
Editor's Corner

What must the electorate know of a candidate's public career and private life in order to make a well reasoned choice? When do the concerns of the public and the media cease being reasonable and constitute an invasion of privacy?

At the annual meeting of the National Capital Area Political Science Association, Martin Tolchin of the *New York Times* described the paper's survey of presidential contenders. The *New York Times*, said Tolchin, tried to reconstruct each presidential candidate from childhood to the present by meticulously gathering data from public records and the candidates themselves. The materials would be used in a series of candidate profiles. The *New York Times* asked each presidential candidate to provide the paper's research staff with copies of their birth certificates, driver's license, high school and college transcripts, as well as lists of high school and college friends and acquaintances. Candidates were asked if they had ever been arrested, or suffered from a major medical disability. Each candidate was also asked to give the *New York Times* permission to review their FBI files.

All the presidential candidates complied with the bulk of the *Times*' requests, save one. Pat Robertson said he would not participate in the survey. Tolchin's presentation was interrupted by a member of the audience. "I am outraged," said the listener. "By what right does the *New York Times* pry into the private lives of the presidential candidates?" "We are," she added, "looking for a president not a priest!" Like this issue's symposium, the concerned listener questioned whether the "search for character" in the 1988 presidential primaries had not erased the line between private lives and public careers. She will, however, find little comfort in the articles by Buchanan, Elving and Levinson.

Buchanan argues that candidates for

public office should be judged on character, competence and issue positions. The question of character, moreover, should be decided upon early in the campaign. If not, issues of character will befuddle the public's ability to judge the competence of candidates, as well as understand their positions on issues.

Elving suggests that the idealized images that candidates build of themselves invite the close scrutiny of reporters eager to show that a particular candidate is simply "too good to be true." The candidate who seeks to elude the press by seeking legal protection of a "right to privacy" is virtually defenseless, states Levinson. Private lives appear to have no place in public careers.

Features

Two articles in the "Features" section also deal with the 1988 presidential campaign. Henry E. Brady and Theodore Rueter "soaked and poked" in the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, respectively, and share their observations. Finally, Brams and Fishburn elaborate upon the ability of approval voting to avoid the lowest common denominator.

Annual Meeting Preview

This issue contains the preliminary program of the 1988 APSA Annual Meeting. The meeting will be held in Washington, DC from September 1 to 4. If you plan to attend the annual meeting, also consult the winter 1988 issue of *PS* for the preliminary program of the International Political Science Association's 14th World Congress. The World Congress will begin August 28 and overlap with the APSA Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 1.

Annual meeting participants should also take note of the change in the schedule of

the APSA Book Exhibit. To enable World Congress participants to attend the exhibit, the book exhibit will open Wednesday, August 31. The exhibit's hours on

Wednesday through Saturday will be 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. The APSA Book Exhibit will not be open on Sunday, September 4.



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