



The Rez Of The Story

A Governmental Template?

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives). This is one of those FYI columns that will illuminate as well as possibly create enough intrigue in you to seriously consider delving into this matter further. These are concepts well worth exploring if you want to be a more informed and active voter or if you might be contemplating public office at some time in the future. Of particular interest is the contributive factor of Native American political and governance thought — suggesting and perhaps dispelling altogether, negative stereotypes some American non-Indians still cling to about Native people being savages at the time of so called “discovery.”



Vince TWO EAGLES

Here, taken from my old friends Keoke and Porterfield from their book entitled, “American Indian Contributions to the World,” it tell us that:

“Socialism is a political philosophy that regards a class-free society — in which the collective good is valued over individuality — as the ideal society. The Iroquois, indigenous to what is now New England, created the Iroquois League between A.D. 1100 and 1450. European political philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were influenced by the Iroquois ideas of government.

“Marx and Engels, both of whom were German, lived in England. They did not have contact with the Iroquois but learned of their constitution through the work of Lewis Henry Morgan, who would later come to be known as the father of American anthropology. He spent nearly 10 years in close contact with the Iroquois people and his writings were far more objective than any others until that point.

“... Morgan detailed how the Iroquois had set up their government with checks and balances and equal distribution of wealth and power. Iroquois leaders were essentially servants who could be removed for any negative behavior relating to the people they served or to the office they held. Ordinary people were allowed religious and political expression, and women were allowed to participate in the political process.

“Most of the thinkers in the 1800s had difficulty grasping the concept of a society without private property or social classes. Up until this time Europeans saw other cultures only in terms of European knowledge and experi-

ence. Many authors attempted to describe the American Indians with words like feudalism and kingships — concepts that were based on the European system of private property. Morgan’s studies of American Indian people stood in sharp contrast to this way of thinking. His experience with the Iroquois led him to believe that the American Indian society without private ownership of property and without class worked because it was based on family ties and kinship relationships as opposed to private ownerships. At first glance the League of the Iroquois appeared more socialist in nature than democratic.

“All these concepts, and more, captivated Marx and Engels. They saw in Morgan’s book a political system that worked and was, at the same time, almost their ideal of a classless and leaderless state. Among the Iroquois, the idea of private property and the competition to acquire wealth was almost unheard of. These concepts appealed most to the two political philosophers. Morgan’s description of Iroquois society fit into Marx’s theories and was an alternative to the monarchy or the Russian czarist form of government that he was uncomfortable accepting. He felt that absolute rule placed too much power in the hands of one person and produced a very unequal distribution of wealth, in addition to which the masses has a few political choices or rights.

“After Marx read Morgan’s work, he became excited by the ideas and began writing a book incorporating Morgan’s theories with his own. Marx died before he could finish the work. Before he died, he declared Morgan’s scholarship a significant piece of writing that all socialist needed to read in order to understand the basis of his own theory.

“... As late as 1964, Moscow hosted a symposium of the International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques devoted to Morgan’s theories and writings. Inadvertently, the Iroquois had contributed greatly not only to the government of the United States of America, but to that of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as well.”

I think it is important to know that Native people had and continue to have a significant role to play in the unfolding of the global politic of the future.

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

Never, Ever Say Never, Ever

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

A few words to ponder as we sail toward the fiscal cliff. Those words would be: “That was then, this is now.” Strip away the false piety and legalistic hair splitting offered by Republican lawmakers rationalizing their decision to abandon a pledge that they will never ever, ever, ever vote to raise taxes, and that’s pretty much what the explanation boils down to.

Rep. Peter King says he understood the pledge, propounded by the almighty Grover Norquist and his group Americans for Tax Reform, to obligate him for only one term. Apparently, he thought it had to be renewed, like a driver’s license.

Sen. Lindsey Graham says that if Democrats agree to entitlement reform, “I will violate the pledge ... for the good of the country” — a stirring statement of patriotism and sacrifice that warms your heart like a midnight snack of jalapeno chili fries.

In other words: bull twinkies. If you want the truth of why a trickle of GOP lawmakers is suddenly willing to blaspheme the holy scripture of their faith, it’s simple. The pledge used to be politically expedient. Now it is not.

This is not, by the way, a column in defense of the Norquist pledge. The only thing dumber than his offering such a pledge was scores of politicians signing it, an opinion that has nothing to do with the wisdom or lack thereof of raising taxes and everything to do with the fact that one ought not, as a matter of simple common sense, make hard, inflexible promises on changeable matters of national import. It is all well and good to stand on whatever one’s principles are, but as a politician — a job that, by definition, requires the ability to compromise — you don’t needlessly box yourself in. Never say never.

Much less, never ever, ever, ever. So this revolution against “he who must be obeyed,” however modest, is nonetheless welcome. It suggests reason seeping like sunlight into places too long cloistered in the damp and dark of ideological rigidity.



Leonard PITTS

But it leaves an observer in the oddly weightless position of applauding a thing and being, simultaneously, disgusted by it. Has politics ever seemed more ignoble than in these clumsy, self-serving attempts to justify a deviation from orthodoxy? They have to do this, of course, because the truth — “I signed the pledge because I knew it would help me get elected, but with economic ruin looming and Obama re-elected on a promise to raise taxes on the rich and most voters supporting him on that, it’s not doing me as much good as it once did” — is unpretty and unflattering.

In this awkward about-face, these lawmakers leave us wondering once again whether the vast majority of them — right and left, red and blue, Republican and Democrat — really believe in anything, beyond being re-elected.

There is a reason Congress’ approval ratings flirted with single digits this year. There is a reason a new Gallup poll finds only 10 percent of Americans ranking Congress “high or very high” in honesty and ethics.

Lawyers rank higher. Advertisers rank higher. Even journalists rank higher.

This is the sad pass to which years of congressional grandstanding, fact spinning, cookie jar pilfering and assorted harrumphing and pontificating have brought us. And while a certain cynicism toward its leaders functions as a healthy antigen in the body politic, it cannot be good for either the nation or its leaders that so many of them are held in plain contempt.

The moral malleability exemplified by the likes of King and Graham will not help. Perhaps we should ask them to sign a new pledge: “I will always tell you what I think and what I plan to do in plain English, regardless of whether you like it or it benefits me politically.”

But no lawmaker would make that pledge. And who would believe them if they did?

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Gertsema Will Leave Behind Strong Legacy

Honestly, many people probably aren’t surprised that Yankton School District superintendent Dr. Joe Gertsema has announced he is resigning next summer. But the reasons for that are in the eye of the beholder. Some would point out that Gertsema has been here 22 years — more than a generation — and cannot be blamed for wanting to try something else while he is still young enough to do so. Others will say he has outlived his usefulness here, noting the two recent failed opt-out attempts as signs. And there are those who will point to his October arrest in Vermillion for allegedly driving under the influence as THE reason he is stepping aside.

He did tell us late last week that he wants to move on to other things, although he has nothing lined up yet, and that he has been looking around for about a year. He added that while the two recent opt-out attempts may have helped speed that process on a bit, the October incident had nothing to do with his decision.

We have every reason to believe this. We do know, based on independent sources, that Gertsema had in fact looked at other jobs long before the October incident, which would seem to verify his comments.

However, the real focus now should be on where the school district aims to go with its next superintendent.

We might suggest that officials could look at Gertsema himself as a practical template for what they should be seeking.

Having a 22-year run in one place by a superintendent tends to create a number of issues, not the least of them being a complacency about the job that person has done. Thus, we tend to take for granted that things will run smoothly, that matters will be addressed, that the needs of the district will be properly met.

For the most part, Gertsema has done all these things well.

When he started here in 1990, Yankton High School was stuffed into the facility on Mulberry Street, and the middle school students were crammed into the aging, inadequate structure on Walnut. He was able to spearhead an effort, that was not without controversy, to build the new Summit Activities Center, which was a daring collaboration between the school district and the city. It survived an initial defeat at the polls and a lawsuit, and it is now the focal point of Yankton’s public education. He was also part of the controversial construction of the new administration building and bus facility, the latter of which will save the district considerable money in the long run.

Gertsema also oversaw the district’s technological transition. When he started in 1990, computers were part of the education program in only a periphery sense. The school has changed dramatically to match the equally dramatic change of modern life as our technological demands have exploded.

Yankton’s students rank among the best in the state, which is due in no small part to an excellent staff, the majority of which have been added under Gertsema’s watch.

Until the recent budget issues, the Yankton district was for a long time seen as a model of fiscal efficiency in the state. Yes, the district has undergone a pair of failed opt-out attempts recently, but the district was one of the last in the state to reach such a point. Money problems have been epidemic among state-supported schools since the late 1990s, and Yankton went a long way before failing that brick wall.

The recent failed opt-outs have been difficult chapters for the district and for Gertsema. The opt-outs have also exposed some flaws in the Gertsema era; in particular, the first opt-out attempt operated with a certain unresponsiveness to public will that was subsequently battered at the polls. The second opt-out try was seen by some people as a referendum on Gertsema himself, as if he was the reason for the financial problems now faced by this district — even though they are the same as the problems faced by the vast majority of schools in the state.

No, Gertsema hasn’t been perfect, but his overall body of work here deserves praise, and it should be used as a guideline for the future.

Anyone who has been in such a job for 22 years is bound to make some enemies, and Gertsema is no exception. But he has also made a lot of good things happen, whether some of his critics will acknowledge it or not. And for that, he should be thanked. We wish him well in whatever he chooses to tackle in the future.

kmh

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Tuesday, Dec. 11, the 346th day of 2012. There are 20 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Dec. 11, 1972, Apollo 17’s lunar module landed on the moon with astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt aboard; during three extravehicular activities (EVAs), they became the last two men to date to step onto the lunar surface.

On this date: In 1792, France’s King Louis XVI went before the Convention to face charges of treason. (Louis was convicted, and executed the following month.) In 1816, Indiana became the 19th state.

In 1912, movie producer Carlo Ponti was born in Magenta, Italy.

In 1928, police in Buenos Aires announced they had thwarted an attempt on the life of President-elect Herbert Hoover.

In 1936, Britain’s King Edward VIII abdicated the throne so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson; his brother, Prince Albert, became King George VI.

In 1937, Italy announced it was withdrawing from the League of Nations.

In 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States; the U.S. responded in kind.

In 1946, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was established.

In 1961, a U.S. aircraft carrier carrying Army helicopters arrived in Saigon — the first direct American military support for South Vietnam’s battle against Communist guerrillas.

In 1981, the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians at the hands of army troops. The U.N. Security Council chose Javier Perez de Cuellar of Peru to be the fifth secretary-general. Muhammad Ali, 39, fought his final fight, losing by unanimous decision to Trevor Berbick in Nassau, Bahamas.

In 1997, more than 150 countries agreed at a global warming conference in Kyoto, Japan, to control the Earth’s greenhouse gases.

In 2008, Bernie Madoff was arrested, accused of running a multibillion-dollar Ponzi scheme. (Madoff is serving a 150-year federal prison sentence.)

Ten years ago: The United States let an intercepted shipment of North Korean missiles proceed to the Persian Gulf coun-

try of Yemen a day after the vessel was detained. A congressional report found that intelligence agencies that were supposed to protect Americans from the Sept. 11 hijackers failed to do so because they were poorly organized, poorly equipped and slow to pursue clues that might have prevented the attacks.

Five years ago: Two car bombs in Algeria, including one targeting the U.N. refugee agency’s offices, killed 37 people, 17 of them U.N. employees; Al-Qaida’s self-styled North African branch claimed responsibility. The Senate Intelligence Committee took closed-door testimony from CIA Director Michael Hayden on how videotapes of terror suspect interrogations were made, then destroyed.

One year ago: Former military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega was flown from France to Panama to face additional punishment in his home country after spending more than 20 years in U.S. and French prisons for drug trafficking and money laundering. A U.N. climate conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, reached a hard-fought agreement on a far-reaching program meant to set a new course for the global fight against climate change.

Today’s Birthdays: Actor Jean-Louis Trintignant is 82. Actress Rita Moreno is 81. Former California state lawmaker Tom Hayden is 73. Pop singer David Gates (Bread) is 72. Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., is 71. Actress Donna Mills is 70. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., is 69. Singer Brenda Lee is 68. Actress Lynda Day George is 68. Music producer Tony Brown is 66. Actress Teri Garr is 65. Movie director Susan Seidelman is 60. Actress Bess Armstrong is 59. Singer Jermaine Jackson is 58. Rock musician Mike Mesaros (The Smithereens) is 55. Rock musician Nikki Sixx (Mötley Crüe) is 54. Rock musician Darryl Jones (The Rolling Stones) is 51. Actor Ben Browder is 50. Singer-musician Justin Currie (Del Amitri) is 48. Rock musician David Schools (Gov’t Mule, Widespread Panic) is 48. Actor Gary Dourdan is 46. Actress-comedian Mo’Nique (“The Parkers”) is 45. Actor Max Martini is 43. Rapper-actor Mos Def is 39. Actor Rider Strong is 33. Actress Hailee Steinfeld (“True Grit”) is 16.

Thought for Today: “A technical objection is the first refuge of a scoundrel.” — Heywood Brown, American journalist (1888-1939).

FROM THE BIBLE

But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.” Luke 8:50. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Gas Price Questions

Paul Harens, Yankton

Once (actually this is the third letter I’ve submitted on this issue) again, I must write to the citizens of Yankton.

I would like to know why Sioux City gas is \$3.19; Interstate station \$3.34; Huron \$3.44? Tyndall and Avon have been cheaper than Yankton stations (at times). When everyone’s gas prices were supposed to go down, Yankton went up. Why does Yankton continually have the highest price for gas? Why isn’t someone looking into this situation.

Perchance someone should contact the attorney general’s office and ask for an investigation?

Just my thoughts on the situation.

Online Opinion

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan’s Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Have you ever been arrested?
No 75%
Yes 25%

TOTAL VOTES CAST 527

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you think Hillary Clinton will run for president in 2016?

To vote in the Press & Dakotan’s Internet poll, log on to our Web site at www.yankton.net.