

Now it is Republican party in need of centrist reform

We're rapidly approaching the Aug. 6 primary election. Here's a timely quiz for politically astute readers, followed by a short essay based on the answers.

Who said which of the following?
a) "What do the American people want in their candidates? Straight talk; the unvarnished truth; certainly not some kind of harsh ideology. ... People may not agree with everything



Phil Power

good candidates say, but people should place a high premium on candidates with high moral and ethical standards, the kind of people you can take at their word."
b) "This is a contest for the soul of the Republican Party. The party has moved further and further to the right, while the electorate has moved closer and closer to the center. ... If we continue to be moral absolutists, we'll be toast in November."

c) "I've never seen a candidate who stands for the things that are important to Michigan and couples that with undoubted honesty, integrity and commitment to principle."
If you picked U.S. Senator John McCain for (a), gubernatorial candidate State Sen. John J.H. ("Joe") Schwarz for (b) and former governor William G. Milliken (endorsing Schwarz for governor) for (c) you'd go to the top of the class.

What brought them all together? They're all moderate Republicans, an increasingly rare breed, gathered together in Michigan last Monday to promote Schwarz's candidacy for the GOP nomination for governor. For three remarkably distinguished, able and respected politicians, they got remarkably little ink or airtime from the media.

That's too bad, because what they're really working on is an attempt to moderate the steady drift to the right of the Republican Party, nationally and in Michigan. Schwarz makes no bones about it.

"My party is increasingly in the control of single issue groups like Right to Life and the progam folks who may provide active and motivated foot soldiers in primary elections, but who do not represent the increasingly independent mainstream voters in America," he said.

I spent some time with Schwarz and McCain as their campaign bus careened from Detroit Metro Airport to Pleasant Ridge and then to Ann Arbor.

We talked about political reform in general and the Republican Party in particular.

Both seemed hopeful in their reform mission, if only because they both believe that Republican candidates who come across as moral absolutists may win primaries but are likely to lose in general elections come November. "What's the best way to get across your message of reform?" responded McCain at

one point. "Pointing out that hard-line ideologues lose general elections. That wakes folks up right quick."

"They cited polling data indicating that voters registering as Independent now make up a larger group than either Democrats or Republicans, especially in Michigan, a famous ticket-splitting state. They argued the best way to attract Independent voters is for candidates to be "centrist", to downplay ideology and to demonstrate character and integrity -- "to be comfortable in their own skin." And they both referred to former President Theodore Roosevelt, who tried (and ultimately failed) to reinvent the Republican Party after the turn of the century, as their hero.

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Our conversation reminded me of what some Democrats were talking about 20 years ago: That their party had moved much too far to the left to appeal to mainstream Americans ... that there had to be a way to generate new ideas to pull the party to the center.

left to appeal to mainstream Americans, that absolutist liberal ideologues had taken over the party, that there had to be a way to generate new ideas to pull the party to the center.

Eventually the Democratic Leadership Council, a think-and-act group, took up the task. It did the spadework on welfare reform, on job training as an investment in human capital, on free trade, on protecting the environment and providing ways for sustainable economic growth. Eventually, these ideas found a voice in Bill Clinton, who pulled his party to the center and, in so doing, got himself elected and re-elected President. Thankfully, political reform goes in cycles. One generation deals with one party, the next generation with the other.

These days, it's the Republican Party that's in need of reform. And the combination of John McCain, Bill Milliken and Joe Schwarz struck me as an awfully compelling lineup to make the case.

Phil Power is the Chairman of the Board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2206 or at ppower@homecom.net.



Joni Hubred

MCMR invitation requires commitment

When they make you a reporter, they take out of your brain that allows you to participate in what you're covering.

Journalists are the chroniclers of history's first draft; we make every effort to stay out of the story. But you can't always do that in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

People in these communities will find a way to pull you in, before you even know you're there.

On Monday afternoon, guilt did me in. I was supposed to be covering the Multicultural/Multiethnic Community Council's efforts to make our communities a model of diversity and inclusion.

The subcommittee met at the school district administration building. My job was to find out what they planned to do, how much it would cost and who would be involved.

Linda West, a consultant with the National Conference for Community Justice, helped the seven-member group come up with a "stakeholders audit," a list of community groups that had to be represented in what everyone hopes will be a deep discussion of issues.

"I was going to suggest that we have a diversity group," she said. "People can be divided by where they work ... I want you to think that broadly."

I sat back with my pen at rest, notebook set on "idle." Hills City Manager Steve Brock looked over at me and suggested I should start writing.

As I was just there as an observer. And that's when he said, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

A few minutes later, Superintendent Bob Maxfield complimented me on a recent editori-

al, in which I'd urged members of the community to get involved in this very process.

Well, I was stuck then. Hoisted on my own prolixity.

So I started thinking about various factions that are a part of Farmington and Farmington Hills. It seems odd that to talk about inclusion and acceptance, one first has to identify differences.

And that is where the discussion began - southeast versus northwest residents, private and public schools, the plethora of languages spoken here, racial and religious diversity, long-term residents, homeowners, condo owners, renters ... the list covered four large sheets of paper.

The subcommittee's charge now is to identify people who belong to those groups, people who are willing to commit to a two-day meeting, Oct. 25 and 26, and all that comes after.

People who are willing to set aside their own personal agendas and cooperate constructively, as Maxfield put it.

"It won't be easy to get 200 people with that kind of invitation," West said. "It's a real commitment."

I was going to suggest they let Mr. Brock write it. But I hope they don't have to go to those extremes. Better that people see the reason behind the invitation is one that will make our communities the first to face the issues of diversity head on and come up with a model for inclusion second to none.

Joni Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments by mail, 3341 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; by phone (248) 477-5450; by fax (248) 477-9722; or e-mail, jhubred.s@homecomm.net

LETTERS

Hard to believe

Regarding your request for opinions about the Supreme Court's ruling to allow publicly funded vouchers for private schools:

Your article has a quote that indicated "It's an out for a hugely complicated problem."

Huge complicated problems are often solved with simple and sensible solutions. The United States of America in part owes its tremendous success to a simple solution-competition. Let the schools learn from the experience of our country.

It is hard to believe at \$10,833 per student (based

upon the numbers presented 12,000 students with a \$100,000,000 budget) the schools are considered underfunded.

Karen Verdura
Farmington Hills

Tongue in cheek?

I got a chuckle out of your interview with our representative Knollenberg. He is quoted as saying "The economic free fall is in part stocks being so over valued."

Talk about faulting the victim. I saw nothing about lying CEOs, Arthur Anderson type accounting firms, or obscene bonuses to failing company

executives, i.e. Kmart, Enron et al.

How can Wall Street, or anyone else, believe a CEO talking about the profitability of any company. Remember World Comp? Four billion dollars is a bit beyond an accounting error. Knollenberg's blaming the EPA for his atrocious environmental record is preposterous. Again, Joe faults the victim well.

This guy must have had his tongue in his cheek when talking to you. His statements must be in jest as they make no sense.

Gerald and Dolores Maxey
Farmington Hills

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