

OUR VIEW

So long, Joe

A huge crowd showed up Friday at Nevada Partners to celebrate Joe Neal's political career. The maverick North Las Vegas state senator, who cut an imposing figure with his cowboy hat and was dubbed the conscience of the legislature for his unrepentant moralizing, served 32 years in Carson City, making him the second-longest serving senator in Nevada history.

In losing Neal, we — and this is "we" in the collective sense, as Las Vegans, as Nevadans, and not merely as African-Americans — lose a throwback politician, one not beholden to the lobbyists and selfish constituencies.

Neal's was often the unpopular stance. Whether it was advocating, as he did in the '70s and to the alarm of police statewide, that Blacks respond to unjust police force with due force (though it was a Huey Newton-esq proclamation, Neal's interest wasn't rooted in Black radicalism but in constitutional freedom from oppression); or, decades later, helping craft legislation creating a civilian police review board after casino floorman Charles Bush died at the hands of Las Vegas police in 1990. Later in the decade, Neal and others would successfully pass legislation outlawing racial profiling and mandating state law enforcement agencies collect racial data during traffic stops. Neal's were routinely the actions of a man who cared more about others' fortune than his. Among his more notable accomplishments is something the lodging, casino and construction industries should thank him for: in the wake of the 1980 MGM Grand fire that killed 84 people, he pushed legislation requiring public buildings that hold more than 150 people to have sprinkler systems, making buildings safer for the multitudes.

Neal continued to agitate in the denouement of his career. His was the lone voice cajoling for the multibillion-dollar casino industry to pay more taxes (Nevada casino operators pay nearly 7 percent; other jurisdictions average 11 percent, some even higher). Each time, he was shot down. Neal's argument: Such a healthy industry should do more for the health of the society that supports it. While valid, Neal's proposal was the equivalent of political suicide in a state run by gamers. That Neal didn't kowtow to Big Gaming speaks volumes about his character.

Also notable: His voluble support of negotiating benefits for the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. Choosing pragmatism over optimism—the federal government has pumped more than \$20 billion into Yucca and isn't likely to let the project die—Neal stumped for securing benefits. Controversial, yes, but many agree with him. Friday's event drew so many supporters that Neal wondered what would've happened "if only they were there" when he unsuccessfully ran for governor in 2002.

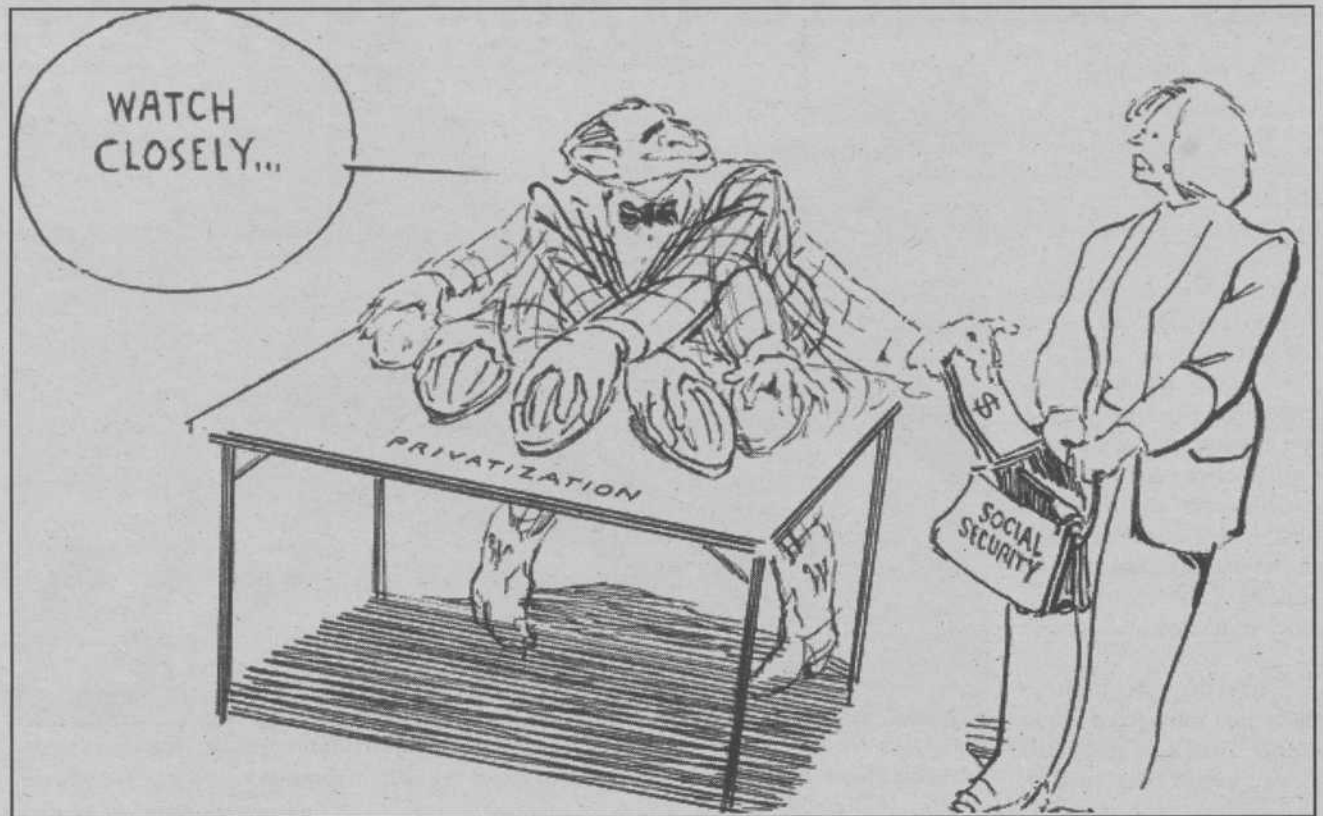
Yes, if only.

Rice Confirmed

The legacy of the Bush Administration will someday make an interesting study for collegiate political science classes. Here you have one of the most divisive presidents in history, a man who some people generally hate and disparage as the idol for C-students everywhere, fashioning one of the most diverse Cabinets in history, easily on par with his predecessor Bill Clinton, a man lauded for this ability to unite ethnicities.

Bush will never be a Franklin Delano Roosevelt and probably won't ever engender anything more than disaffection from the majority of Black America—there are good reasons for this; not meeting with the NAACP, repealing affirmative action, underfunding No Child Left Behind, etc. But in appointing Condoleezza Rice, the first African-American woman to be National Security Advisor, to the position of Secretary of State, succeeding the first African-American to hold that post, Colin Powell, who he appointed, President Bush has succeeded in blunting some of the criticism that he is minority unfriendly. However, he shouldn't get all the credit: after all, Rice and Powell came with impeccable credentials.

POINT OF VIEW



Where do we go from here?

By Dora La Grande
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A British slave owner in the West Indies by the name of Willie Lynch was invited to the colony of Virginia in 1712 to teach his "slave control" methods to slave owners there. The term "lynching" is derived from his last name. Willie told the slave owners that he had a fool-proof method for controlling Black slaves: exploit their fear, distrust and envy.

He told them that he guaranteed these methods, if installed correctly, would control slaves for 300 years into the future; and that the Black slave, after receiving this indoctrination, will carry it on and become self-refueling and self-generating for hundreds of years — maybe even thousands.

His great-great-grandson, Willie Lynch III, said, as recently as 2002, that they can continue to reap profits from Blacks without the effort of physical slavery by focusing on the current methods of containment Blacks use on themselves: a) Ignorance b) Greed c) Selfishness.

Ignorance (because many Blacks don't read): Lynch indicated that the "[masses of Blacks are fools because they don't read; therefore, they will never figure out that they have all the information a person needs to succeed in America in the books, magazines and newspapers they read all the time]..."

Greed (because Blacks have large amounts of money at their disposal): African-Americans have

\$450 billion in purchasing power — that we constantly spend — because we continually want more without any regard for saving or investing; that we'd rather buy new sneakers than invest in starting a business or community development. Greed keeps us Blacks from making better communities for ourselves while they (Whites) take the profits from their businesses that we frequent and build solid communities.

Lynch said: "[Blacks think that because they have a Mercedes and a big house, it gives them status while the vast majority of them are still in poverty.]"

Selfishness (the most powerful one of the three): Selfishness, ingrained in the mind through slavery, keeps Blacks contained in a slave status. Any group united under one vision can accomplish anything. Yet, this device is the most effective way to keep Blacks contained: create divisions among them as a people. Blacks "it's all about me" attitude has caused us to isolate into classes, and caused us, as a whole, to achieve nothing great for ourselves in the form of solid communities, business or economic empowerment.

Lynch method states: "We will continue to contain them (Blacks) as long as we keep them from reading, let them buy anything they want, and keep them thinking that they are really helping their communities by paying dues to some organization."

Lynch and his descendant, Lynch III, were right: their strategies worked. So, do we

allow their methods of controlling the Black community to continue? Or, do we break the cycle of disenfranchisement — and, how?

In the 1960's Black entertainers could sing and dance at the hotels in Las Vegas, but they couldn't stay at the hotels. In 2005, Blacks may be the third highest ethnic group to frequent Nevada as a tourist destination, but Black businesses get less than a one-half of one percent of procurement opportunities from the hotel industry — an industry whose top six hotels had a 2004 combined record revenue of \$18.9 billion, up 8 percent from \$17.5 billion the year before. There is only one African American business in the state with an unrestricted gaming license, Fitzgerald's Hotel and Casino.

For the fiscal year ending September 2004 the Small Business Administration assisted over 803 businesses through its numerous loan programs that totaled over \$200 million in financing throughout the State of Ne-

vada. Fewer than 25 of these loans went to African-Americans. Where do we go from here when we want to expand black businesses?

- We support the Urban Chamber of Commerce in record numbers as they forge ahead with their gaming initiative.

- We support New Ventures Capital Development (the only Black certified development company in the nation) as they package and get more Black business loans approved than any other CDC. We support Black owned businesses in the community. We support legislators who are fighting for the growth and expansion of Black businesses and economic development in our neighborhoods.

- We start new businesses so that we can train, hire and develop our own Black people, and we won't have to worry about the recidivism rate.

- We support black banks and credit unions that understand our needs and are will-
(See La Grande, Page 11)

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