

COMMENTARY

The "no deal" convention gets new leader

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Reform Party convention in Dearborn, Mich., at the end of July was an historic event. It was grassroots, democratic and unbrokered. It was wide open going in, it remained wide open throughout, and it adjourned having made a set of decisions that take the Reform Party from its founding stage to a new phase of self-governance and party building.

You know about the "Raw Deal" - what many Americans called our government's policy under Herbert Hoover and the "New Deal" ushered in by Franklin Roosevelt and then continued as the "Fair Deal" under Harry Truman. I think it's fair to call the Reform Party the "No-Deal." We had a convention free of back room deals, where the delegates - in the

midst of a free flow of ideas and dialogue - made our choices. This may have been the first unbrokered convention of a national political party in nearly a generation. At it, we set a course for our vision of the country - a "No Deal" America - that is governed through democratic process, not partisanship.

Though the news media (these are the folks Governor Jesse Ventura cautioned the delegates not to trust) reports they can't figure out what the Reform Party stands for, we have. We stand for political reform. Pat Choate, the party's 1996 vice-presidential candidate and a good friend, eloquently delineated this vision for the convention together with our other speakers. The Reform Party has emerged over the last several years as the

This Way For Black Empowerment

By Dr. Lenora Fulani



electoral party of America's political reform movement.

This is a broad-based and multi-faceted movement. We saw many of its key leaders represented at the convention - among them, Paul Jacob of U.S. Term Limits, Dane Waters of the Initiative and Referenda Institute and "Granny D." of the campaign finance reform movement. These are the issues that are at the core of the Reform agenda - issues that bind Americans across ideological lines. There is no "cookie-

cutter ideology" in the Reform Party, to quote Minnesota Lt. Governor Mae Schunk; no imposition of ideology of any kind, as Governor Jesse Ventura stressed in his remarks to the convention. Political reform is what unifies the party - something the media misses with its sensationalistic preoccupation with reporting what Ross Perot aptly called the catfights that don't exist.

The election of Jack Gargan for Chair is part and parcel of the party's statement

about the centrality of political reform. Jack is one of the founders of the anti-incumbent movement, a fierce term limits supporter and an outspoken critic of the corruption and hypocrisy of the two parties.

The delegate coalition that elected Jack also has its roots in the political reform movement. It includes Gargan's own followers, many delegates whose first experiences in third party politics were in the pro-democracy New Alliance Party and the Patriot Party, supporters of Jesse Ventura and, of course, many delegates who came into the party through the Perot movement and now favor a post-Perot scenario for the party. With respect to the contest for Vice Chair, my thanks to the delegates who gave me the 45 percent of the

vote in that race. I am gratified by the extent to which those supporters joined me in the Gargan coalition.

It is worth noting that after the Perot campaign of 1992 strongly emphasized economic reform - in particular balancing the federal budget - this issue was quickly taken up and then enacted with bipartisan support. But political reform was and is far more controversial. As Perot pointed out in his remarks to the convention, issues like term limits, limiting the free reign of lobbyists and campaign finance reform, while incorporated into the Contract With America from the independent movement to help the Republicans win control of Congress from the Democrats in 1994, were removed from the Republican

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Carl Rowan's Commentary

GOP candidate's plans blurs line on separation of church and state

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The most under-reported under-discussed political event of July was Texas Gov. George W. Bush's declaration that if he becomes president, he will give federal money and tax breaks to churches and neighborhood groups to help the poor.

Of the few Americans who took note of this remarkable declaration, some immediately raised the alarm of a president violating the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state. "We will send money to fund services," the Texas governor replied, "but the money does not go to fund the religious programs within the institution."

That issue does not bother me, because the U.S. Supreme Court has established that the federal government can give money to churches that provide social services without religious proselytizing.

What does bother me is the possibility that Bush is committed to the conservative Republican goal of reducing the size and scope of government, and that he intends to proceed on the pretense that churches and private charity can do for the needy all the things that government has been doing.

I run a private college scholarship program that I consider a great success. I know of many other private educational help programs that make laudable contributions to America's poor.

But I know that all these programs combined cannot do a fraction of the good that has been done by the Federal Aid to Higher Education Act of 1965. There is no



CARL ROWAN

possible church or private substitute for the loans, the Pell and other grants, that have produced a huge, well-educated American middle class.

The same can be said for Medicaid, food stamps, shelter grants and other governmental programs that lift the level of

life for the country's neediest people. The history of America is replete with evidence that "volunteerism" never meets the needs of those in dire want.

I do not find this definition of "compassionate conservatism" objectionable if Bush simply intends to make churches and private groups more active allies of larger government efforts to aid the poor. It would be nice, for example, if every city had a panel of citizens charged with investigating the work of churches and private groups and saying to the federal government "This one will put federal funds to great use." Or, "This group is all overhead and personal gain and very short on community help. It must not be given taxpayers' dollars."

There is another risk, of course, that Bush could bestow federal largess on churches and private groups in a way that would become political proselytizing or build a Republican base in communities that now give little support to the GOP. I don't want to be overly cynical on this point at the outset, but I do say that this would-be president must tell us a lot more about the details and safeguards of his "bold new approach" to create what he called "a different role for government."

The Black Press: Looking to the future

Jake Oliver

President, National Newspapers
Publishers Association
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Stepping into the future on the foundation of the past. During 1827, in a small office in downtown New York City, against the expressed will of a racially divided nation, slaves and former slaves began publishing *Freedom's Journal* and the Black press was born. Thirty four years before the first shot was fired in the Civil War and 36 years before President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, our forefathers and foremothers had already begun putting pen to paper and lifting their voices in a loud and clear cry for justice.

Our mission today remains the same. In a world oftentimes void of truth, hope and humanity, the Black Press is at its best when it is a champion for justice in a nation not known for racial equality.

It is Black newspapers in large cities and small towns throughout the United States which continue to remind America that she has a long journey before she reaches her full potential and truly becomes "one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all." Much work continues to be done.

That is why the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) exists today and that is the answer we continuously give when we are asked, "Is the Black Press still relevant?"

The Black family being served by the Black Press is as diverse as any other group. They are liberal. They are conservative. They are Democrats. They are Republicans. They play basketball. They play golf. They drive sports utility vehicles. They drive mini-vans. They listen to hip-hop. They listen to opera. They do it all. However, there is little doubt that as we go into the future, such diversity will continue to be mostly visible only in the pages on the Black Press.

The Black community and the millions of readers our newspapers are reaching today is richer, more educated, geographically diverse and both socially and politically more astute. For this reason, the same formulas used in the past for covering and informing our community will not suffice. Over the next decade, the Black Press will be forced to change, along with the other members of the press, to effectively address the challenges and promises offered by the fast paced changes of our information based society.

With more than 210 member newspapers, the NNPA is a significant voice in the discourse on Black issues on the national and, when important, local scenes. With the improvements promised by enhanced technologies, the Black Press will become an even more powerful tool for spreading the news and "the Black positions" on virtually any issue for the entire world to know and understand. No longer need an issue be labeled "Black" as a condition precedent for the Black Press to proffer an opinion.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association has always played an important role in helping America become the best it could be. Early in this century we demanded an end to lynching, fought for the right to vote and buried too many of our brothers and sisters and friends in our national quest for justice. Going forward, the NNPA will continue the battles through the effective use of unified electronic network to "drum" out the word to our communities and the rest of the world. We will speak as a powerful singularity of many voices.

In the new century, our marching orders will still be the same and our vision shall be clearer than ever. When there must be a voice speaking out for what is right for African-American and other minorities, it will be the unified voice of a powerful Black Press through the NNPA which will be loudly heard by the entire listening world.