

Candidates are talking about the issues

Media Myth: An inaccurate or misleading opinion that has become standard wisdom through constant repetition by newspaper and television pundits.

If nothing else, the first presidential debate should dispel certain media myths that have taken hold in our national consciousness. Namely, they are the mistaken ideas that people vote for presidents based on vague, insubstantial reasons and that the candidates have avoided being specific on the issues.

Frankly, neither George Bush nor Michael Dukakis is someone you'd want to crawl into bed with. So what else *is* there but the issues?

No one is going to vote for Bush because of what his advisers liked to call a warm, human presentation — Bush rarely spoke a complete sentence without stumbling over his words. And people aren't going to flock to the son-of-Greek-immigrants-but-still-very-rich Dukakis because of his intelligent, businesslike manner that seemed cold and aloof to the rest of us.

And why should they? The Republican and Democratic nominees have shown clear and pointed disagreement on a wide range of issues.

Take national health insurance. Dukakis is for requiring all employers to provide health insurance for their workers. He believes most good companies already do and that they're unwillingly subsidizing those that don't through higher payments. Bush thinks the only result of a mandatory policy like that would be to make small companies less competitive and put people out of jobs.

Then there's the capital gains tax. Bush says that history is on his side in proving that lowering this tax would increase revenue and productivity. Dukakis

Michael Giltz

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feels it is another example of a tax break that only benefits the very rich.

What about the military? The deficit makes it inevitable that the next president will have to eliminate some expensive programs. Dukakis has explicitly stated which weapon systems he would dump, while Bush prefers to remain mum, claiming that he doesn't want to give away any valuable bargaining chips for when he must deal with the Soviets.

Child care? Dukakis wants to create a national child care system. Bush prefers to put money back into the pockets of parents, so they can decide how best to spend it.

Abortion? Bush would allow it only in cases of rape, incest or danger to the mother's life. Dukakis feels it is a difficult, important decision that should be left to the woman involved. Gun control? Dukakis is for it, Bush opposed. Foreign policy? How long have you got?

One could go on, but the point is made. The candidates have vast differences in every area of our domestic and foreign affairs, differences that they have stressed forcefully and repeatedly. And anyone who thinks it doesn't matter who sets up shop in the Oval Office simply hasn't been paying attention for the past eight years.

Michael Giltz is an English major, writer for Applause, head of the RUPC film committee and all-around good egg.