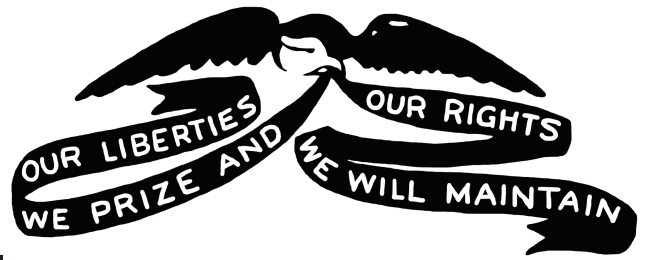


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Winter 2018

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Get on the Bus

[from a transcript of remarks given at Bethel AME Church in Iowa City on January 16, 2017, edited for The Prairie Progressive]

Thank you for asking me to speak at Bethel, especially on this day. When I asked Mrs. Townsend what she wanted me to talk about, she said, just tell people why you've worked quietly over the years to help people who are struggling for their civil rights. The truth is, I don't know.

Maybe it's because my grandparents were immigrants to this country, and I grew up hearing their stories of persecution and poverty.

Maybe it's because I grew up in Chicago, when it was known as the most segregated city in America, and might still be. At an early age I saw extremes of poverty and extremes of wealth side by side, for no good reason that I could determine.

Or maybe it's because I was lucky enough to grow up around the time the transistor became cheap and available, and my friends and I could listen to the great American poet Chuck Berry all day and into the night. And then in high school, the golden age of Motown began. The sound of the Supremes, the Miracles, the Temptations, was everywhere. I was drawn to the music, and I was drawn to an old theatre down on the south side, on 47th St. and South Parkway. (South Parkway is now Martin Luther King Drive.) It was called

the Regal, and it was home to live shows every weekend. On a lot of those week-ends, my friends and I would travel from our slice of life on the north side down to the south side, and see everyone from James Brown to Bobby Blue Bland, but best of all, the Motown Revue. In one night, for just \$2.50, you could see some combination of Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, Mary Wells, Little Stevie Wonder, Martha and the Vandellas, Diana Ross, the Four Tops!

This was an important cultural experience for me, a white kid from a middle-class family, who was brought up to stay in his seat and clap politely. At the Regal, people were running up and down the aisles, laughing and shouting to friends, jumping up and down in their seats, going in and out for popcorn during as well as in between songs...it was exhilarating.

But I learned something else at those shows. It never seemed to matter to anyone that a handful of white teenagers were there. Nobody ever gave us any trouble, everybody was friendly, nobody asked us what we were doing there. We felt at home. But back home, up north, a lot of people would say, 'You went down to 47th St? At night? You know, that's a bad neighborhood.' Well, I've heard that term Bad Neighborhood many times since then, and I learned what people usually mean by it, even here in Iowa City. Those early experiences at the Regal taught me to take it with a grain of salt.

So maybe it was my grandparents, or maybe it was the economic inequality that I saw as a child and couldn't ignore, or maybe it was Smokey and the Miracles, that led up to my wanting to go to the March for Jobs and Freedom at the end of August of 1963. What a chance to see Dr. Martin Luther King and be a part what was predicted to be a quarter of a million people in our nation's capital!

My friend Ira and I scraped together a few dollars...my older brother loaned me \$30 and promised not to tell our parents...and we took the train downtown to the Greyhound station. We waited in the hot dark station until that big bus pulled up with the words Washington DC on the front. We were actually within a few steps of getting on the bus when out of the shadows stepped Ira's father. Well, we were busted, and Ira started trudging alongside his father. I started trudging with them, until Ira's father said to me, 'I just came to get Ira. You can do whatever you want.'

I looked at Ira, and I looked at the bus, and I went home with Ira and his father.

At the time I told myself I was being loyal to my friend. If he couldn't go, neither would I. The truth is that I was 16 years old with little money and no place to stay in a city I'd never seen, and I was just a little too scared to go on my own. I've regretted it ever since.

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Now, this might be the first time at a Martin Luther King Day celebration that you've heard a story about NOT going to the March on Washington, but I learned something that day that I've tried to live by ever since. When you've got a choice between getting on the bus or staying in the station, get on the bus! I know that all of you here today have gotten on the bus, that most of you have been on the bus your entire lives, so I say it mostly to the younger people here. When you've got the chance, get on the bus.

Many years later, I was a social worker for people who had been shut away in Iowa's state hospital-schools for most of their lives. Many of you know some of them here in Iowa City who came back to live in their home towns after being institutionalized as children. I learned a lot about courage and resilience from them. To live and to get around independently, they often had to do something scary: get on the bus. Most of us don't realize how confusing and frightening that can be if you've never done it before, but these folks did it.

More years later, I was a member of an organization that I generally respected, but I became disturbed by what seemed to be a strain of racism within its leadership. I grew discouraged when nothing I did had an impact, and I was on the verge of quitting the group as a matter of principle. But before I did, I asked for advice from a community organizer in Des Moines. Some of you might have known her. Her name was Evelyn Davis, she was the founder of the Tiny Tots Day Care Center, and just about everyone in Des Moines knew her as 'Mom.'

When I told Mom Davis my predicament and wanting to quit this organization, she informed me that principle was no good if you don't fight for it. In so many words she told me to stay on the bus! Since then, I've had moments

in every job I've had, where resigning on principle was tempting, but I learned from Mom Davis that it's almost always better to fight from within, than to give up and get off the bus.

Mom Davis once said something else that I've tried to live up to. She said, 'I never got a paycheck big enough to shut my mouth.'

Mom was one of the people I first met when the Rev. Jesse Jackson ran for President. Your former pastor, The Rev. Dial, was another. When Rev. Jackson decided to enter the Iowa caucuses in 1987, I knew that was one bus I had to get on. I learned a lot from the people on that bus.

"The brightly-lit double-doors provided a perfect frame for an assassin's bullet."

I didn't get the chance to talk with Rev. Jackson very much, but once I asked him a question. The Reverend was obviously a long shot for President, twenty years before Barack Obama came along, and many people thought it was naïve and foolishly idealistic to be on the Rainbow Coalition bus. I asked him, what should I tell the people who, somewhat mockingly, call me an idealist? Rev. Jackson answered, 'tell them you're a realist with high ideals.' That's another thing I've tried to live up to over the years.

One time after a campaign event at a hotel in Cedar Rapids, I was with campaign manager John Norris in a van picking up Rev. Jackson at the front entrance. As we pulled into the circle driveway, Jackson was pacing in the big lit-up doorway of the hotel. He got in the van without a word. I thought to myself, he seems angry, but we were

only a few seconds late, it shouldn't be that big of a deal. Finally he turned to Norris and said, 'don't ever leave me exposed like that.'

I looked back at the front of the hotel, and sure enough, the brightly-lit double-doors provided a perfect frame for an assassin's bullet. It drove home to me the ever-present daily danger that Rev. Jackson lived with, just as the Rev. King did. And the necessity of never letting it stray far from your mind.

Since then I've also learned, many times over, the ever-present daily danger that many people live with, dangers that a white person like me rarely experiences. I don't have to be extra vigilant and take precautions that many people do every day. I don't have to worry if I look presentable enough to go to the grocery store, or if I'm talking too loud, or if I might appear to be loitering. I've never been asked for three forms of ID to cash a check. I'm not followed around by a security guard in the aisles of a store. I don't have to be extra-nervous if a police officer pulls me over. I wasn't burdened with having to explain all of this to my children.

These are just a few snapshots of some of what I have learned from others. And as I reflect with you on Martin Luther King Day, they make me think about the challenges our country faces, with a new president just four days from now. Most of you have faced these challenges throughout your entire lives, but I want to conclude by saying again, especially to the younger people here: don't let these challenges scare you. Don't be left at the station, as I was 53 years ago. Get on the bus if you're not already on! If you're already on, stay on the bus! And let's remember what Dr. King would most want us to keep in mind: we're all on the bus together. ✨

—Dave Leshtz is a former Chair of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.

We Can Follow One of Two Paths

In 2018 the only way to beat Kim Reynolds, a Republican woman in Iowa, is to ensure that she is opposed by a better Democratic woman. A woman who confronts the catastrophic failures of Medicaid privatization and the undeniable fact that Iowa needs to guarantee healthcare to all. A woman who fights state wage suppression, gratuitous attacks on public employees, and innate hostility to the labor movement that built the American middle class. Despite Kim Reynolds' full-throated support of the GOP war on women policies, she starts with an inherent advantage as a strong woman running in a system indelibly stained by years of sexual harassment, misogyny, and a shameful lack of female representation.

In a year that will hinge on candidates' positions on sexual predation, equal rights for all genders, and the perennial fight over women's right to make their own healthcare decisions, Iowa Democrats need a candidate who not only understands these issues, but one who has confronted them head on in real life. That candidate is Johnson County's own Cathy Glasson.

Cathy knows that 41% of women in Iowa have experienced sexual harassment on the job. As a longtime leader in the heavily female nursing profession, Cathy has fought for individuals who faced criminal behavior at work, she has battled for woman-positive policies at the state and national level, and she has earned professional distinction in a system that routinely undervalues women's work.

As an intensive care nurse, Cathy has seen that unaffordable health care isn't just about campaign talking points, rather she feels in her bones that too many Iowans cannot pay for even basic preventative care, let alone the astronomically overpriced treatments that keep those able to pay alive. Cathy can speak from personal experience about patients who left the hospital rather

than run up unpayable bills, of families left destitute caring for sick relatives, and above all the GOP's willful destruction of Iowa's exemplary publicly managed Medicaid system.

In 2016 Governor Branstad unilaterally handed healthcare for thousands of vulnerable Iowa children, special needs patients and nursing home residents to private corporations famous for meaningless contracts, deliberate payment delays, and long histories of overcharging the state while denying service to the neediest. Cathy knows that Iowa's broken healthcare system is a daily reminder that we need universal health care for every Iowan NOW.

In the last legislative session the Republicans did their masters' bidding, suppressing local laws that raised Iowa's abysmally low hourly wage; they gleefully attacked public employee unions in an effort to crush Iowa's union movement, the only force powerful enough to resist their anti-people corporate agenda, and the GOP threw state coffers open to Medicaid fraud, unneeded tax handouts to business, and turned a blind eye to rampant corruption such as no-bid contracts and make-work jobs for privileged GOP hacks at our state universities. Kim Reynolds and her obscenely wealthy friends made it blindingly clear that they believe Iowa should be a low wage, unregulated, anti-employee haven for corporate criminals, tax cheats, and GOP operatives defrauding the public for private gain.

As Iowa Democrats we can follow one of two paths: We can bury our heads in the sand and continue mumbling platitudes, running uninspiring candidates, and hoping that Republican arrogance and incompetence might allow a Democrat to eke out a mandate-less victory. Or we can heed the blaring sirens, flashing red lights, and public disgust with the timid talking points and lackluster nominees of past campaigns. We need to nominate

a Democratic woman who will work to make Iowa a state with high wage jobs, free comprehensive public education, and where everyone has guaranteed healthcare.

In Cathy Glasson's Iowa we will return to investing in education, raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour, ensure state guaranteed healthcare, pass laws and appoint judicial appointees who support equal rights for all Iowans, and build an Iowa economy where workers control their own futures through the power of collective bargaining. Cathy Glasson is the woman who will trounce Kim Reynolds and her plutocratic masters in 2018. ✂

—Duncan Stewart, an angry librarian, is tired of watching the Democratic Party eviscerate itself in every election.



CALENDAR

Jan 15
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday (observed)

Jan 20
Women's March

Feb 5
Iowa Caucuses

Feb 15, 2003
Millions marched worldwide against US war in Iraq

Mar 3, 1913
Over 5000 women marched in Washington for the right to vote

We Must Talk with Rural Voters

I have traveled thousands of miles across Iowa on my campaign for governor and I cannot help but get depressed at what I see. Iowa's rural landscape has slowly but steadily eroded from when I grew up on my Southwest Iowa family farm. Our state's farming operations continue to consolidate and family farms are nearing extinction. Rural communities lose population and economic diversity while industrial scale agricultural practices, both crop and livestock degrade our water and soil. Is this progress?

We've seen this downslide taking place for too long while policy makers in Des Moines fail to take action. A perfect example of this is the battle over water quality. The problem is well known. Industrial scale agriculture applies tons of fertilizer and chemicals and plants every possible foot of every field in order to secure higher yields and subsidies. Accelerated runoff from fields with no cover crops or buffer strips leads to extremely high levels of nitrogen and nitrates that threaten public health. The municipal water systems need to remove the nitrates, greatly increasing their operational costs when much of the problem can be managed at the source – the field.

The Iowa Legislature, largely influenced by the Farm Bureau and other corporate ag interests, has been ineffective while doing its best to shift responsibility to all citizens of the state rather than those most responsible for the problems. This is a complete policy failure.

How can we incentivize producers and, more specifically, land owners to farm sustainably? If cooperative funding is needed, one approach could be to assess a surcharge on fertilizer and farm chemicals sold in the state. Every dollar generated would go back to

farmers through financial assistance to those who deploy measures to reduce over-fertilization, water run-off and soil erosion.

Of course, rural Iowa faces many other issues. Many 'downtowns' are close to abandoned. Regional superstores get property tax breaks and then suck commerce from the smaller towns. Changes in agriculture to larger operations and fewer overall operators have driven people from the farm. And the steady expansion of livestock confinement operations has dashed the dream of a bucolic, rural lifestyle for many.

“Democrats campaigning for statewide office have focused almost exclusively on the state's largest counties.”

With the primary engines for economic growth outside of Iowa's cities tending to be meat packing and ethanol production, it is clear that rural communities and regions need a more diverse path forward. They aren't getting it from a centrally located economic development authority that relies almost exclusively on tax handouts as our economic development strategy rather than actually creating economic opportunity.

Is it time to shift our economic development efforts from this model to regionally-based efforts? Does an authority based in the state's largest city truly understand the needs and aspirations of a county in the corner of Iowa?

Completely redesigning the state's economic development model is a radical notion but, with the challenges Iowa and its citizens face, the time is now for

considering such changes. We are dealing with a growing number of sobering realities. Our public education system, once the envy of the U.S., continues to decline, not the least because we refuse to fund our schools and teachers adequately. Rural schools and hospitals are the essential building blocks of rural communities and now the privatization of Medicaid threatens the future of these economic anchors.

As Iowa's population continues to shift from rural to urban, Democrats campaigning for statewide office have focused almost exclusively on the state's largest counties, while virtually ignoring rural Iowa. It has clearly been a failed strategy to ignore rural voters. We must talk with rural voters about our shared values of caring for the land, families and communities and offer a better vision for the future of rural Iowa. Renewable energy, expanding broadband access, targeting small business development and investing in our workforce are all critical initiatives Democrats should own. We must show we are willing to fight to bring life back to our rural communities and offer a better economic future for rural Iowans.

In 2018, I believe that there will be a Democratic resurgence so that we can return our state to its role of being a leader in progressive policy and action. But to do so will require the greatest possible presence in areas too often ignored by Democrats. ✂

–John Norris, Democratic candidate for Governor, was State Director of the Farm Unity Coalition during the 1980s' Farm Crisis. He served as Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is currently co-owner of the State Public Policy Group.
Norrisforthepeople.com

Corn Fed, Iowa Bred

Fred Hubbell is my choice to be the next governor for the state of Iowa. He is knowledgeable, passionate, and committed to the people of Iowa. Fred has the leadership and experience needed to fiscally manage a seven billion dollar budget and the heart and soul to address our state's education, health care, economic, and environmental needs.

Fred Hubbell is a life-long progressive Democrat who has supported the Democratic Party and Democratic Candidates for many years. His list of support for progressive causes is lengthy. He and his wife Charlotte have contributed to United Way of Central Iowa, Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Urban Dreams, Simpson College, Broadlawns Medical Center, Des Moines Social Club, Iowa Environmental Council, and Iowa's Water and Land Legacy.

Fred Hubbell will return Iowa to its former ranking as #1 in education. For many years Iowa has been a national leader in education at all levels. Over the last decade we have seen our state's financial commitment to public education decline. This has had a negative impact on our early childhood programs, K-12 public schools, community colleges and private and public colleges. Fred understands that education is the core for creating jobs and economic opportunities for Iowans and Iowa

businesses. He will craft a budget that once again reflects education funding as our top priority.

Fred Hubbell will fix our failing health care system. He believes in affordable access to family planning for all Iowans and will work to restore funding to the Planned Parenthood Clinics that were recently closed in Iowa. After the failed health care initiative of the Reynolds administration, Fred will abandon the privatization of Medicaid and return us to a state plan that will actually care for our most needy Iowans. Fred will create a mental health system for Iowans that serves those who need help when they need it. With only 64 publicly funded mental health beds in the state, we are ranked 49th in the country in programs and services for the mentally ill. Fred will change that. He also has a plan for a children's mental health system that addresses the needs of our youngest Iowans.

Fred cares about Iowa and our natural resources. He will work with all of the stakeholders to clean up our water and hold polluters accountable. He will work to maintain our leadership in the use of renewable energy. As the head of the Iowa Power Fund, Fred worked with the wind energy industry to make Iowa the leading state in the nation in wind power generation. In 2016 Iowa generated 36.6% of its energy needs through wind. Fred understands the

importance of renewable energy in Iowa and will seek new ways to support the industry.

Fred cares about Iowa workers. He is committed to increasing the minimum wage and supports all of labor's key legislative priorities. This last session we saw a gutting of Iowa's collective bargaining law. Fred will work to restore workers' rights and wages. He will protect the public retirement systems of our state workers and strive to see that these systems continue to support current and future retirees. Fred Hubbell has a love for Iowa City and Johnson County. He graduated from the University of Iowa College of Law School. He met his wife Charlotte in Iowa City while they were attending law school. He has many friends and supporters in Johnson County.

All of the Democratic candidates running for office are progressives. All of them would be better than the current Republican administration in running the State of Iowa.

Only one candidate has the knowledge, experience, dedication, and financial backing to actually win. That candidate is Fred Hubbell. That is why I am "Corn Fed, Iowa Bred, Voting for Fred!" ✂

—State Representative Mary Mascher

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Iowa is Better Than This

Last session, Republicans used their majorities in the legislature to decimate Iowans' rights. I had a front row seat to their destructive and divisive in the Iowa Senate where I fought, sometimes all through the night, with thousands of Iowans by my side, to defend the rights of working families throughout our state. Republicans gutted collective bargaining rights, underfunded education for the seventh year in a row, and defunded Planned Parenthood, making affordable health care harder to access. They failed to take meaningful action on water quality and mental health, and they even lowered the minimum wage in counties like Johnson where local leaders stepped up to support their residents.

Iowa is better than this. I imagine an Iowa where workers can have a say in their work environment, our children can grow up to be whatever they want through a world-class Iowa education, no matter what zip code they live in, and where every Iowan has access to quality, afford-

able health care. We must take real action on water quality, and address climate change, especially in ways which our state excels like wind and solar energy. Instead of closing mental health institutes and ignoring the mental health crisis in our state, we must reopen the facilities in Clarinda and Mt. Pleasant, and invest in expanded community-based mental health services. We must also raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation so everyone can earn a livable wage in our state.

Talking about all these issues is important, but action is what's essential. For the last 12 years, I've worked as a workers' rights attorney, defending people who have been wrongfully terminated, standing up for women who have been sexually harassed, and fighting for workers who have been hurt on the job. Last session, I introduced bills to fund IWILL and reopen the mental health institutes closed by the Branstad/Reynolds administration. I also introduced bills to raise the minimum wage and index

it to inflation and a bill to require equal pay for equal work. With a tough legislative session coming up, I will continue to fight for working Iowans by standing up to Republicans and introducing bills to expand working Iowans' rights, but your Democratic legislators need your help. We cannot get outrage fatigue, no matter what the Republicans try to push through the legislature this year. We need you to continue your advocacy at the Capitol and through to 2018. The best way to turn our state around is to elect a Democratic governor, and with a strong candidate at the top of the ticket, make gains in the Iowa House and Senate. I'm sure you've been told every year that "this is the most important election," but this one really is. I am working to earn your support - I've visited all 99 Iowa counties and earned the endorsement of legislators from across the state. I hope to earn your support, too. ✨

—State Senator Nate Boulton, Democratic candidate for Governor

An Ounce of Harassment

I recently took a trip to our state capitol in Des Moines. While eating lunch in the cafeteria, I noticed papers left behind at the table next to mine. I picked them up and was about to put them in the recycling bin when I saw the heading: DRAFT 2018 Republican Medicaid Reform Plan. I must tell you of the bold vision our state's Republican leadership has devised to reorganize and inject market principles into Medicaid.

Starting next year, the State of Iowa will utilize the predominant factor test when making coverage decisions for Medicaid clients. Medicaid enrollees must demonstrate that the factors which led them to be eligible for Medicaid were not the predominant factor causing them to seek the treatment at issue. This will enable the State to cut back on fraud and abuse by creating more accountability in the system. It will also enable the State to focus limited resources on the truly deserving Medicaid recipients.

The State of Iowa will ensure accountability by contracting with several different private providers to ensure implementation of the new standard, and to provide oversight for existing contractors Ameri-

Health, Amerigroup and Ameristar. Each Medicaid applicant must select a new provider to manage coverage and approval decisions made by their existing Medicaid contractor. Decisions authorizing treatment by existing private contractors will be reviewed by three-member panels consisting of a medical professional, a workforce counselor and a representative of Iowans for Tax Relief. As use of private contractors has maximized efficiency while cutting fraud and abuse, use of new contractors to oversee existing contractors will go even further to make sure Iowans are getting value for their tax dollars.

With respect to existing Medicaid contractors, each year the State will conduct recertification elections for each contractor on behalf of their respective clients. Clients will be emailed a User ID and temporary password. They will be directed to a website to customize a password for use in the recertification election. To remain eligible to continue work as an Iowa Medicaid contractor, a majority of each contractor's clients must vote affirmatively for continued coverage. If, in any year, a contractor fails to gain an affirmative vote from a majority

of its clients, clients will be freed to obtain and negotiate directly with any medical provider for their care.

Finally, all Medicaid contractors doing business with the State of Iowa must certify all employees have undergone harassment training. Contractor employees must be certified in detection of red flags indicating abuse and fraud signified by client applications for services. Contractor employees must also be certified in intervention strategies to deter providers from making applications for services on behalf of clients red flagged for potential abuse and fraud. An ounce of harassment is worth a pound of services authorized.

Iowa Republicans are confident these long overdue reforms will create data driven synergistic solutions while cutting fraud and abuse and producing market based results. Though the first wave of Medicaid privatization has accomplished much, Republicans are confident Iowa can build on these successes in the upcoming session of the Iowa General Assembly. ✨

—Nate Willems is a former state legislator who lives in Mt. Vernon.

Back to the Future: How Democrats Can Become the Majority Party Again

There is only one word to use when surveying the damage the Republicans are doing to Iowa and America: depressing. We need to keep our eye on the ball, though, and avoid being diverted into competitive name-calling. We need to elect Democrats until we regain a majority at every level of government. In the present crisis, any Democratic victory is a win, no matter how awful the Democrat.

In addition to issuing an “all hands on deck” call to elect Democrats, we should also have a discussion about how we got into this mess of being a minority party at every level of government. We could do worse than look back to a period of history when Democrats were the natural party of government, the half century beginning in 1932.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected by promising a New Deal for the American people, he brought to an end a half-century of Republican majority rule. Republican political dominance was not just based on money or organization or their dominance in the media. It was based on their ideas, which corresponded with what most people regarded as “common sense”: balanced budgets for families and governments alike; what’s good for General Motors is good for the country; if you work hard and avoid spending your money on booze, women and movies you won’t be poor and you might get rich; the appropriate response to poverty is charity; government can do nothing much about a depression except wait for a natural recovery.

Roosevelt challenged “common sense” with a series of legislative initiatives that violated that common sense in almost every way. He created federal entitlements available to all Americans regardless of income, e.g. social security. (An entitlement is a program that is not means-tested, i.e. you don’t have to prove you are needy to draw the benefit.) He also put government resources directly into the hands of working people, and the power of the federal government squarely behind working people with the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act.

Republicans were furious, and remained furious for fifty years, because Roosevelt and the Democrats had transgressed

the boundaries of common sense and Democrats were winning elections anyway. When the electoral pendulum swung back to the Republicans in the 1950s, though, they scaled back on the New Deal achievements but failed to repeal a single one of them. The New Deal became common sense. Government was the solution, not the problem, and tax money should be used to benefit working people, not big corporations.

Conservative thinkers were forging an intellectual counter-attack on New Deal socialism, reading thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and the novelist Ayn Rand, a favorite of both Alan Greenspan and Paul Ryan. When the Democratic Party fell apart in the 1970s over issues of war, race, and runaway inflation, Republican conservatives seized the opportunity in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan.

Republicans won elections for another 40 years by turning the old Democratic Party common sense on its head. The depression of the 1970s/80s they claimed was caused by government and the welfare state. The solution was to starve the beast by shrinking government. They went to war with the New Deal.

Just as Republicans had been traumatized by the ascendancy of New Deal ideas, Democrats were traumatized by the Republican revival. Convinced that there was something wrong with the New Deal, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama embraced the ideas known as neo-liberalism, i.e. pro-corporate and pro-free trade policies based on the view that the corporate economy can be micro-managed from above by technocrats, and that government entitlements should be replaced by means-tested programs targeted to those who truly need them

Neither Clinton nor Obama was capable of establishing a new neo-liberal common sense. When Clinton came into office, Democrats appeared set to regain majority status. When he left office, the Republicans once again controlled every level of government. History repeated itself with Obama who came into office with Democratic majorities in the midst of a depression. His policies were a

kind of Anti-New Deal: bailing out big banks with direct government subsidies; a home foreclosure program that bailed out mortgage lenders; pay freezes and layoffs for public employees; a minimum wage capped at \$7.25; trade deals that further depressed wages and undermined unions.

Finally, Obama crafted a health insurance program that, unlike Medicare, was based on principle of means-testing rather than entitlement, dividing Americans against each other based on income levels rather than bringing them together under a universal program. By the 2016 elections, Democrats were left defending a robust recovery characterized by low wages, long hours, bad working conditions, extreme job insecurity, widespread health care insecurity, and lack of economic opportunity for young people burdened with student debt. The attempt to create a new neo-liberal Democratic common sense failed at the polls.

The surprise of the 2016 election was the unanticipated resurrection of the New Deal. FDR rose from the grave in the unlikely person of Bernie Sanders running as a Democrat. He launched a campaign based on a New Deal approach to the Depression of 2008: a one trillion dollar green jobs program; free tuition at all public colleges and universities, a universal entitlement to health insurance (Medicare for all); a \$15 an hour national minimum wage with no exceptions. He addressed the widespread anxiety about campaign finance reform by refusing corporate campaign contributions (while accepting help from unions) and limiting individual contributions to \$2700.

Sanders went on to attract more caucus attenders in Iowa than any other candidate, and carried primaries in 22 states (and every county in West Virginia), garnering 45% of the elected delegates. Clinton won the nomination fair and square in my opinion, in part because Sanders was challenging the “common sense” not only of the Ayn Rand / Paul Ryan Republicans but also the neo-liberal leaders of the Democratic Party who had succeeded in lowering the expectations of Democratic voters about what is possible. Despite that, Bernie Sanders remains far and away the most popular political leader in America, and has changed the debate inside

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Back to the Future

Continued from Page 8

the Democratic Party in fundamental ways back to the New Deal.

This brings us to the 2018 Democratic gubernatorial primary. The consensus among all the candidates appears to be: turn the clock back by undoing the damage the Republicans have done, restore collective bargaining rights, restore minimum wage increases, fund public education fully at all levels, put more money into health care, especially mental health funding, de-privatize Medicaid, fund Planned Parenthood.

This is an admirable agenda, but it is also a "business as usual" (BAU) agenda in which Democrats propose to return a few years to the status quo before the Republicans, to the very status quo that produced Republican landslides in Iowa. But how does this agenda address the crisis of campaign finance, the staggering load of student debt faced by Iowa students, and the lack of

educational and job retraining opportunity for working class, small town, and rural Iowans?

There is only one candidate who stands out from the BAU crowd in this race, and that is Cathy Glasson. Glasson is the only candidate willing to be an advocate for a modest but absolutely essential reform: eliminating tuition at our Community Colleges. This will provide educational opportunity and a ladder to a higher degree for high school graduates, not to mention urgently needed job re-training opportunities for workers made 'redundant' in our brutal, NAFTA-ridden capitalist economy. She also proposes freezing tuition at our three Regents universities, the only practical way to deal with the student debt crisis.

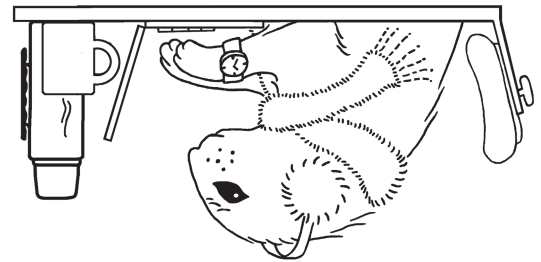
Campaign finance? Glasson is the only candidate to place limits on individual contributions, and to refuse corporate PAC contributions. The BAU candidates appear to be thumbing their noses at a public convinced that the system is corrupt

by bragging about their ability to attract contributions or even fund their own campaigns out of pocket.

Finally Glasson, a nurse, is the only candidate who understands that, while Medicaid can and must be improved, it can't be fixed. A means-tested program, it can't cover everyone who needs medical care and it can't provide health care security, which is what Iowans need. Even a de-privatized Medicaid will have a big target on its back that says "welfare," and will be chronically underfunded. The only way to fix Medicaid in Iowa is to fold it into a national Medicare for all program, which is on the way to becoming the new "common sense."

Republicans have made themselves unpopular in many ways, and Democrats will probably win back lost ground in 2018. Having won, can we keep an electoral majority? For that we will have to win the war of ideas, and go back to the future, to the principles of the New Deal that have a proven record of working. ✨

—Jeff Cox



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