



Mitt's Biggest Problem

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

There are two major theories about why Mitt Romney is dropping in the polls. One is that Romney is a lousy candidate, unable to connect with people or make his case. The other is that Americans are finally beginning to see how radical the GOP has become and are repudiating it.

Most Republicans hold to the first view, for obvious reasons. And their long knives are already out.



Robert REICH

Conservative columnist Peggy Noonan called the Romney campaign “incompetent” and “a rolling calamity.” Republican guru William Kristol termed Romney’s videotaped remarks “arrogant and stupid.” Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association, a conservative Christian group, slammed Romney for running a “lackluster campaign.”

As his poll numbers continue to slide, conservative carping against Romney is growing louder — prompting his wife, Ann Romney, to tell conservatives, “Stop it. This is hard. You want to try it? Get in the ring.”

OK, so maybe Romney isn’t the best campaigner the world has ever seen. He’s no Bill Clinton. But to put all the blame on Romney and his campaign misses a fundamental reality: Today’s Republican Party is more radical and extreme than it’s been in more than 80 years.

Don’t just take my word for it. Norman Ornstein, a distinguished political observer and resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (hardly a liberal bastion) and his colleague Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution have been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than four decades. They say they’ve never seen Washington as dysfunctional as it is now. And they blame Republicans.

“We have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party,” they wrote in the *Washington Post* in April. In their view, the GOP has become “ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence, and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition.”

While Democrats “may have moved from their 40-yard line to their 25,” say Ornstein and Mann, “the Republicans have gone from their 40 to somewhere behind their goal post.”

Most Americans don’t pay all that much attention to politics most of the time. But as the presidential election has begun to loom, they’ve started to notice.

They saw the Republican primaries and then they watched the Republican convention. And they’ve found a GOP far removed from the “compassionate conservatism” the party tried to sell in 2000.

Instead, they’ve found a party dominated by Tea Partiers, nativists, social Darwinists, homophobes, right-wing evangelicals, and a few rich people whose only interest is to become even wealthier.

These regressive elements were there in 2000, to be sure. They lurked in the GOP in the 1990s, when Newt Gingrich took over the House. They were there in the 1980s, too, although Ronald Reagan’s sunny disposition gave them cover. In truth, they’ve been part of the GOP for more than half a century.

But never before have these regressives held so much sway in the Republican Party. Never before have they called the shots.

Unfortunately for the GOP, most Americans don’t share these extreme views.

In other words, the GOP’s problem isn’t Mitt Romney. It’s the other way around. Mitt Romney’s problem is the GOP.

The GOP is also the problem for an increasing number of Republicans around the country in Senate and House races. Sen. Scott Brown, for example, is well-liked in Massachusetts. Up until recently the polls showed him slightly ahead of his opponent, Elizabeth Warren.

But Brown’s poll numbers have been dropping in recent weeks. That’s not because of the Romney campaign. Romney was governor of Massachusetts; if Romney had been Brown’s problem, it would have been a problem from the start.

Brown is dropping because he’s had to carry the burden of the public’s increasing distaste for the GOP. The same is true of Senate races in Virginia, Florida and elsewhere.

Romney hasn’t been letting the GOP down. To the contrary, Romney’s been giving this GOP exactly what it wants in a candidate.

And that’s exactly the problem for Romney — as it is for many other Republican candidates — because what the GOP wants is not at all what the rest of America wants.

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.

YOUR LETTERS

Trash Talk

Ken Jiricek, Yankton

I drive past YHS on a regular basis and frankly, I’m appalled by the trash produced by the students and then allowed to blow with the wind wherever it may go.

In the Yankton Municipal Codes, Article I, Section 10-3 states: “No person shall throw or deposit receivable solid waste or other kinds of waste as set forth and defined in section 10-1 on any private property within the city, whether owned by such person or not; except that the owner or person in control of private property may maintain authorized private receptacles for collection awaiting prompt disposal in such a manner that such receivable solid waste will be prevented from being carried or deposited by the elements upon any street, sidewalk or other public place or upon any private property.”

YHS is guilty of violating the city code regarding littering. If I allowed trash to blow about such as YHS does, I’m fairly certain I’d be informed to cease and desist.

If this trash is produced as a result of the open campus policy, there should be accountability for abusing the privilege. It should be revoked if abused in this manner or modified to eliminate containers leaving the cafeteria, (and Styrofoam at that, another issue

ABOUT THIS PAGE

■ The View page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the Press & Dakotan. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

for another time).

The mission statement of the Yankton School District is “to optimize student potential in a global society.” Indeed we do live in a global society and our globe is a closed ecological system. We have an impact on our planet and allowing this behavior does nothing to develop a sense of societal responsibility and consequences.

I’ve had discussions with several parents and community members regarding this trash and they likewise are appalled. It speaks very poorly as a community, a societal example and as a school system. There are several hundred hands in YHS, I do not believe it to be cruel and unusual to ask that they assume a modicum of responsibility for their actions.

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Is Hyperion Giving Up On Union Co.?

Frankly, if you’re supporter of the proposed Hyperion oil refinery project in Union County, it is difficult to see Monday’s announcement by the company as anything but a bad sign.

And if you’re an opponent of the \$10 billion refinery, you couldn’t be blamed for feeling optimistic today.

On Monday, the Texas-based company announced that it has allowed its existing land leases for the proposed 2,000-acre refinery to lapse. In a press release, the company stated that “we are evaluating our various options and opportunities.” The deadline for the project to start construction (depending on financing) was March 14, 2013, although there was a possibility Hyperion might have sought an extension.

“Options and opportunities”? That certainly sounds as though, after more than four years of work and logistical wrangling — and after all the mystery (remember “the gorilla” project, as it was first known?), hype and promise — the firm may be looking elsewhere to build its refinery. There were three other sites being scrutinized by Hyperion when this process started. So, while the statement may well be true, one cannot escape the feeling it is less rooted in reality than the alternative.

The announcement comes at an intriguing juncture. The South Dakota Supreme Court is set to hear oral arguments today (Wednesday) in Sioux Falls concerning Hyperion’s bid for a state air quality permit for the refinery. The company said it still plans to argue the case.

The refinery project has seen some tough sledding on its road to reality. The Sierra Club has challenged the project vigorously on environmental grounds, and that has delayed the project. There has also been some local opposition to the refinery.

However, there’s been considerable support shown, too. Union County voters gave their OK to the project in 2008, and state officials have worked closely with Hyperion on the project, which was expected to generate 5,000 construction jobs and, once completed, about 2,000 daily jobs. It was anticipated to refine about 400,000 barrels of oil per day.

The financial impact of such a project cannot be overstated, either in dollars that would have been generated or in dollars that may now go elsewhere. The Sioux City Journal estimated it would have had a multi-billion-dollar impact on the three-state region. Elk Point invested heavily in its infrastructure to prepare for the refinery’s arrival. And communities within a 60-mile radius, including Vermillion, Yankton and Hartington, figured to have felt an economic impact of the project. Indeed, Yankton city officials have long couched the discussion of certain regional projects, such as airport modifications, with Hyperion in mind.

The environmental impact is another issue to bear in mind. We can draw judgments here in Yankton, but those judgments are based 50 miles away and with no prospect of a oil refinery moving into our back yard. We’re in the game, but not nearly as much as others.

Even if Hyperion prevails in its Supreme Court hearing and decides to push on at the Union County site, it’s hard to see how this project can now get under way anytime soon. It must be assumed that lease negotiations for the land would have to begin again. The simple fact is, the prospect of the company reworking the same old procedural territory to get back to where it was on Sept. 30 doesn’t seem like a prudent course of action at this point.

“I really don’t understand why they would allow the land options to expire,” conceded Union County Commission Chairman Doyle Karpen. “I believe this lingered on longer than they anticipated.”

Perhaps too long, depending on how you read Monday’s actions.

kmh

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 3, the 277th day of 2012. There are 89 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Oct. 3, 1962, astronaut Wally Schirra became the fifth American to fly in space as he blasted off from Cape Canaveral aboard the Sigma 7 on a 9-hour flight.

On this date: In 1789, President George Washington declared Nov. 26, 1789, a day of Thanksgiving to express gratitude for the creation of the United States of America.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November Thanksgiving Day.

In 1932, Iraq became independent of British administration.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of Economic Stabilization.

In 1951, the New York Giants captured the National League pennant by a score of 5-4 as Bobby Thomson hit a three-run homer off the Brooklyn Dodgers’ Ralph Branca in the “shot heard ‘round the world.”

In 1952, Britain conducted its first atomic test as it detonated a 25-kiloton device in the Monte Bello Islands off Australia. The situation comedy “Our Miss Brooks,” formerly a radio show, premiered on CBS-TV with Eve Arden again in the title role.

In 1962, the British musical “Stop the World — I Want to Get Off” opened on Broadway with Anthony Newley and Anna Quayle reprising their West End roles.

In 1967, folk singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie died in New York at age 55.

In 1970, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was established under the Department of Commerce.

In 1992, Barack Obama married Michelle Robinson at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago.

In 1995, the jury in the O.J. Simpson murder trial found the former football star not guilty of the 1994 slayings of his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and Ronald Goldman (however, Simpson was later found liable in a civil trial).

In 2008, O.J. Simpson was found guilty of robbing two sports-memorabilia dealers at gunpoint in a Las Vegas hotel room. (Simpson was later sentenced to nine to 33 years in prison.)

Ten years ago: Five people were shot to death in the Washington, D.C. area within a 14-hour period, sparking the hunt for the “Beltway Sniper.” Hurricane Lili gave

Louisiana’s coast a 100-mile-an-hour battering. Producer-director Bruce Paltrow, 58, died in Rome, Italy.

Five years ago: North Korea agreed to provide a complete list of its nuclear programs and disable its facilities at its main reactor complex by December 31, 2007. (However, North Korea later said it would move to restore its nuclear reactor, saying the United States had failed to follow through with promised incentives.) President George W. Bush quietly vetoed expansion of a children’s health insurance program.

One year ago: An Italian appeals court freed Amanda Knox of Seattle after four years in prison, tossing murder convictions against Knox and an ex-boyfriend in the stabbing of their British roommate, Meredith Kercher. Three scientists, Bruce Beutler of the U.S., Jules Hoffmann of France and Canadian-born Ralph Steinman (who had died three days earlier), won the Nobel Prize in medicine. Arthur C. Nielsen Jr., 92, who’d led the famous TV ratings company, died in Winnetka, Ill.

Today’s Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Marques O. Haynes is 86. Composer Steve Reich is 76. Singer Alan O’Day is 72. Rock and roll star Chubby Checker is 71. Actor Alan Rachins is 70. Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., is 69. Magician Roy Horn is 68. Singer Lindsey Buckingham is 63. Jazz musician Ronnie Laws is 62. Blues singer Keb’ Mo’ is 61. Former astronaut Kathryn Sullivan is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Dave Winfield is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Dennis Eckersley is 58. Civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton is 58. Actor Hart Bochner is 56. Actor Peter Frechette is 56. Golfer Fred Couples is 53. Actor-comedian Greg Proops is 53. Actor Jack Wagner is 53. Rock musician Tommy Lee is 50. Actor Clive Owen is 48. Actress Janet Moloney is 43. Singer Gwen Stefani (No Doubt) is 43. Pop singer Kevin Richardson is 41. Rock singer G. Love is 40. Actress Keiko Agena is 39. Actress Neve Campbell is 39. Singer India.Arie is 37. Rapper Talib Kweli is 37. Actress Alanna Ubach is 37. Actor Seann William Scott is 36. Actress Shannyn Sossamon is 34. Rock musician Josh Klinghoffer (Red Hot Chili Peppers) is 31. Actor Seth Gabel is 31. Rock musician Mark King (Hinder) is 30. Actor Erik Von Detten is 30. Singer-musician Cherrill Green (Edens Edge) is 29. Actress-singer Ashlee Simpson-Wentz is 28.

Thought for Today: “The worst disease in the world is the plague of vengeance.” — Dr. Karl Menninger, American psychiatrist (1893-1990).

FROM THE BIBLE

Sing to the Lord, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day.
Psalm 96:2. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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