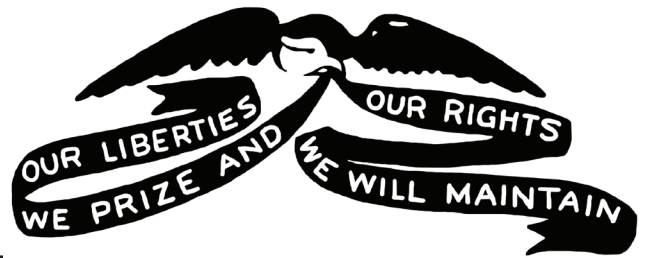


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Summer 2015

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Almost Ready For Hillary

But I'm even more ready for the media to grow up.

Recently, as editor of Blog for Iowa, I was contacted by a Washington Post political reporter who was working on a story about Hillary Clinton. Specifically, he wanted to talk about what he called "infamous" green snow shovels that the campaign gave out to supporters last time. He made no pretense of what he was doing. He basically was using the green snow shovel story to write a derisive article about Hillary, using a formula that the national media is enamored with now, focusing on some trite or sensationalistic aspect, and magnifying it – in this case, the (infamous!) snow shovels that I had not heard anything about or forgot.

Here is how he framed it:

"I'm a reporter for the Washington Post, covering national politics. I'm very sorry to bother you, but I wanted to ask your help on something. I'm writing a story about Hillary Clinton's (in)famous green snow shovels: in the last days of the 2008 primary campaign in Iowa, Clinton's folks bought more than 600 snow shovels and handed them out to precinct captains and other local leaders. I'm trying to find people who supported Hillary Clinton back then, and still have those shovels in their possession.

I'd want to talk to them about their experience with that 2008 campaign, and whether they think Clinton has learned from her experience in Iowa back then.

I figured you might have seen or heard chatter from people who still have those shovels. I also was trying to figure out how I might put out a call for those folks on the Blog for Iowa, to ask if anybody had a shovel and wanted to talk with me about it. I'm going to be in Iowa next week, and would love to meet folks in person if they're interested. I'm at 202.---.---, if you'd rather talk by phone than over email."

"This is a close-to-home example of what is wrong with media today - wasted newspaper space that could have been used to inform."

I replied to his query this way:

"Seriously? This is what you are using your position at the Washington Post to write about? You want to talk about shovels? How depressing. And you call yourself a journalist? We're not in the Hillary camp yet, but we're still not going to help you write your pathetic little "let's make fun of Hillary" piece. We will talk to reporters that are covering

the issues. Thanks for contacting us. I'm sure you'll find plenty of idiots who will love to help you out but it's not going to be us." (Disclaimer: I admit that my reply was a little terse. Also, I had no idea at the time who if anyone spoke with this reporter, and I am not calling any specific person who talked to him an idiot. Iowans are just nice people). I did not hear from him again.

Last week, the story appeared on Washingtonpost.com, and it was as I expected. At the top a gigantic headline, "In 2008, Clinton Couldn't buy Iowans' love. So she bought them snow shovels" topped by a cute, folksy photo of some typical Iowans with one of the "infamous" shovels. The snow shovels were mentioned no fewer than 24 times throughout the article. There was not one but four photos of Iowans with shovels, evenly distributed throughout the text so that no matter where you were on the page, you could see one. The reporter extracted quotes from Hillary supporters who said of course, living in Iowa, they didn't need a shovel because they already had one.

This is a close-to-home example of what is wrong with media today - wasted newspaper space that could have been used to inform. This guy spent two weeks of his life putting

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Free Speech in the Multinational Corporation

On May 27, 2015, I attended the Chevron Annual Stockholders meeting. I inherited some Chevron stock, and while I don't own enough to make a dent in their policies, I am eligible to attend their annual meeting. The only thing I know about annual stockholders meetings is Berkshire Hathaway, since I grew up and have family in Omaha. I know about shareholders enjoying the products of their holdings: Dairy Queen, Coca Cola, See's Candies, shopping at Borsheim's, and meeting the Geico Gecko. And, of course, Warren Buffett playing ping-pong. Sounds like fun to me. So what about Chevron's annual meeting that takes place a short drive from my home in Oakland. Would I get a free tank of gasoline?

For starters, getting information about attending the meeting was no easy task. I received the proxy voting materials weeks before the meeting, but those materials included no information about the time or place of the meeting. I perused the Chevron web site and found no obvious reference about meeting attendance. So, I typed my inquiry into their search browser. I learned that you have to submit documentation of ownership of the stock; not an unreasonable request. So, I sent my information and received my ticket to the event, along with instructions about proper government-issued ID and restrictions on bringing briefcases, phones, cameras, purses or recording devices into the meeting.

On the day of the meeting, I drove into the lushly landscaped headquarters of Chevron in San Ramon. It's safe to say, there were more police and security officers present than stockholders. I entered the

walkway, bounded on both sides by security officers, men and women in dark suits, a table to check your possessions and a stop to pick up what I thought was a name-tag. I did get a badge, but my name wasn't on it. Apparently, they don't want us to get to know our fellow stockholders. There was only a lovely image of offshore oil rigs on the blue ocean, a number 96 and the word "Guest."

I proceeded to the meeting room, expecting to see a convention-size body of people, displays and options for attending breakout sessions. Maybe coffee and breakfast? I was a few minutes late, but there wasn't a bagel in sight. Instead, I walked into an auditorium of maybe 150 people, surrounded on the periphery by more men in suits with ear buds. The stockholders looked pretty regular. More men than women, more whites than people of color, but a pretty average looking group of stockholders. John S. Watson, Chevron Chairman of the Board and CEO, was presiding. There were brief reports about stockholder proposals and then a Q and A session. The event was carefully managed, with people who wished to ask questions required to draw a number. Questioners got two minutes for a comment or question.

Of the ten or so people who asked questions or made comments, only one seemed to support Chevron's current policies and practices, saying basically, "I love the dividends and I spend the dividends, so keep doing whatever it is you're doing." The other speakers included the following: A nun who supported a proposal requesting disclosure of shale energy operations; an indigenous Ecuadorian man chastising Chevron for their refusal to clean up toxics dumped

in the Amazon and sickening the residents; leaders of two Australian unions (maritime and construction) from Western Australia urging Chevron to sit down at the table with unions working on their massive Gorgon Project. The project has provided many jobs for Australia but has been criticized for environmental transgressions against protected species living on Barrow Island. Now, Australian workers are facing job loss due to importation of low-wage workers from abroad. A climate-change advocate asked if Chevron would join the Paris climate talks since Chevron has acknowledged that climate change is actually a thing. The answer was "No, we won't be joining those talks."

Richmond City Council member Richard Martinez spoke next. Chevron operates a refinery in Richmond where the community has been impacted by several "accidents" releasing toxic fumes into the air. Martinez noted that Chevron spent \$272 per citizen of Richmond in an attempt to buy the last local election. Chevron failed due to community activists exposing their attempt to influence the election. When a third person got up to discuss the Ecuadorian situation, Mr. Watson stated, "We've already had two speakers on this issue and we'll have no more," and the microphone was turned off. If any speaker went over their two-minute limit, even by a second, the microphones went off.

Chevron showed a brief film claiming the lawsuit filed on behalf of the Ecuadorians was full of fraudulent information. There was little or no engagement on the part of the CEO on questions of Chevron's environ-

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Democrats and the Wal-Mart Recovery

With the Iowa caucuses on the horizon, Iowa Democrats are naturally focused on holding on to the White House in 2016. Perhaps even more important, though, is what we are to do as a party to stop the Republican trend at every level of government. In Iowa we have been reduced to a single representative in Washington. Only the very welcome election of Kevin Kinney to the Iowa Senate from Johnson County prevents the Republicans from controlling every level of government. Terry Branstad carried every county but one in his re-election campaign. With Republican Party registrations surging while Democratic registrations fall, there is no sign of a Democratic recovery.

Nationally the Republicans control the House, the Senate, a large majority of governors, and about 70% of state legislators. What is in store for the country is crystal clear – look at what Scott Walker has done to Wisconsin. Democrats around the country have been, so far, powerless to reverse the trend toward low wages, powerless unions, privatization of government services, and the defunding of both K-12 and higher education.

Democrats have been scrambling for explanations for Republican success, but have trouble coming up with answers. It is clear in the polls that Republican policies are unpopular, but why do they continue to win elections? Why did the Republican Joni Ernst, however photogenic, pick up Tom Harkin's senate seat when her views are so out of touch with the majority of Iowa voters?

Democrats do well when we manage the economy in ways that produce visible results for wage-earners, male and female. When voters don't trust

Democrats to produce good jobs at good wages, they are much more likely to vote on issues of gun control, abortion, immigration, and support for our troops. The most plausible explanation for why Joni Ernst represents Iowa in Washington is that swing voters – wage-earning voters – simply did not believe that Democrats had done a credible job of managing the Great Depression of 2008.

To hear many Democrats talk, you would think we have done a wonderful job. Unemployment is down to 6% (officially), the stock market is booming, and more people have health insurance. Why the ingratitude? Why is Obamacare so unpopular (look at the polls)? Why aren't working class voters thankful for their jobs?

In order to reverse the Republican trend, Democrats must face up to the nature of the economic recovery, one that can best be described as a Wal-Mart recovery characterized by low wages (especially for women), job insecurity, the ever present prospect of having to go on welfare (i.e. food stamps or Medicaid), and health care insecurity.

The major elements of the Democratic Party's response to the 2008 depression have all contributed the Wal-Mart character of the recovery. They are: the largely unconditional bailout of our major banks, an enormously expensive foreclosure program that has been a failure by everyone's definition, an economic stimulus that was better than nothing but entirely inadequate to stimulate good jobs at good wages, the failure to put through a second round of economic stimulus on the advice of Larry Summers and Tim Geithner, the postponement of any major initiative

to raise the minimum wage, and Obamacare.

When Democrats praise the "new normal" of 6% unemployment, working class voters can see through the happy talk. The real unemployment rate (as Senator Sander points out repeatedly) is twice that, and three to four times that for African-Americans and young people of all races. Those who have jobs cannot afford day care for their children, or buy health insurance, or afford college tuition for themselves or their children. It is no accident that every major Wal-Mart store has a staff person whose job it is to help employees get food stamps and Medicaid.

Obamacare is unpopular because Democrats have forgotten what is wrong with welfare. Most of the people who have been added to the health insurance rolls have done so by enrolling in Medicaid, a welfare program that forces people to declare themselves second class citizens in order to protect themselves from illness or bankruptcy. No one is ever grateful for welfare. Those who receive subsidies through the insurance exchanges, which are like Medicaid subject to an income test, never know if they will be able to keep their insurance.

Bruce Braley would have won this election if he had not been forced to defend Obamacare, and if the Democratic Party had generated jobs programs that produced good jobs at good wages. Braley ran in defense of Social Security, Medicare, and Obamacare. Ernst simply lied to the public, claiming that she would never cut Social Security or Medicare, but denounced Obamacare at every opportunity.

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CALENDAR

July 1, 1970

Abortion legalized in New York

July 2, 1972

Death penalty reinstated by US Supreme Court

July 14, 1995

Former University of Iowa basketball coach Vivian Stringer became the highest paid women's coach in the US (at Rutgers University)

July 16, 1945

First atomic bomb tested in New Mexico

July 26, 1990

Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law by President George Bush

July 28, 1995

Iowa NAACP members picketed US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas when he attended a conference in Des Moines

August 2, 1990

Iraq invaded Kuwait

August 11-16, 1965

Watts riots against police brutality

August 14, 1945

Japan surrendered, following atom bomb killings of 240,000 civilians

August 14, 1995

Thomas Farmer of Waterloo, Iowa, became first person in US sentenced to life in prison under the federal "three strikes and you're out" law

August 25, 1925

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized by A. Philip Randolph

August 26, 1920

US women won the right to vote

August 28, 1955

Emmett Till murdered in Mississippi

September 6, 1860

Jane Addams born

September 22, 1980

Iraq invaded Iran

September 26, 1960

First televised presidential debate

Lincoln: Clay-foot Civic Saint? Or, How Victors Write History

A couple of years back, I conceived the genius notion of dressing up on Halloween in a Civil War costume and going up to the grade school at the top of the hill in Cascade, Iowa, and telling the kids the story we all "knew" as children that had since disappeared.

Then (the 1940s and 50s), the school was an old limestone mansion, essentially two one-room schools—early grades in library, upper grades in the salon—with spy blood, it was rumored, on the third floor. Demolished in 1961, and the "Spy" story with it. The principal was enthused. I did a little research and wrote up my spiel, but it was rejected as "too negative." Later, they scheduled Ronald McDonald for a talk on fairness and social responsibility. That we are plagued with obesity and poverty is hardly a surprise, when a purveyor of high-calorie fast-food until recently paying its workers a non-living wage is explaining moral concepts to impressionable grade schoolers.

By then I had become so intrigued with the tale of the Confederate soldier John Yates Beall, the "spy" who had spent the summer of 1862 in the old Chew mansion at the top of the town hill, that I decided to do an adult version.

My play resurrects Margaret Chew, the chatelaine of the mansion where I went to kindergarten, to tell Beall's tale of being wounded at Bolivar Hill, coming to Dubuque where he had a brother, and staying with the family friend (Margaret) here in Cascade. Margaret was a transplanted Marylander and the Bealls lived across the border in Virginia near Charles

Town. I couldn't help wonder what she must have thought when President Abraham Lincoln arrested the pro-slavery Maryland legislators, so the state would be counted as anti-slavery.

Local research revealed that Lincoln sent U.S. marshals out to Dubuque to arrest Dennis Mahony, then the Copperhead editor of the *Dubuque Herald*, who frequently inveighed against Lincoln's policies and was also running for the Iowa Statehouse. They escorted him back to D.C. and locked him up until the election, which of course he lost.

By then, Beall had returned to the Chesapeake Bay area and become the scourge of the Union army with a couple dozen guys and two small boats. They disabled lighthouses, stole equipment and whale oil, and seriously encumbered shipping. The army sent 500 men after Beall. He switched operations to Lake Michigan where they finally caught him mid-December 1864, and executed him shortly before the end of the war.

The biggest shock was reading Carl Sandburg quoting Lincoln in his 10-volume *War Years*:

No man knows the distress of my mind. The case of Beall on the Lakes—there had to be an example. They tried in every way. They wouldn't give up. But I had to stand firm. I even had to turn away his poor sister when she came and begged for his life. I let him be executed, and he was executed and I can't get the distress out of my mind yet.

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Almost Ready for Hillary
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together this silly hatchet piece. He came out to Iowa for the purpose of getting photos of supporters with shovels! And we accept this as normal political reporting. The reporter could have asked open questions about what issues Clinton supporters think are going to be important this time around. Instead, he used what he thought was a clever hook (or click-bait) and in my view, very transparently tried to build a negative story around it with the intention of making her look bad.

To be fair, the shovel story would have been worth a mention, if the article had had a more authentic goal. But it wasn't worth the singular focus of the article.

I'm almost ready for Hillary now. And articles like this one are helping me get there. ✨

--Trish Nelson lives in Iowa City and can be reached at blogforiowa.com.

Free Speech in the Multinational Corporation
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mental record. He did mention he was very proud of Chevron's efforts to increase wind and solar energy.

The phrase that kept cropping up in my head was "tight control." Stockholders were told not to ask questions or comment during any part of the meeting and the only time they could speak was if their ticket was called to ask a question or make a comment. I started to applaud one of the speakers and realized no one else was making a peep; the room was filled with security men and maybe I should just stay quiet. I felt like this must be what life is like in some other political system where there is nominally democracy, but in practice, not really.

The entire meeting lasted 90 minutes and it wasn't a scene conducive to hanging around and kibitzing. I did manage to meet a couple of the people in the room who spoke up. I remember hearing that multi-national corporations are often more powerful and influential than actual nation states. Now I understand what that means and how that looks. ✨

--Francie Hornstein grew up in Omaha and now lives in Oakland.

Lincoln: Clay-foot Civic Saint? Or, How Victors Write History
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Abraham Lincoln knew that John Yates Beall was an enemy combatant and by international law he should receive certain considerations.

Flabbergasted, I kept asking myself: How did this man become one of our leading Civic Saints? What do I do with this stuff?

We know "the victors write history," but I realize now I never knew any historical period deeply enough to catch them at it, and could probably find the same thing if I knew another one sufficiently well. Historian Horowitz wrote a piece in *The Atlantic* in 2013 called "150 Years of Misunderstanding the Civil War" that probably provides the best insight.

In any case, Beall's is a fascinating bit of Eastern Iowa history. One and all are invited to the Cascade "Spy" Project production of *The True Story of John Yates Beall*, over the 4th of July in Cascade at the Ellen Kennedy Center in Cascade. ✨

--S. Keyron McDermott lives on the mighty Maquoketa River.

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*Democrats and the Wal-Mart
Recovery
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Democratic leaders in Iowa are rallying around a candidate for President who served on the board of directors of Wal-Mart, and whose campaign is funded by the Wall Street banks who have profited the most from the economic recovery. The notion that such a candidate can mobilize young people and working people is illusory. We might hold on to the White House in 2016 even with a demoralized party, depending on who the Republicans nominate. What we will not do with such a candidate, win or lose the White House, is stop the disastrous march of Republican victories that are inflicting unspeakable harm to our country. ✂

–Jeff Cox

Help Wanted

The words “You win with people” are painted on a hallway wall in the Des Moines Register’s offices in Iowa’s capitol city. We at the Prairie Progressive, located in an undisclosed den in the greater Iowa City area, agree with this sentiment, and we applaud the Register’s recent effort to introduce its “team” to its readers.

Thus inspired, the Prairie Progressive announces new positions available on our staff:

- Community content editor
- Consumer experience director
- Content strategist
- Content specialist
- Digital and print producer
- Engagement editor

Please send your resume to the Prairie Progressive if you feel qualified to assume these responsibilities. We regret that all positions are filled for:

- Journalist
- News reporter
- Columnist
- Political analyst
- Book reviewer

However, the Prairie Progressive always welcomes your articles, and will print (almost) anything you submit. 700-800 words is best, to match our readers’ diminishing attention spans. Thank you for your support! ✂

–Prairie Dog

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