

# World & Nation

## Election, cont. from page 1

there, trying to win the Sunshine State's 25 electoral votes. Pre-election polls indicated that the state was leaning slightly in the Republican direction, but that the race would be a close one.

No one knew how close.

Before the polls had even closed on Election Day, the media announced that, based on exit polls and early returns, and despite the expectations, Gore had won in Florida.

Several hours later, they took it back.

When all the ballots were counted, Bush led the state by 1,784 votes. Out of the six million Floridians who voted, 1,784 votes is less than one half of one percent.

The narrow margin kicked off an automatic computer recount. When the recount was complete, Bush led by a mere 327 votes, according to the Associated Press. 327 votes is less than .015% of the state's total.

And still, the saga continues.

Florida voters and Gore campaign officials have both expressed doubts about the validity of the totals. Gore's campaign has called for a hand recount of votes in four Florida counties, counties in which the Democrat already has a strong lead. In each of these counties, officials recorded six to ten thousand "under-votes"-ballots on which no markings were detectable by machine count. Gore's hope is that many of these ballots will, when examined by hand, be countable. In Democratic counties, the majority of the additional votes should be his.

And then there is the issue of the so-called "butterfly ballots." Used

vote for Attila the Hun...I can't tell you how I feel. I can't think of any words that are permissible to say and still be called a lady."

Even Buchanan admits that his total in West Palm Beach, 3400 votes, was inordinately high. Having never campaigned in the area, Buchanan did not expect many votes at all.

In addition, the "butterfly ballot," so called because it lists candidates on either side of a central margin, does not conform to two Florida state ballot laws.

Several West Palm Beach voters have filed for a re-vote, but no court action can be taken until the totals are final and certified, after absentee ballots are counted on Friday.

In addition to the questionable ballot, others are calling for a revote for different reasons.

"While there is, over and over again, a call for a recount, in West Palm there must be a first count," Jesse Jackson said of reports that many black voters in Florida were denied access to polls.

Jackson and NAACP president Kweisi Mfume received reports that, in Florida, many African American, Haitian American and Cuban voters were turned away at the polls, being told either there were no more ballots or the polls were closed.

Roadblocks were set up in many predominantly black neighborhoods to prevent and intimidate black voters from going to the polls, reports say. "Haitian Americans were denied assistance in the voting booth, which they can expect and accept by law," Jackson said. Many Mexican Americans and Cubans received similar treatment. Haitian American Jude Esperance (who did not vote for president for fear of accidentally punching the wrong box) said, "I am very frustrated and I feel cheated. I wanted to participate in democracy, but no one was willing to show me how."

The Democratic National Committee has set up a hotline for voter complaints and received 6,000 calls in Palm Beach County alone. The NAACP is currently holding public hearings and plans to take legal action.

### The Electoral College

Despite the millions of votes cast every four years, only 538 people actually elect the president of the United States.

In the vast majority of elections, the 538 people who make up the Electoral College choose the same candidate as the entire population of voters. However, because even a small

majority of each state's popular vote can win the entire slate of Electoral College votes in most states, it is possible for one candidate to win the popular vote and another to win the Electoral College and the presidency.

This year could be the fourth time in the history of the country that the Electoral College vote and the popular vote have been at odds.

As it has in the past, this situation is leading some voters to doubt the effectiveness of the Electoral College. "The result of this election, if it holds, would mean that a quarter of a million vote surplus for Mr. Gore nationally is worth less than [327 votes] in Florida. Why?" asked Neal Pierce, co-author of *The Electoral College Primer 2000*.

"Why?" is the question that many have been prompted to ask since November 7th. Why is it that Vice President Gore got more votes than Governor Bush, and yet Bush may still win the election? Why do we have an electoral college at all?

"Many see the system as a creaky anachronism, a last minute deal that perversely endured and is ill-suited to modern politics," said Robin Toner of the New York Times.

And yet, in 1969, when the House of Representatives and President Nixon attempted to overthrow the system, the Senate voted to keep the College just that way it was.

Many smaller states count on the Electoral College to increase their influence in choosing the president. Votes are assigned based on how many delegates each state has in the House of Representatives and the Senate combined. While representation in the House is based on population, in the Senate each state is equal. Thus, the Electoral College allows smaller states to have more of an impact than they would if the popular vote were the only factor.

"The Electoral College is a train wreck waiting to happen," said Lawrence A. Tribe, Harvard Law School's expert on Constitutional law. Although the system has lasted for over 200 years, through 42 presidential elections, it seems as though the wreck may have just occurred.

### The Third Party

The issue of the third party was central in this election. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader is thought to have been a major influence, although he did not achieve his goal of 5% (of the popular vote) which would have ensured government campaign funding in the 2004 election. Nader, however, still feels successful. "Whatever happens to third parties in terms of winning or not winning elections, this is the beginning of the end of the end of the two-party duopoly," Nader said.



An elderly woman in Florida holds up one of the misleading ballots that caused thousands to vote for Buchanan instead of Gore.

Nader's presence in the election has come under fire from Democratic supporters. "His standing has been severely diminished by his actions. People basically view him as having been on a narcissistic, self-serving, Sancho Panza, windmill tilting excursion," said Amy Isaacs, national director of Americans for Democratic Action.

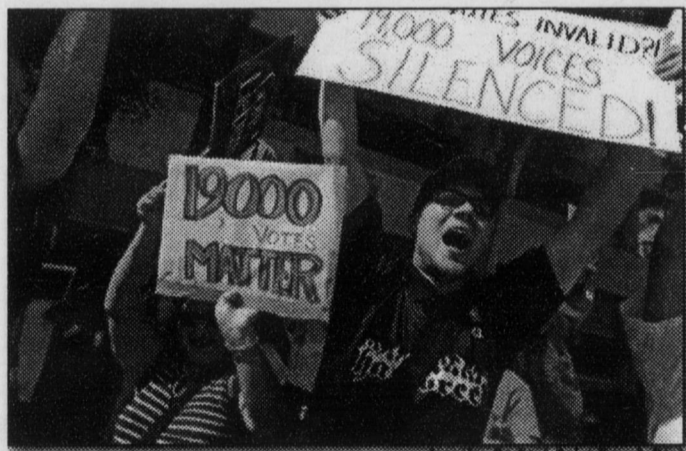
Just how big was Nader's influence? In states that might have gone to Gore, such as Colorado, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, Washington state, and Wisconsin, Nader made a strong showing. Democratic supporters claim many of these states went to Bush as a result of Nader's influence. In Florida, where the margin between Gore and Bush is just over 300 votes, Nader garnered 96,900 votes.

Nader dismisses all attacks on his campaign, refusing to apologize. "I did not run for president to help elect on or the other of the two major candidates," Nader said.

This is exactly the scenario many Democratic supporters warned against before the election, attempting to entice many Nader supporters to vote for Gore, claiming "a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush." Nader supporter John Gehan, 51, of St. Paul, Minnesota was undaunted by such claims. "Those sort of attacks on him (Nader) and me solidified my vote for Nader. If Gore loses, it's because Gore is a lousy candidate, not because I voted Nader," Gehan said.

While it is not certain how this election will influence the future of American democracy, there will definitely be repercussions. In addition to the electoral college and third party issues, the closeness of this race has solidified the truth in the statement that every vote counts. "I have two children in college...having lived through this election, I am absolutely certain that neither of them will not vote in any election as long as they live," said Chris Griffin, West Central Florida chair for the Gore campaign.

Instead of a new administration, Election Day 2000 brought chaos, protests, and lawsuits. But amid the controversy, the President himself has remained calm. As the whole country anxiously awaits a decision, Clinton, whose presidential worries will soon be over, assures us: "America will be just fine."



Thousands of protesters took to the streets when news of the botched election was announced.

only in West Palm Beach county, this new style of ballot apparently confused many voters into casting their votes for Reform Candidate Pat Buchanan rather than Gore.

Despite the fact that the ballot was designed to make voting easier for elderly voters by increasing the size of the print, and despite the fact that representatives of both major parties approved it, many voters expressed complaints.

"The very thought that I might have voted for Buchanan is enough to make me lose sleep for weeks," said voter Holly Howell. "I'd rather