

editorial

Lesser-of-two-evils is good politics in nuclear age

A BASIC problem with the American two-party system is the lack of choices often presented to voters. With only two candidates realistically running for each office, it's unlikely that a diversity of viewpoints will be represented.

Take the presidential race. Neither candidate is willing to *cut* defense spending. Neither candidate is seriously interested in reducing the size of the federal government. Both say we should "get tough" with the Soviets. Both use hackneyed economic policies which offer little hope for poor people or for revitalization of basic industries.

So, to me, both are "evils." Faced with such feelings, most voters usually choose to not vote.

But there is at least one reason why voting is always crucial in national races: survival.

Human life on Earth is endangered by the nuclear arms race. The arms race has a life of its own, out of the control of politicians, generals, and technocrats. The risk of accidental nuclear war is high; over 50 false

alarms have appeared on the Pentagon super-computers in the past few years, and the Soviets--whose decisions do control our own lives--have even less reliable computers.

The arms race has evolved to the point where when a crisis appears, there is not time to decide. It takes only a half hour for the ICBM's to cross the Earth, only six minutes for the Pershing II's or SS-20's to reach Moscow or London. Soon our weapons may be launched automatically, instead of by the decisions of our overwrought leaders.

Even if the decisions are controlled by our leaders, can we realistically expect them to act rationally in a crisis? The Soviets feel surrounded and backed into a corner by hostile forces on all sides. They are paranoid--perhaps with good reason. Our current President considers the Soviets the root of all evil, the "Evil Empire," and has long viewed (incorrectly) all foreign relations in terms of capitalist/communist conflict. With such paranoia and such ideology, how can rationality--the firm conviction that war will kill everybody

equally-- rule over the impetus to make war?

For that reason, Mondale is the lesser of two evils. He opposes all the new nuclear weapons because he realizes they are designed for a first strike--designed to win a nuclear war, ridiculous as that may seem. He favors a negotiated "quick freeze" to at least temporarily stop building more weapons. Most important is that Mondale comes to the job with less ideological baggage, a better ability and willingness to negotiate, and a greater possibility of easing the tensions which can lead to war.

Reagan wants to build 15,000 more bombs in the next four years. He's pushing for a one trillion dollar Star Wars system that most scientists say can't work. He appoints arms control negotiators who have publicly opposed all negotiations. He makes no effort to ease international tensions.

Reagan continually berates the capacities of our armed forces, despite the opinions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that ours are far superior. We constantly hear that we're behind when

the facts are that NATO has always outspent the Warsaw Pact and the U.S. started and has always led the arms race. Since 1944, the U.S. has caused every escalation, save one, in the arms race.

In the two other national races applicable to Gunnison County, the choices are clear cut. Strang supports more nukes, Mitchell opposes them. Armstrong is more pro-nuke than even Reagan and is a main supporter of the expensive Star Wars program, despite his alleged fiscal conservatism. Armstrong consistently receives one of the lowest arms control ratings of anyone in Congress.

Most people in America seem to base their votes on leadership, personality, or a combination of issues like economics, morality, or special interests. I argue that now is a time to vote on one issue alone. There is no more general interest than survival. Whatever your special interest--be it abortion, the environment, the deficit, or crime--remember: Your issue is lost if there's a nuclear war.

--Gary Sprung