from' Phyllis Schlafly

Let’s Repudiate Argument by Epithet

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Ever since George Bush's stunning come-from-behind victory over Michael Dukakis, we have been deluged by the media with attacks on what they call the “negative advertising” of his 1988 campaign. This media-manufactured revisionist history has made Willie Horton into a household word, although his name was never mentioned in the Bush TV spots run under the direction of Lee Atwater.

All this discussion of questionable tactics reminds me of the story about the candidate who started his campaign by offering to make a deal with his opponent. “Let’s agree to have a clean campaign,” he said. “If you don’t tell any lies about me, I won’t tell the truth about you.”

The 1992 campaign has taken a twist that is far uglier than negative advertising. It is argument by epithet, and Patrick Buchanan has been the chief victim. The word bombs thrown at him include extremist, fascist, race-baiter, hatemonger, anti-Semite, reactionary, isolationist, protectionist, nativist, and even David Duke.

Those who use these personal smear words are not seeking an intellectual or even a political debate on issues. They are using emotion-laden semantics designed to preclude rational discussion.

“Isolationist,” for example, is a semantic weapon to hide from public scrutiny the fundamental difference between Buchanan’s policies to put the interests of Americans first and George Bush’s policies to take us into the New World order. People would surely pick the preservation of U.S. sovereignty rather than United Nations wars and treaties Given that choice, the American and taxpayer-financed foreign aid.

Isolationist is designed to conceal the difference between Buchanan's record of urging the United States to recognize and deal with Boris Ye1tsin, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Croatia and other countries trying to throw off the yoke of Communism, while the Bush-Baker policy was to stand pat and try to shore up the stability of the crumbling Soviet Union and keep Gorbachev in power.

The isolationist epithet is also part of an effort to manufacture a revisionist definition of conservatism which makes support for Bush's Gulf War the litmus test. This attempt “bombed” with the P.X. Kelley TV ad used in Georgia. Conservatives stand for peace through strength, SDI, and patriotic support of our troops, NOT for going to war.

For decades, the banner cry of conservatism was to inveigh against how the Democrats lied us into four wars, all the while promising peace: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. When Barry Goldwater was asked on the 25th anniversary of his presidential race how things would have been different if he had been elected in 1964, he said, “There wouldn't have been a Vietnam War.”

“Racist” and “race-baiter” are obvious smear words to keep out of the 1992 campaign any rational discussion of preferential hiring and testing. But the Quota bill that was vetoed in 1990 and passed in 1991 deserves a national debate in order to give the public the last word.

“Nativist” is a new epithet created to raise another phony issue and then preclude discussion of it. Most people all over the world want to immigrate to the United States, but no candidate of either party is talking about relaxing our immigration laws.

The epithet “anti-Semitic” is obviously designed to carry out a political kill because nobody can survive in politics who is truly anti-Semitic. The epithet “fascist” has no relevance to American politics because Mussolini has been dead for decades and his peculiar brand of state socialism is totally alien to the United States.

The epithet “protectionist” is irrelevant to the 1992 Presidential race. With George Bush lined up with Lee Iacocca and the Japan-bashing automobile dealers, and running ads in Michigan attacking Buchanan's wife for driving a Mercedes, it's hard to find a dime's worth of difference between the candidates. This epithet is designed. to conceal the extent to which “free trade” has come to mean taxpayer subsidies to the politically well-connected export-import industry.

“Extremist” is a favorite liberal epithet, but it's downright peculiar for any so-ca11ed conservative to be using it. After all, that was the chief word-weapon used by the media to savage Barry Goldwater in his 1964 campaign, and real

conservatives believe with Barry that “Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice.”

The interesting thing about the epithet assault against Buchanan is that it is mostly coming from persons who call themselves conservatives. This is not a debate about ideology at all, nor even part of the contest between Bush and Buchanan, but a jealous reaction of other presidential hopefuls to the way Buchanan has seized the leadership of the conservative movement.

There is room in the conservative movement for a variety of spokesmen. But not for those who argue by epithet.