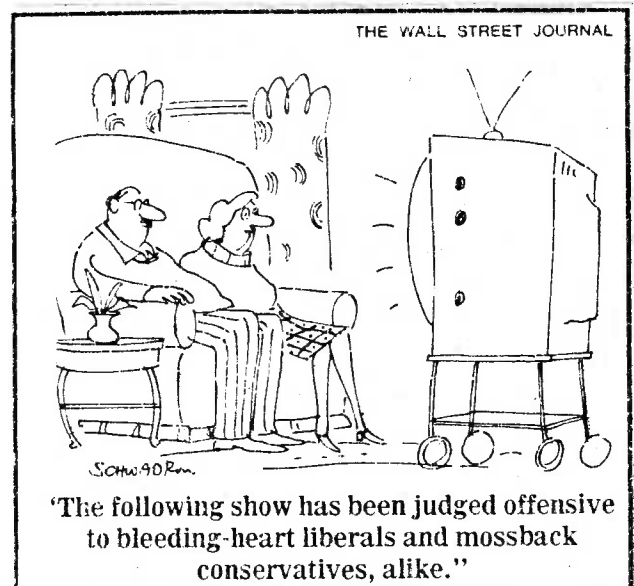


THE REAL ISSUES ARE....

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Tomorrow is the first Bush/Dukakis Debate, and this Thinksheet is my effort to clarify in my mind, before they confuse me, what the real issues are.... It's like being a skillful book-reader: before beginning to read, you reflect on the title and, if any, the subtitle: what's the book about? how, do you think, the author's gone about treating this subject? how, if you'd been the author, would you have treated it?....This WSJ cartoon uses the humor of reversal: the show is about to do the reverse of what the Duke & the Dude will try to do. The show doesn't mind offending 'most everybody, but the Presidential debaters must put their feet down hard (so they aren't wimps) where there are no toes (so they don't "give unnecessary offense," as the saying goes). You can offend some of the people some of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you'd better try to offend none of the people (in this case, 100,000,000 of us) on prime time....Just one more preliminary observation: a candidate who comes on strong, "having the courage of his convictions" (as a good old saying has it), he's in double danger: he offends those of opposite conviction, and he frightens some who agree with him into thinking "I wouldn't want to be on the other side of that one; if he feels that strong about that, he probably feels as strong on some conviction I disagree with him on--and then would I vote for him? And if not, should I take a chance on voting for him even though I agree with him on this one?" So many enfranchised chickens out there!....I imagined myself one of the interviewers & came up with these issues in what strikes me, reflecting on the gospel as I now understand it, as the order of importance:



1. **Vision**, without which the people perish. Tell us where you want to go, and move us to go with you. (Big trouble: is either one capable of this?)
2. **The rich/poor widening gap**. What do you intend to do about....
 - ...**education**? (1) For citizenship: should the basic aim of public education be to create American citizens or world citizens? (2) For jobs: given the widening gap between skills-level achieved and skills needed, how radical need school-reform be if we are to avoid a permanent, two-level, classistic society? (3) For life: given the increasing religious & moral ignorance of America's children, what specifically should the public schools do about it, if anything?....Higher education: in view of the widening gap between costs and student ability to pay, what delayed-payment proposal do you favor? How about automatic amortization over the course of one's worklife?
 -**jobs**? Both of you have been promising "good jobs at good wages": since many jobs needing doing can't be called good, how get these jobs done? and where's the money to come from for "good wages" for not-so-good jobs? How can entry-level jobs be helped to pay a living wage, though it can't be "good"? Does the Federal government have any responsibility vis-a-vis job retraining? for moving workers & their families to job-sites, & jobs to where there are people needing them? In Japan & W.Germany, law recognizes the public interest in private economic decisions: do you favor this for us? yes or no, please be specific.
 -**housing**? The building trades, besides being as racist as they can get away with, are as change-resistant as they can get away with: the knowledge is there to build better housing for less, but the will is not. Does the Federal government have any responsibility for motivating the building industry to update itself? As for existing housing, the affordability ratio (house : annual income) is so disadvantageous that scarcely 20% of our people needing housing can afford to purchase it: what are your ideas about that? What about private purchase by families of government-owned housing (as extensively practiced now in Britain's council-housing)? (WSJ yesterday: Highland Park, MI, selling city-owned housing for \$1 a year with \$10,000 to maintain for five years, the housing to be owned by the resident after the fifth year if maintenance has been satisfactory.) Should government in any way encourage private creativity in housing, such as Habitat for Humanity, which President Carter actively supports with money, time, & skills?

....**health care?** Since better Social Security income correlates with a person's having paid in more, should better health-care be available for those able to pay more--and good, basic health-care available to all, regardless of ability to pay? What part, if any, should the Federal government play in (1) regulating health delivery-services (physicians, hospitals, pharmaceutical corporations) & (2) health insurance (Blue Cross//Shield et al)?

3. What part, if any, should ideology (ie, consonance with your philosophy & policies) play in the Presidential appointment of **judges**? What relative weight do you give to protecting liberty & extending justice?

4. In comparison with the private sphere, are there differences in **fiscal responsibility** in the case of government? if so, what are the differences?

(1) What devices do you think most hopeful toward reducing the **national debt**? Or do you think this not too serious, since "we just owe it to ourselves"?

(2) Step by step, what should the Federal government do about the **trade deficit**? What can we do on our own, unilaterally, without trade-protectionism reprisals?

5. **Environmental issues:**

(1) Should the EPA and parallel agencies be given more authority & money for R&D as well as for prosecutorial purposes?

(2) What proportion of attention should be given to (a) front-end (waste-&-pollution prevention), middle (w.-&-p. control), and rear-end (cleanup)?

(3) For resources management, what alliances should exist between government & the private sector?

6. **Foreign policy:** If we should, how should we try to "stop communism"? Specifically how, & in which of its functions & agencies, should we try to strengthen the UN? In our global policing responsibilities, are we now underdoing, overdoing, or doing just about right? In interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, should we use (1) economic sanctions, (2) CIA subversive activities, &/or (3) indirect or direct military action? Under what circumstances should we interfere in the internal affairs of other countries: when we don't like the way they're treating their people, or even some of their people? the way they're treating a neighbor or neighbors? when we dislike their alliances (eg, Nicaragua with Cuba & the USSR)? when we think we can force on them our form of government? when we fear their internal collapse (as our successful invasion of Lebanon in 1958)?

The PENTAGON: Is the present Pentagon % of the Federal Budget about right? What Pentagon % of the GNP do you consider within responsible fiscal policy? Should "the market" (supply/demand equations) play a greater part in Pentagon procurement policies? In the crunch, should the Pentagon share across-the-board reduction or be given preferential treatment vis-a-vis social programs (Social Security, Medicare-Medicaid, et al)? Should all procurement agents have had extensive procurement experience in the private sector? What % should be given, each, to research, development, & production? Should we continue mfg./stockpiling of chemical weapons? Should nukes be phased out in favor of conventional weaponry? What sense, if any, does SDI make? Would you favor dropping production of a flawed weapon even if it would seem politically &/or economically unwise to do so?

7. **Drugs & Crime:** If you favor shifting fear from the people to the criminals, how would you propose to do so? Do our laws "coddle," overprotect, criminals? Are you against police brutality but for police severity? (Recently I was fined \$28 in Vienna for having lost my streetcar ticket; if I'd been a citizen of Austria, I'd have gone to prison. Vienna has, needs, almost no police: when they pounce, they land hard. And the streets are safe for everybody all night.) For what crimes is capital punishment appropriate? Should we aim to become a drug-free, drug-controlled, or drug-legalized society? Should abortion be a crime?

8. **Minorities:** Are you straight meritocratic, or do you favor special job-treatment for citizen categories other than white males (though they are one of the minorities)?