Voyager One and spectacular science

Last Wednesday, scores of MIT students huddled around MITV monitors to watch Voyager I encounter Saturn. Saturn made the front page of every major newspaper and was featured nightly on the evening news for the better part of a week. Public interest was so riveted by the fifty of the one-second challenge. The public was fascinated by the discovery of Saturn's rings, and an automated space laboratory. The public badly needed the discovery of a new planet, and perhaps a new form of life. The public was desperate to think of new ways to explore the universe and on the place of science as a fantastic intellectual endeavor. However, behind the surface wave of enthusiasm, there must a subtle undercurrent of concern. Science spectacles like Voyager are wonderful ways to get people thinking about science. They may also be discriminatory against less spectacular but equally or more valuable research. There is more to consider when one is evaluating the merit of a scientific proposal than its public relations value. In an age when politics, education, and culture are more and more frequently tailored to and packaged for the mass media, we must fear for the time when our research will remain vital. When Voyager attracts large awestruck crowds at a setting like MIT, we are all too often autoindustrial appeal, the national scientific community will not remain vital dictated solely by the marketability of dazzling pictures or by sheer in-education and culture are more and more frequently tailored to and packed for the mass media, we must fear for the time when our research. However, behind the surface wave of enthusiasm, there must a subtle undercurrent of concern. Science spectacles like Voyager are wonderful ways to get people thinking about science. They may also be discriminatory against less spectacular but equally or more valuable research. There is more to consider when one is evaluating the merit of a scientific proposal than its public relations value. In an age when politics, education, and culture are more and more frequently tailored to and packaged for the mass media, we must fear for the time when our research will remain vital dictated solely by the marketability of dazzling pictures or by sheer in-education and culture are more and more frequently tailored to and packed for the mass media, we must fear for the time when our research will remain vital dictated solely by the marketability of dazzling pictures or by sheer in-education and culture are more and more frequently tailored to and packed for the mass media, we must fear for the time when our research will remain vital dictated solely by the marketability of dazzling pictures or by sheer in.

On November 4, I became an elderly species. I am a liberal — and I saw my future being threatened by both the right and the left. The threat liberals present in their own future well-being may prove more serious than the short-term danger posed by the Reagan landslide. The election results are a clear indication that the American people are more concerned with the state of the economy than that of the environment, the poor, or other traditional liberal policy issues. Liberals who glibly predict that their rich benefactors will return to the fold from their premature journey into funding the arts and humanities are fooling themselves. Even if the backlash against the Moral Major- and the National Conserva-tive Political Action Committee succeeds in killing those groups forever, the conservative trend will remain. Some conservatives see the election strengthening the future of liberalism. The best and brightest of our generation, so the reasoning goes, will respond to the Republican landslide by flocking to Washington to save the world. Even William Safire recommended last week that young people planning a career in politics become liberals. This will probably be the only time in my life I fervently hope that people take William Safire's advice. Even if these eager young liberals do take up the challenge and head for Washington, it is doubtful that they will find any traditional liberals left to join. Already, Senators Gary Hart, Paul Tsongas and other members of the Upper House's shrinking liberal delegations are talking of a "new liberalism." The shape this new philosophy will take, and how it will be related to what must now be called the "old liberalism," are not yet clear. As far as I can tell, this new liberalism will be based in great part on the curse of many current Democratic bureaucrats: cost/benefit analysis. The strategy seems to be that the Republican budget-cutting hordes can be kept from the social programs by using cost/benefit to justify these programs' existence. Most liberals would be happy to be able to numerically prove that their pet programs work; few believe it can be done. It is no small task to quantify the economic benefits of cleaner air or quanti-fy the edge on the social value of breaking the poverty cycle. Cost/benefit analysis is a rationalization which liberals will probably not be able to hide behind for very long. The question remains, what will they do when this strategy fails? Chances are they will be forced to turn to the right. Conservative groups are already threatening liberals, calling for them to toe the line or else. The consequences of "or else" are, of course, illustrated by the election defeats of Frank Church, George McGovern, Birch Bayh, et al. The political instinct to save one's skin will give the new liberals much to think about.

Compromise almost inevitably leads to further erosion. Political programs may be amenable to compromise, political values are not. If there is a less for liberals to learn from this conservative victory, it is tenacity. Truly believing in the value and necessity of social equity requires support that philosophy through good times and bad. Liberals in-ning to the right to salvage some of their programs may end up dropping over the cliff and losing everything. This is not to say there are no conservative programs liberals can support. Government waste is not justifiable in any political philosophy. Some programs, such as job training efforts, may have quantifiable outcomes. But in general, liberals may have to get used to the idea of being on the losing side of Congressional votes. This, however, is a far bet-ter fate than being on the winning side of a vote — but the losing side of a consensus.

Stephanie Pollack

Liberal costs and benefits

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