

Point

Counterpoint

# What did Ross Perot accomplish in Election '92?

Over the years there have been many third party candidates running in the Presidential elections. This year was no different. Fifteen candidates actually ran for the Oval Office, but the public only heard about the usual Republican and Democratic candidates plus a Texas billionaire, Ross Perot.

Since the media is a profit-driven industry, it operates on business principles and promotes whoever can help them the most. This year the media showed America a frightening aspect: that democracy can be bought through media exposure.

George Bush and Bill Clinton went on road trips around the county to promote their campaigns. Ross Perot ran thirty-minute infomercials on national T.V. The people never really met him. He never visited North Carolina or the other undecided states. He never got out and met the voters, yet he claimed a mandate from the people.

If any other candidate had pulled out in the middle of the race and then re-entered, the press would normally either ignore or crucify him. When Ross Perot got back into the race after dropping out, the press not only welcomed him back with open arms, but continued to give him air time for his story of a Republican conspiracy.

If you watched any political commercials this year, you might have noticed that all of Perot's commercials were on at prime-time air slots. He was competing with Coke and AT&T for air time. Bush and Clinton ran their ads during the day, especially near news times. The viewer audiences for the two time slots are not comparable.

This year Ross Perot did not win any electoral votes, but he did open up the possibility of a media-based national campaign that ignores the people individually. The citizens of the United States should be wary of anyone telling them through T.V. appearances that he can solve their problems. We must make sure the candidates stay in touch with the real people of the country - the people who elect them.

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For the first time in 80 years a third party had a strong showing in the presidential race. Ross Perot captured almost 20% of the popular vote in the election last week.

Many of my friends said they voted for Perot because they did not like George Bush or Bill Clinton. For the first time, many people felt that there was a viable choice aside from the regular Democratic and Republican candidates.

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Instead of not voting, many people voted for Perot to show that they disliked the other candidates. Perot supporters are rallying for him to run in 1996. The media are asking him if he would lead a third party. He says he will do what the volunteers want him to do. One supporter said the new party could be called United We Stand, America, and the symbol would be the American Eagle.

Perot was not what many call a normal politician. He spent his own money (about \$60 million) on his campaign and said that he wanted to be the voice of the American people. He said that he had no personal goal to become involved in politics. He said that if he won the presidency, he did not want to be paid. He also stayed away from negative campaigning, providing infomercials instead. In the debates he forced the candidates to talk about the issues, not each other. One issue that he brought out was the deficit. When asked about what kind of experience he had, he commented that he did not have the experience of running up a \$4 trillion debt.

Although I did not support Perot, I think his entering the race benefited overall. Voter turn-out was stronger this year and I attribute that to Ross Perot. Some people say that he was not good for the race because he took votes away from the candidates that were more likely to win the election. I disagree. I think he brought in more votes. People who are dissatisfied with the status quo saw Perot as an alternative. On 20/20 Friday, Barbara Walters in an interview with Perot said people voted for Perot out of "anger at the dysfunction of Washington." Perot offered a fresh outlook on the presidency.

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