a Conservative as: 1. [n] a person who has conservative ideas or opinions. 2. [adj] resistant to change. 3. [adj] conforming to the standards and conventions of the middle class; "a bourgeois mentality." 4. [adj] unimaginatively conventional; "a colorful character in the buttoned-down, dull-gray world of business" - Newsweek. 5. [adj] avoiding excess; "a conservative estimate." 6. [adj] opposed to liberal reforms.

There are good things on both sides of the political spectrum, and it is important to the success of the democratic government we have that there are people willing to be labeled as one or the other.

In the battle of ideas, most people will not make a decision based on one statement or how a person is labeled, but that does not stop either Bush or Kerry from trying to make the label be a negative for their opponent.

Another argument is to say that the liberal is a person more likely to think the glass is half full and believe it will get fuller. The conservative is a person who thinks the glass is half empty, and is afraid it will always get worse.

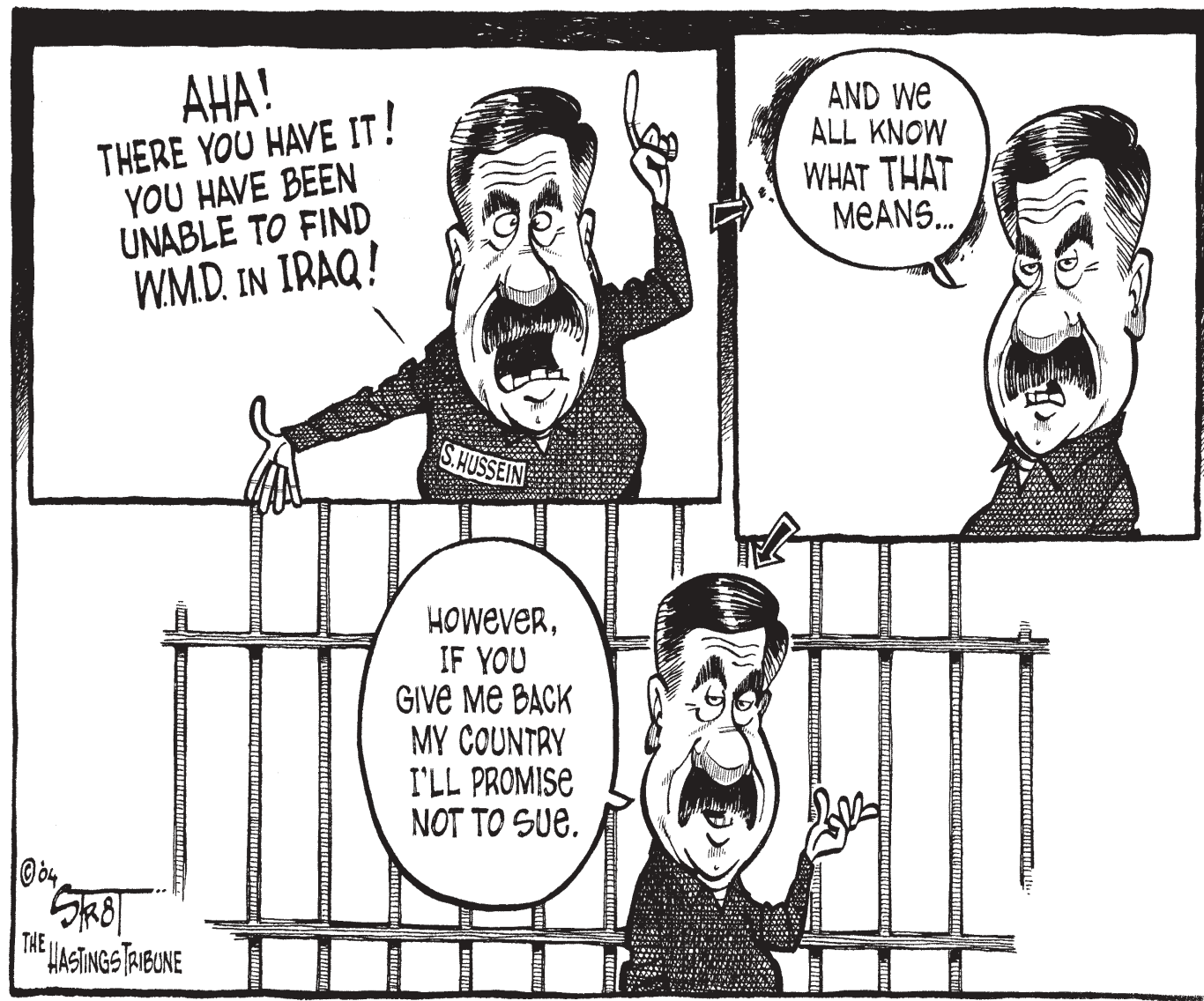
Those are as broad and over sweeping as the idea that all Democrats are liberal and all Republicans are conservative.

These labeling arguments are good for the political scientists who try to explain why things happen and the forces of the society that come together to make the changes. Day-to-day, though, the labels are less clear, and have less to do with what is or may happen.

They serve as ideological battering rams, and are being used that way today, substituting name calling for substance.

No matter whether you consider yourself a liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, this is an important election for you to vote in — for the man of your choice.

— Tom Betz



## Neighbors help make house a home

When buying a home we ask the size, price, how many bedrooms, how much is the utility bill and how about those taxes.

But one of the most important features of a home purchase is only uncovered or discovered upon the experience of living in the home — the neighbors.

I've always said God provided me with neighbors with cameras when my children were growing up. He knows I'm a lousy photographer and the mystique of the camera is a bit like the mystique of an umbrella — it always is where I am not.

And so God gave me neighbors with cameras.

But now with my children grown and a daughter-in-law who loves to take pictures I don't need a camera-laden neighbor. When we moved into this house we

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



graduated to a different level.

We have friendly neighbors around but there are three of us in a row that seem to have our own little neighborhood.

The matriarch of the trio is an avid gardener. She grows everything, except radishes. She has eggplant and peppers and cabbages, sweet potatoes and on and on. And best of all, she shares her bumper crops and comes with vegetable in hand

and a recipe as well.

Even the neighborhood bunnies know what house to visit. She has wonderful bird feeders and I can sit at my desk and watch the finches.

The youngest of us grows cactus and rose moss and feeds squirrels.

She transplants all sorts of flowers including iris. Not only does she share her rose moss, she prepares the soil in my whiskey barrel, transplants it and then waters it daily. Not long ago she purchased two squirrel feeders; one to place up in the tree and the other to put along the fence so my grandchildren could watch them eat.

And me, well, I attempt to garden. I nurture rabbits, I provide a back porch for us to congregate in, but most importantly, I am the lucky recipient of literally, the "fruits of their labor".

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

### Mother thinks best interests are at heart

To the Editor:

I have debated about writing this letter, as I am John Miller's mother. I cannot vote for him, as I am not in his district.

I am not writing this in regard to John only, but for all our county commissioners and city officials who serve us.

Being a county commissioner is not just about sitting in on meetings. They have to know about all federal, state, county and city laws and regulations. They have to have knowledge about budgets, accounting, construction and many other things.

Our critical water situation is something that has to be protected — not only for us but for our children, grandchildren and all our future descendants.

I grew up in Almena. I remember when the Prairie Dog Creek used to run full. You could fish and swim in it. Now it is only a small stream. You can look along our creeks and see many dying trees because of the lack of water.

Our present county commissioners have done a great job to protect our water supply and many other things. They have worked long hours outside of meetings, getting information they need to make good decisions for Norton County.

I have lived in Norton County all my life and appreciate all that has been done over the years to keep this county a clean and desirable place to live.

Lucille Miller  
Norton

### Voters don't care for hit and run tactics

To the Editor:

I find it interesting that my letter about the anonymous flyers was published on the same page as the editorial that pretty much had the same questions and comments I did on the subject. Delores Atkinson seems to have the same thoughts about it, also.

Maybe more voters who don't care for these tactics should chime in with letters

to the editor. At least "anonymous" might get the message that "hit and run" is not the way to impress people with their opinion. If "anonymous" doesn't want to come out in public, then they will have to face fading into the nameless oblivion to which they have consigned themselves.

June Prout  
Norton

### Man imagines presidential press release

To the Editor:

Imagine this in our nation's newspapers in November if Kerry wins the election:

"Kerry announced that his first official act would be to create a new cabinet-level post. He was, however, rather vague as to the purpose of the position. Some of his top aids, under the conditions of being anonymous, stated that it would be called the Secretary of Presidential Plans.

"Some of the duties would be to keep an accurate record of all the plans the new president had proposed during the campaign. This would include monitoring the status of all plans, advising the president

of the status of all and reminding him periodically of plans he has not yet begun. The secretary would advise the president of any that appeared to be stupid, unbelievable or impossible. The secretary would have the responsibility to keep a record of how the new president promised he would accomplish each plan.

"There were a few more related duties, but his people decided that they were already probably in enough trouble that they abruptly ended the conversation."

Dave Ashley  
Norton

### Representative respects, supports commissioner

To the Editor,

During the general election, Norton County has some important decisions to make regarding local issues. Although some might say that I shouldn't have an interest in the Norton County commissioners race, I'd still like to add my "two cents worth."

John Miller is one of the most respected county commissioners in the state, bar none. Through his hard work and commitment, he has expertise in all aspects of county government and has been a wonderful resource for me and our former senator, Stan Clark.

As you go to the polls, consider the great job John has done.

John Faber  
state representative  
Brewster

## WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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