

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Partisanship poisons confirmation process

Seems the more politicians call for erasing partisanship from the political landscape, the more it seeps into the fabric of this democracy.

Partisan bickering taints all matter of issues: Whether or not Yucca Mountain will become dumping ground for the nation's nuclear waste -- the GOP is for it; the importance of vouchers in education -- the GOP is for it, even though vouchers will do nothing to improve public schools; whether the National Endowment for the Arts -- along with after-school programs, latch-key projects, recreational options and the like -- should be scrapped as the GOP wants; the merits of a now-dead \$792 billion GOP tax cut bill filled with perks for the nation's wealthiest and a now-dead GOP program that would siphon more taxes from the working poor.

For some time now, partisanship has been plaguing Senate confirmation of appointed officials, judicial appointees in particular. Republicans grumbled when President Clinton nominated Bill Lan Lee acting director of the U.S. Civil Rights office. The GOPs lambasted Lee for supporting affirmative action, among other things.

If the Democrats chose, they could call the Republicans to task for its dismal record of confirming judicial appointees, many of whom happen to have been nominated by Democrats.

During the 1997-98 congressional term, there were 92 whites and 31 minorities up for federal court jobs. Only 14 percent of the white nominees failed to gain confirmation. That was mainly due to Senate inaction -- caused by questions about their records -- or because they withdrew their names.

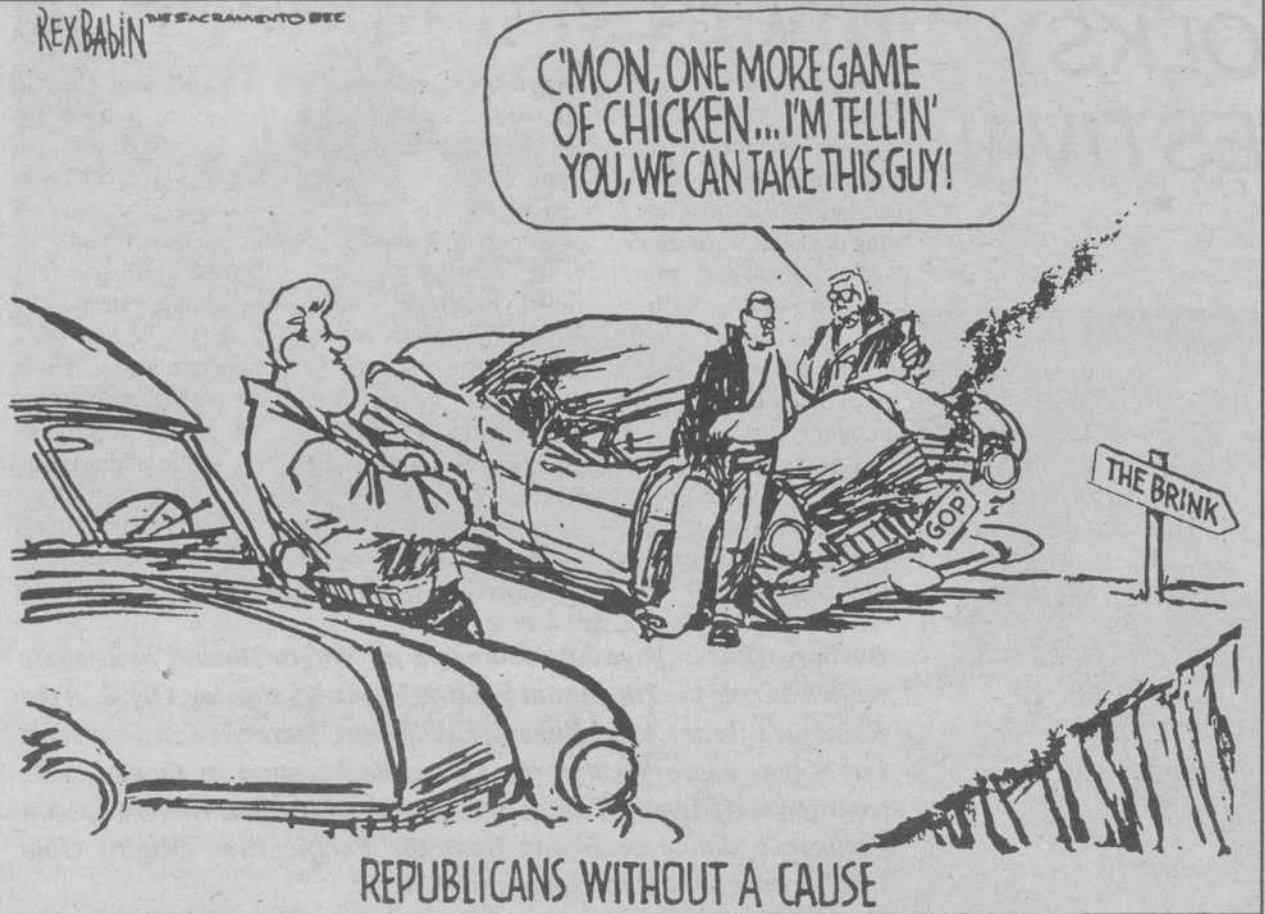
All the minorities have failed to gain confirmation or are still waiting. Some have been waiting for 20 months, others have been on the sidelines the past 44 months. The latest casualty in the partisanship war was black Missouri Judge Ronnie White. President Clinton, who nominated White, called the decision against the judge a "disgraceful act of partisan politics."

"By voting down the first African-American judge to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court, the Republicans have deprived both the judiciary and the people of Missouri an excellent, fair and impartial federal judge."

Republican Missouri Sen. John Ashcroft managed to convince his GOP comrades, many of whom supported White, to couch their support. Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., and Christopher Bond, R-Mo., pulled their support for White -- the trio had greenlighted his confirmation in the Judiciary Committee -- after Ashcroft called into question his record on the death penalty.

Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan, a Democrat, who called White a "highly qualified lawyer and judge," said Ashcroft manipulated the death penalty figures. He claims Ashcroft's appointees have voted more times to reverse death penalty cases than White has.

It's a shame that GOP senators can't think for themselves. A trio of the GOP's most influential senators -- Thurmond, Hatch and Bond -- backed White. As did President Clinton, Democrats and Missouri clergy. Given that, White should have sailed through. Republicans, and Democrats for that matter, would do well to stop touting partisanship publicly when it isn't practiced privately. The more things change, the more they stay the same.



REPUBLICANS WITHOUT A CAUSE

Black, white working classes should unite

Special to Sentinel-Voice

There are many things that stunned the political establishment about my meeting with Pat Buchanan to discuss his interest in the Reform Party nomination for President.

Buchanan is a right-winger; I come from the left. Buchanan has been criticized for being a racist. I'm Black. Buchanan is a lifelong Republican, a consummate political insider. I am the ultimate outsider, an African-American independent at odds with the Black leadership's insistence that we stick to the Democrats for our political and economic survival. In most respects, Pat Buchanan and I are like oil and water -- chemical opposites that can never successfully mix.

Yet, in spite of those extreme differences, there is something that Pat Buchanan might be able to help us do, if he decides to seek the Reform Party nomination: Liberate Black America.

Before you start screaming that I've lost my mind, let me assure you I am aware Pat Buchanan is not Malcolm X. But Pat Buchanan -- as an independent -- could turn out to be the impetus for a major breakthrough in the empowerment of ordinary Americans by helping to bring the Black working class and the white working class together again.

Buchanan and I both have a deep connection to working class people in America. His

This Way For Black Empowerment
By Dr. Lenora Fulani



anti-corporate populism -- his protests on behalf of blue-collar Americans who have lost jobs and economic security as a result of government policies that undercut America's manufacturing base -- has made him a popular figure within the white working class, nowadays known as Reagan Democrats. This blue-collar constituency has been more politically mobile than most, swinging between the Republicans and the Democrats, but aggrieved by both. The Reform Party may turn out to be just the ticket for them.

My political agenda for the last 20 years has been to give the Black working class community some new political tools -- independent tools like the Reform Party -- that enable it to break out of its poverty-stricken relationship with the Democratic Party. Unlike blue collar white America, Black America has been immobile politically. It has remained loyally Democratic as the party has catered to an increasingly white suburban constituency, allying it with middle class voters whose

economic and social interests are often opposed to theirs.

During the Great Depression, Black and white working people, beset by an unprecedented economic collapse, were joined together in a mass movement. Segregation was still the law of the land at the time. But in the 1930's heyday of industrial unionism, the color barrier was broken as Black and white Americans joined together to resist the economic exploitation of factory owners and industry giants. But the labor movement would undergo rapid changes as it forced its way into Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal

Democratic Party coalition. These unions (consolidated as the CIO -- which later joined with the more conservative and racist AFL) became less independent -- and less racially mixed. As industries like steel, auto and defense grew, the jobs went to whites. Blacks remained under-employed, unorganized and poor. The Unemployed Councils -- which had organized the lower strata of Americans, including many poor African-Americans -- were shut down, creating a further schism. Later on, Blacks and other people of color would break into the service sector, precipitating a divide within the union movement itself.

Today Black and white working people have increasing interests in common, but we are politically alienated from one another. Race and the manipulations of racial antagonisms have certainly played their part. The race (See Buchanan, Page 13)

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