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Douglasville, Ga 30135

Dear Mr. Lamb;

I'm writing you because I think you're the only one who won't throw my letter in a wastepaper basket. I'm enclosing an article that I feel strongly about. I am ashamed of our corrupt democracy, where money, instead of morals, runs our government. I don't think our government is much better than the notorious history of Italian governments, ^{which} ~~that~~ are a tangled mass of corruption & injustice. I believe it migrated to America!

I'm not the wisest person but I'd like

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to offer a suggestion that could very helpful
to Americans.

Why can't every representative be required
to answer a questionnaire about issues? There
could be a list of issues with yes + no answers.
Then ^{the} following pages (with corresponding numbers)
could explain reasons why a representative
takes a certain stand. These questionnaires
could be picked up at a local courthouse, or
someone could mail out the questionnaires to homes
when people call + request them.

I think it would be democracy in its PUREST
form !!! Everyone would know where their

representatives ^{or candidates} stand + make an informed vote on who they want elected! What could possibly be more honest + forthright?

If a candidate has too many negatives with a certain voter, he elects another candidate, Or if a certain voter has a very strong opinion about a certain issue, then he selects someone that represents him. The voter can weigh in his own mind if certain issues are weightier than others, + make an informed decision.

I don't think there's a great need to rattle off a list of credentials to impress people on how a candidate will perform. All that needs

to be done is to have a series of round table discussions between several candidates!

People ^{would} love it! They like talk shows, don't they? Why people couldn't wait to tune in to the drama of politicians vying for favor!!!

The thing I hated so much during the last election was the dry, tense, interrogation of Bush + Dukakis! How degrading ^{it is} to grill the next president of the U.S! Like he is on a quiz show earning points!!

I don't feel too bad not being a wise person, because I'm not an educated fool who knows EVERYTHING about what people want!!!

But I do have a practical knowledge that comes from everyday living. How could anyone really enjoy grilling presidential candidates except "the grillers", or someone who's a little bit sadistic?? Does pressure really show off a candidate's attributes? I think it is quite the opposite. It is not real life.

Any ordinary person would know that you can best judge a candidate by how he ~~interacts~~ interacts with other people, after all, that is the reality of what the president's job is!!

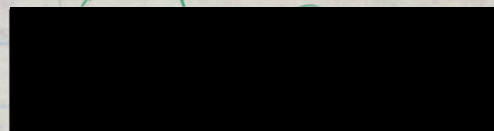
Please give America the chance to judge ~~a~~ candidates, just as they would judge a neighbor, friend,

or colleague. By simply ^{having them} interacting with others,
+ putting their views in black + white.

This kind of honesty, friendliness, and
tact in politics would be like a breath of
fresh air + a refreshing drink of spring water.

It would be democracy you could cheer about!

Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

David S. Broder

Reconnecting politics and government in America

WASHINGTON — A word of warning to regular readers of this column. There's a subject on which I intend to become a crank.

No one can go to Eastern Europe in this season of its liberation, as I have just done, and come home uninspired by the power of democracy as a universal ideal. It would be grotesque, at such a moment, to watch without protest the strangulation or distortion of democracy in the United States — which symbolizes successful and sustained self-government to so much of the world.

Rather, as 1989 was a year of victory for freedom in the world, each of us must do what we can to assure that 1990 is a year of renewal for democracy here at home. It is time for those of us in the world's freest press to become activists, not on behalf of a particular party or politician, but on behalf of the process of self-government. It is time to expose the threats to that process and support the efforts to get rid of them.

We cannot allow the 1990 elections to be another exercise in public disillusionment and political cynicism. Three elements are crucial — and in each, the press has a significant role to play.

The first is improving the quality of candidates and encouraging the spread of political competition. It is already late to be recruiting for the 1990 contest, but not too late for the parties to ascertain — and news organizations to publicize — where gaps exist on the 1990 ballots. Every one of those gaps that can be filled by able people before the filing deadline is a victory for democracy.

As journalists, we need to acknowledge that our vigor in exposing politicians' shortcomings has made many talented men and women wary of seeking and holding public office. We should not relax our vigilance, but

We cannot allow the 1990 elections to be another exercise in public disillusionment.

we should be sure that we balance the books by saluting those who strengthen the nation by serving in elective office — or simply by challenging the current officeholders vigorously enough at election time that they are forced to explain and defend their records.

Second, we have to help bring the financing of campaigns back into the hands of the people who are represented, rather than letting it continue to be controlled and manipulated by those seeking special treatment from the government. We do not have to wait for another scandal to realize that the purchase of access to elected officials through large-scale fund-raising endangers representative government and breeds justifiable public distrust.

One way of getting campaign finance back into the hands of the people is through a tax-form checkoff system, with reasonable limits on campaign spending, as we already do in presidential campaigns. Another is to require that candidates raise their funds, in small sums, in the jurisdictions they represent. A third is to challenge and empower political parties to raise the money their nominees need.

The best mix of methods is debatable. But the need to clean up the present system's corruption is so clear to so many of the politicians themselves that this must be the year for action.

Finally, the campaign dialogue must be rescued from the electronic demagoguery fa-

vored by too many hired-gun political consultants. Campaigning must be reconnected to governmental decisions voters really care about.

The public is sick and tired of being assaulted for weeks before Election Day with horrifying recitals of the opposing candidate's supposed record on some issue — which magically disappears once votes have been counted. That's fine for the consultants, who collect their fees and go off to another campaign in another state. But voters are cheated of their right to hear their own concerns discussed and have their own views registered.

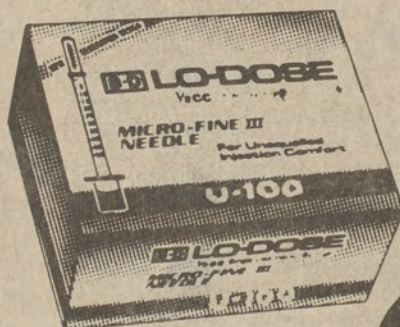
This is the issue on which the press must take primary responsibility. Consultants and their clients plainly are not going to clean up their own act as long as the political marketplace rewards such tactics with success. Legal restrictions are anathema to those of us who fear governmental regulation of political speech. So the press will have to step forward to police the campaign process, very much as we try to catch cheating and chicanery in government.

That means that we must be far more assertive than in the past on the public's right to hear its concerns discussed by the candidates — in ads, debates and speeches — and far more conscientious in reporting those discussions when they take place.

We have to help reconnect politics and government — what happens in the campaign and what happens afterward in public policy — if we are going to have accountability by our elected officials and genuine democracy in this country.

In the world of 1990, anything less is unacceptable.—(c1990.)

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