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## Big Media's take on the candidates

BY WHITT FLORA

KNIGHT-RIDDER TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON - When you go to the polls on Nov. 7, remember one thing: Big Media will be looking over your shoulder with justifiable concern.

Big Media, in case you haven't noticed it, is getting a trifle anxious about the outcome of this fall's election. It has a lot at stake after all; it has spent most of the last two years trying to educate the public about the differences between the two candidates.

Actually, just make that "the difference" between the two candidates. One candidate, you see, has the intellect of an Aristotle; the other is type-cast for a starring role in the next remake of "Dumb and Dumber."

One sure way you can tell the non-preferred Big Media candidate is really dumb is by the clumsy and often incoherent way he expresses himself.

Since Big Media is getting a little put-off by polls showing that you, Joe and Jane Six-Pack, aren't picking up on The Difference, here's a snap quiz to help you do the right thing when you enter the voting booth:

Which candidate said the following really stupid things:

"If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure." "Mars is somewhat the same distance from the sun, which is very important. We have seen pictures where there are canals, we believe, and water. If there is water, that means there is oxygen. If oxygen, that means we can breathe." "I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy - but that could change." "We're going to have the best-educated American people in the world." "A low voter turnout is an indication of fewer people going to the polls." "(It's) time for the human race to enter the solar system." "We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur." "Quite frankly, teachers are the only profession that teach our children." "It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."

And finally, this gem:

"People that are really very weird can get into sensitive positions and have a tremendous impact on history."

If you're still a bit puzzled, here's a final clue. Those remarks weren't uttered by Big Media's designated Big Dummy, George W. Bush.

Those are all publicly recorded quotations from the mouth of Al Gore during his two terms as Vice President of the United States. Many of them were uttered directly to Big Media at press conferences or during one-on-one interviews.

Yet Big Media is worried that you may vote for the really stupid candidate when you go to the polls. In fact, Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz recently noted that many Big Media pundits are so upset by Bush's showing in the polls that they have begun writing columns suggesting he not only is unqualified, but a moron to boot.

He cited The New York Times' Maureen Dowd, The New Republic's Martin Peretz, The Boston Globe's Tom Oliphant, Slate Editor Michael Kinsley and Nation magazine's David Corn as some of those bemoaning the cerebral deficiencies of George W. He could just as easily have added another battalion of names including nationally syndicated columnists Molly Ivins, Tom Teepen, Richard Cohen and Marianne Means.

Now, no one would suggest that George W. Bush is a later-day Thomas Jefferson or Ben Franklin. He probably won't be invited to join the Austin chapter of Mensa. He does, at times, have difficulty constructing a simple sentence. Gore isn't much better. At times, indeed, he is even worse.

Truth be told, the leading third-party candidates - Ralph Nader, Pat Buchanan and libertarian Harry Browne - are all more articulate and less mealy mouthed than either Bush or Gore.

Yet there's something unseemly about major journalists suggesting either major party candidate is a moron or worse. It's a sign of political desperation and, perhaps despair, when they abandon discussion of the issues and launch ad hominem attacks merely to appease their ideology.

Both Gore and Bush are reasonably in-

## Editorial Viewpoint

### Should we have RU-486 on campus?

With the approval of the abortion pill RU-486, many colleges and universities have been faced with the difficult decision of prescribing the drug in university health centers. Although the majority remain undecided, several universities - almost moments within the approval of the drug - openly announced that they would not support the RU-486 pill, which seems as though not much consideration was given to all to the pros and cons of this pill.

The main reason the already decided universities are not supporting the pill is mostly because of medical reasons rather than moral and ethical reasons, however the universities have an obligation to the students that pay fees to provide them with adequate health care, abortion or no abortion.

First one must look at the fact that if health care clinic's are justifying not offering the RU-486 pill due to lack of personnel and trained physicians, then they need to strongly consider training more physicians and hiring more personnel for other medical purposes other than an abortion pill.

Most university health care clinics have less than two Medical Doctors on staff, which is a frightening thought, considering that is (in the case of our campus health clinic) one Medical Doctor to 10,000 stu-

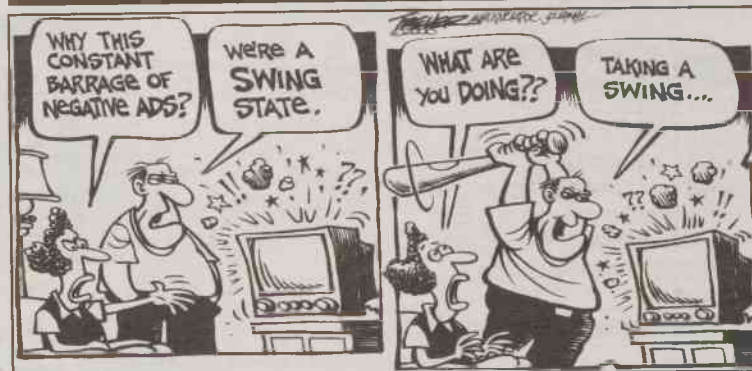
dents. Granted, most of all student health visits can be handled by a nurses assistant, but generally, more than one doctor on staff would prove to be beneficial for everyone.

Secondly, when a campus like our own is composed of 60 percent females, campus health clinics have a greater responsibility to accommodate a woman's need for personal health care especially since the university health clinic serves as the primary source of health care to many college students. Not prescribing the RU-486 pill does nothing but hurt female college students that depend on their health care clinic for all types of treatment.

If a health care clinic is going to offer birth control pills, condoms, and the morning after pill, then they should also be prepared to offer the RU-486 pill. Students depend on a health care clinic that can provide the services any average doctor's office can offer, but are there to strictly serve college students. College health care clinic's should not be so quick to decide against something new just because it goes against the norm, and instead ask the student body, see what they want, and if necessary make the changes needed to better serve the students who are in fact the ones who the health care clinics are there for.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

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telligent, reasonably good men with a penchant for occasionally misspeaking. After a grueling 18-hour day on the campaign trail, peppered by questions from reporters, it's a wonder they don't make even more bloopers.

America's voters have a better understanding of this than Big Media with its

"gotcha" mentality. The differences between the two candidates that they'd like to hear more about between now and Election Day are substantive ones on Social Security, military preparedness, health care, tax-cuts and other major issues.

Big Media should get back to basics.