



The New U.S. Civil War

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

The vitriol is worse than I ever recall. Worse than the Palin-induced smarm of 2008. Worse than the swift-boat lies of 2004. Worse, even, than the anything-goes craziness of 2000 and its ensuing bitterness.

It's almost a civil war. I know families in which close relatives are no longer speaking. A dating service says Democrats won't even consider going out with Republicans, and vice versa.

What's going on? Yes, we're divided over issues like the size of government and whether women should have control over their bodies. But these aren't exactly new debates. We've been disagreeing over the size and role of government since Thomas Jefferson squared off with Alexander Hamilton, and over abortion rights since before Roe v. Wade almost 40 years ago.

And we've had bigger disagreements in the past — over the Vietnam War, civil rights, communist witch hunts — that didn't rip us apart like this.

Maybe it's that we're more separated now, geographically and online.

The town where I grew up in the 1950s was a GOP stronghold, but Henry Wallace, FDR's left-wing vice president, had retired there quite happily. Our political disagreements then and there didn't get in the way of our friendships. Or even our families — my father voted Republican and my mother was a Democrat.

So when Americans get upset about politics these days, we tend to stew in our own juices, without benefit of anyone we know well and with whom we disagree — and this makes it almost impossible for us to understand the other side.

That geographic split also means more Americans are represented in Congress by people whose political competition comes from primary challengers — right-wing Republicans in red states and districts, left-wing Democrats in blue states and districts. And this drives those who represent us even further apart.

The nation is becoming browner and blacker. Most children born in California are minorities. In a few

years, America as a whole will be a majority of minorities. Meanwhile, women have been gaining economic power. Their median wage hasn't yet caught up with men, but it's getting close. And with more women getting college degrees than men, their pay will surely exceed male pay in a few years.



Robert REICH

In other words, white working-class men have been on the losing end of a huge demographic and economic shift. That's made them a tinderbox of frustration and anger, eagerly ignited by Fox News, Rush Limbaugh and other peddlers of petulance, including an increasing number of Republicans who have gained political power by fanning the flames.

That hate-mongering and attendant scapegoating — of immigrants, blacks, gays, women seeking abortions, our government itself — has legitimized some vitriol and scapegoating on the left as well. I detest what the Koch Brothers, Karl Rove, Grover Norquist, Rupert Murdoch and Paul Ryan are doing, and I hate their politics. But in this heated environment, I sometimes have to remind myself I don't hate them personally.

This degree of divisiveness would not have taken root had America preserved the social solidarity we had two generations ago. The Great Depression and World War II reminded us we were all in it together. We had to depend on each other in order to survive. That sense of mutual dependence transcended our disagreements. My father, a "Rockefeller Republican," strongly supported civil rights and voting rights, Medicare and Medicaid. I remember him saying, "We're all Americans, aren't we?"

To be sure, we endured 9/11, we've gone to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we suffered the Great Recession. But these did not bind us as we were bound together in the Great Depression and World War II. The horror of 9/11 did not touch all of us, and the only sacrifice George W. Bush asked of us was that we kept shopping. Today's wars are fought by hired guns — young people who are paid to do the work most of the rest of us don't want our own children to do. And the Great Recession split us rather than connected us; the rich grew richer, the rest of us grew poorer and less secure.

So we finish a bitter election feeling as if we're two nations rather than one. The challenge, not only for our president and representatives in Washington but for all of us, is to rediscover the public good.

Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is the author of "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf release now out in paperback.

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Citizen Of The Year: The Best Of Us ...

Yankton is praised a lot for the generosity and devotion of its people, and that's not an exaggeration. We seem to possess more than our share of that Midwest friendliness and helpfulness that is hard to find elsewhere.

These are the people who are honored each year with the "Citizen of the Year" award, which is presented by a coalition of service organizations and the Press & Dakotan. We are once again seeking nominations for this very special honor.

The award was conceived more than 40 years ago as a way to spotlight the devotion of some of our citizens. The first winner was legendary Yankton College coach Carl Youngworth.

These people deserve our gratitude — although they don't actively seek it, which is quite understandable. But they do merit our praise and our appreciation. But the "Citizen of the Year" award does more than honor a deserving individual.

The award also throws a spotlight on those who serve the community in general. It highlights a type of spirit that every town like ours needs. It's a spirit that can be found in the best of times and the worst of days, in the brightest moments and the darkest hours.

That's what characterizes every person who has ever won the "Citizen of the Year" award. They are more than people who do good deeds. They are people who are always there when you need them. And they represent the best of us.

Table listing Past Honorees from 1970 to 2011, including names like Carl Youngworth, Joe Vinatieri, Jeff Scott, Freeman Otto, George Bauer, Harold Levinger, C.B. McVay, Chan Gurney, Dorothy Jencks, Lucy and J. Laifen Weed, Irene Scott, Sister Jerome Schmitt, Laddie Cimpl, T.H. Sattler, Elizabeth Rempp, Mary Alice Halverson, Don Dendinger, Bessi Burgi, Don Peterson, Frank Yaggie, Willis Stanaage, Wynn Speece, Don Bierle, Hod Nielsen, Millie Wootton, Tom Merrill, Ted Blakey, Bob Karolevitz, Gladys Woolm, Dr. Ken Halverson, Sister Jacquelyn Ernster, Don and Doreas Allan, Beulah Larson, Ken Jones, Arletta Tisher, Larry and Kathy Hintgen, Don and Peg Schiedel, Jim Black, Pauline Rhoades, Jack and Margaret Lyons, Myrtle Andersen, Thomas and Jo Stanaage.

And now we need you to nominate some of these individuals for the "Citizen of the Year" honor. Please send your nominations to: Citizen of the Year, c/o Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078; go online to www.yankton.net/coy, or drop off a nominating form here at the paper. The winner will be announced in early January.

SPEAK OUT!

Share your thoughts with us. Write to the PRESS & DAKOTAN on a topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, Nov. 7, the 312th day of 2012. There are 54 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 7, 1972, President Richard Nixon was re-elected in a landslide over Democrat George McGovern.

On this date: In 1811, U.S. forces led by Indiana Territory Gov. William Henry Harrison defeated warriors from Tecumseh's Confederacy in the Battle of Tippecanoe.

In 1861, former U.S. President John Tyler was elected to the Confederate House of Representatives (however, Tyler died before he could take his seat).

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln replaced replace Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac with Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside.

In 1912, black boxing champion Jack Johnson was indicted in Chicago for allegedly violating the Mann Act with a white woman, Belle Schreiber. (Johnson was convicted and sentenced to a year in prison; he fled the U.S., later returning to serve his term.)

In 1916, Republican Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to Congress.

In 1917, Russia's Bolshevik Revolution took place as forces led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin overthrew the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky.

In 1940, Washington state's original Tacoma Narrows Bridge, nicknamed "Galloping Gertie," collapsed into Puget Sound during a windstorm.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt won an unprecedented fourth term in office, defeating Thomas E. Dewey.

In 1962, Republican Richard Nixon, having lost California's gubernatorial race, held what he called his "last press conference," telling reporters, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore." Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, 78, died in New York City.

In 1973, Congress overrode President Richard Nixon's veto of the War Powers Act, which limits a chief executive's power to wage war without congressional approval.

In 1980, actor Steve McQueen died in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, at age 50.

FROM THE BIBLE

Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." Genesis 4:25. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Trail Ride A Success

Muriel Cook, Mission Hill St. Jude Coordinator

The organizers of the 15th annual "Saddle Up for St. Jude" trail ride held on Sept. 16 would like to express their gratitude to all who made the ride a success. We would like to thank the businesses that donated the door prizes, they were: Ace Hardware, Bomgaars, C&S Saddle Shop, Dakota Archery, Four Seasons Fabric, Frontier Mills, Graham Tires, Mark's Machinery, Probuil, Rexal Drug Center, State Farm Insurance, Sturdevants, Tractor Supply Company, Truck Trailer Sales and Service, Walmart and Yaggie's Grain and Seed.

We also want to thank all the businesses who donated the items for lunch served after the ride: Chesterman Company (Coke products), Cimpl Packing Company (hot dogs), Freedom Valu Center (bottled water), Yankton Hy-Vee (hot dog buns) and the Yankton Rodeo Association for all the food items they donated to our event.

A special thanks to Doug Kauth for leading the riders through the trails, to Val and Doug Hevle and Kali Cook for helping with registration, to Stacy Kotalik for helping set up the lunch site and serving lunch, to James Kotalik for running the Poker Run and to Val Hevle for cooking for the lunch. To Kyle and Justin Cook who set signs up and took care of all the heavy lifting.

Without the help of these fine people and businesses, the fund-raiser could not have been a success. This event raised \$3,500 for the Children of St. Jude. The Children's Research Hospital is a non-sectarian hospital that treats patients without regard to race, religion, creed or ability to pay.

American Invention

Charles Snyder, Apple Valley, Minn.

In a recent letter (Press & Dakotan, Oct. 24), Sam Nusz wrote, "Americans have invented the telephone, radio, television, computer, electricity, light bulb." The harnessing of electricity does have considerable roots in America, but to say that we invented it is a stretch. The electrical devices that Mr. Nusz mentions would not be possible were it not for some universally used components such as resistors and capacitors.

Online Opinion

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

LATEST RESULTS:

Who do you support in the Yankton County Commission race?
Donna Freng36%
Mark Johnson27%
James Van Osdel23%
Undecided/not sure15%
TOTAL VOTES CAST447

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 Hurricane Sandy reinforces the warnings about climate change?

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

Resistance is measured in ohms. This name comes from a German physicist Georg Ohm, who, in a treatise published in 1827, described measurements of applied voltage and current through electrical circuits. He formulated an equation to define electron movement that is known as Ohm's law; to this day, it stands uncorrected.

Michael Faraday, a famous English physicist and chemist (1791-1867) discovered that electricity could be made by moving a magnet inside a wire coil; he was able to build the first electric motor. He later built the first generator and transformer. He was honored by having the storage capacity of capacitors, named after him: farads.

Those are just two of many non-Americans that contributed to the understanding of electrical theory. So it seems America does not have a corner on inventing electrical stuff.

From The Economist (Oct. 20, 2012): "A nation that can attract the cleverest people in the world can innovate and prosper indefinitely. Unless it does what America has done since Sept. 11, 2011, which is to make the immigration process so slow, unpredictable and unpleasant that immigrants stay away."

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