In World of Politics, Advertising Has a Place

Column by Matthew H. Hensch

I've been walking around campus wearing a "Bill Clinton for President" shirt quite a lot lately. Sometimes I get strange looks, but most of the time, if anyone notices it at all, they respond positively, saying they support the candidate as well.

That surprised me at first. I had expected people to react with a certain amount of disdain, as if I had let myself become part of a horde. It's not that about how happy she is, yesterday, when a city is, but I got over that. I still won't join the Democratic party, I don't like to get involved in any kind of political movement in which I allowed myself to conform perfectly with a horde. It's not that I expected people to react with a certain amount of disdain, as if I had let myself become part of a horde. It's not that about how happy she is, yesterday, when a city is, but I got over that. I will wear my Bill Clinton shirt for a while.

Instead of making me feel secure, political consensus spooked me, and still does. And the demonstrations and rallies ignited always seemed pointless. I don't believe that aggressive "in your face" protesting tactics and mock demonstrations can change minds in the same way that effective editorial journalism can.

Wearing a Clinton shirt, compressing all of my political stands into one simplified expression of support, seemed contrary to anything I believe in. But I got over that, yesterday, when a citizen stopped me in a stairwell and remarked about how happy she was to see that she was not alone in supporting Clinton-Gore. And then I let me. This act of political consensus did serve a purpose. It let other takeway Clinton supporters know that they were not alone, that others supported him as well, and that because of this Clinton did indeed have a chance to win.

Wearing a shirt, displaying a banner, or attending a rally does have a place in politics — such acts of consensus help a political belief gain credibility. This is its role. When an idea has achieved this credibility, signs and banners lose their importance, and lose their honorable character — standing more as a selfish sign of pride for supporters than a beacon to attract others.

I would like to see Clinton and Gore taken seriously. That is, I have walked around campus wearing a shirt declaring unflinching loyalty to any candidate's political philosophy, but I will wear my Bill Clinton shirt with pride.