

“Liberals Whining Inside”: A Sign of the Times

KATE TARASENKO

FORT COLLINS—The lone, wind-blown picketer outside last Tuesday’s political forum, held at the Lincoln Center, made for a pathetic photo-op, with nary a photog in sight. The water from the center’s bronze fountain, whipped up by early evening gusts, sprayed him and his flaccid placard (see title) as he gazed forlornly through the dark glass doors, doubtlessly rehearsing his scornful rejoinder to the first “whining liberal” baited by his limp accusation.

Perhaps he was hurt that no Republicans or conservatives of any hue were invited to sit on the panel of the event, which was sponsored by the Center for Justice, Peace and the Environment’s “Strength Through Peace” project, and which featured David Barsamian, award-winning author and founder of the weekly show “Alternative Radio.”

It would be easy enough to dismiss a crybaby neo-con’s response to the forum he refused to attend, provocatively titled “Beyond the Bush Administration: Fostering Regime Change at Home.” But it’s not. The problem is, he’s got a point.

Joining Barsamian on the dais were the event’s organizer and moderator Kevin Cross,

local Democratic booster Betsy Markey and Green Party spokesperson Eric Fried. After some requisite Bush-bashing, followed by equal parts political burlesque and righteous indignation, the energetic, pepper-haired Barsamian, sporting a Che Guevara t-shirt, yielded the mic to Markey.

Markey, in spite (or because) of her shrill earnestness, shall be known evermore to this reporter as “Murky,” as indeed the Democratic waters have increasingly become. While she unintentionally made the case for the sign-wielding conservative, she did evoke all the shuddering sympathy one would naturally muster for a hapless deer caught momentarily in the headlights of a pick-up truck barreling down a dusty dirt road just before the inevitable happens.

Who was driving that pick-up? None other than Eric Fried. And that’s mud slinging only if you think evolution has a soft spot. The reality of road-kill, regardless of political denomination, is that it’s nothing personal; it’s merely a matter of survival of the fittest.

The Democratic platform—save for such deal-breakers as abortion rights, which face threats as perennial as the Miller-moth invasion—is becoming more and more indistinguishable from the GOP’s.

Coolly armed with facts and figures, and

foregoing the easy applause that Markey’s bland platitudes burped from much of the crowd, Fried eruditely made the Greens’ no-brainer case: There has been no alarming organ rejection after stitching together two ideological adversaries and coming up with a neck-bolted Republicrat, kept alive on the bipartisan plasma of corporate funding, and big and lumbering enough to straddle both sides of the political fence.

Election reform? Only for Florida. NAFTA? We hafta! Tax breaks for the working poor? Funding for alternative energy? National health insurance? Increased military spending? The PATRIOT Act? The wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and drugs? The Coke-versus-Pepsi challenge delivered more suspense.

The breakaway Greens, meanwhile, have taken up residency in the long-abandoned house that the Democrats trashed and are busily going about repairs.

Markey needs to re-educate herself to the realities (read: voting record) of her party if she’s going to plead their case in a serious forum next time. If you’re a hard-liner Democrat, you should know that the platform’s boards are loose, warped and in dire need of replacement.

In the interim of campaigning and

elections, there is much to be done on a grassroots level, in our own backyards. Voting, as Fried pointed out, is the least we can do. We can walk the talk daily. Volunteer at your local community radio station and express whatever outrage you may be feeling to your state’s senators and representatives about the FCC’s recent (and continued) rollbacks of media ownership regulations. Organize a neighborhood yard sale and donate the proceeds to a women’s shelter. Go on the Internet, do a Google search for “alternative media websites” and get your mind blown.

While the Greens surely face many more years of political marginalization here in the U.S. (with a roughly 20 percent success rate since their first ballot showing in 1986), we should take no party’s platform for granted, but do our homework and let the facts speak for themselves. And when the time comes to pull that lever or punch that chad, remember the slogan that inched the Nader-LaDuke ticket titillatingly closer to national credibility: Vote your hopes, not your fears. 🐾

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Kate Tarasenko has interviewed Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, Winona LaDuke and Daniel Ellsberg. She can be heard regularly on KRFC’s “News on the Range.”

Obituary: Strom Thurmond, December 15, 1902-June 26, 2003

JOSHUA SAMUEL BROWN

To some, he was the great white hope, an unyielding bulwark holding back the tide of ungodly liberal humanism threatening the Christian fundamentals upon which America was founded. To others, he was a symbol of bigotry and racism, the living pinnacle of the worst aspects of pre-civil rights America. Still others took the middle ground, seeing him as the embodiment of man’s ability to change. He was, after all, the first senator to employ a black aide, proving that even an avowed, lifelong fighter for segregation could change his ways by graciously tolerating the presence of a non-white within his inner circle.

To me, Strom Thurmond was a symbol of the decrepitude of the American political system itself, a man whose aides would wheel him, barely conscious, into the senate chambers, propping up his near-lifeless body and dictating audibly which way he should vote. Inevitably, Thurmond’s vote would be a rubber stamp for the most glaringly right-wing factions of the Republican Party. Thank you, Strom, for showing the corrupt nature of American democracy in all its cynical delusion. Please allow me to direct the remainder of this brief eulogy to you personally, and allow me to surmise as to where death might find you.

Perhaps your years of lechery and racism have landed you in that place Christians

call Hell. If so, might I suggest using your considerable guile to get elected to a position within the infernal bureaucracy? Within no time, you’d be cajoling Lucifer himself into signing bills to bring pork-barrel projects to whichever circle of the inferno you wind up representing. If your god is as forgiving as many make him out to be (or as forgiving as the electorate, at least), you may have made it into that place that Christians call Heaven, where you’re no doubt gleefully fondling the buttocks of cherubs and nymphs throughout the halls of paradise.

I personally believe that the universe offers both wisdom and humor. Thus, I’d like to think that somewhere in America on June

26, a black woman on welfare gave birth to a baby girl, and that inside of that helpless newborn now resides the same soul that once inhabited the collection of grizzled flesh and bone formerly known as Strom Thurmond. As the man who did more long-term damage to the cause of racial equality and economic justice in America than anyone else, living or dead, working your way through life in this incarnation might offer you some valuable karmic lesson.

Wherever you’ve wound up, Strom, I only hope you’ve discovered one fundamental truth that nearly all religions agree upon: There is no “whites only” section in the hereafter. 🐾

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