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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Daring To Be Different

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (Sept. 10): In the last presidential election, John McCain took Nebraska for granted, only to see Barack Obama spirit away an Electoral College vote from this thoroughly Republican state. The Obama campaign had an Omaha headquarters and a well-organized effort to identify Obama voters and get them to the polls. It was the first electoral vote claimed by a Democrat in 44 years. Fittingly, it was a cold day — 4 degrees Fahrenheit — in Huskerland (with apologies to Don Walton) when biology teacher and delegate to the Electoral College John Forsee cast a lone vote for Obama.

This year, Mitt Romney is leaving nothing to chance. The Romney campaign has targeted Omaha to make sure that doesn't happen again. The Obama campaign also has opened a headquarters in Omaha, although it does not appear to have as much staff as four years ago.

The attention is a payoff for Nebraska's unusual system of allocating its electoral votes for president. Nebraska is one of only two states that allow voters to split its votes between presidential candidates. (Maine is the other.)

The state law that allows the votes to be split has been under almost constant attack since it was approved in 1991. Gov. Ben Nelson vetoed two bills that would have done away with the system.

Last year, Republican Party officials threatened to hold Republican members of the nonpartisan Legislature "accountable" if they opposed a bill to end the split vote system.

However, supporters of the current system succeeded in bottling up the bill in committee.

So, would either the Romney or Obama presidential campaigns be paying much attention to Nebraska if the winner-take-all system were in place?

An argument can be made that the state would be taken for granted by both sides. Nebraska's profile in the presidential race would be so low it would barely register.

Sometimes it's advantageous to be different. Nebraskans always have placed high value on independent thinking.

One high-profile example is Nebraska's unique, one-house Legislature. Another is Nebraska's status as the only state served entirely by publicly owned electric utilities.

We'd put the state's system of allocating Electoral College votes in the same category. By going its own way occasionally, Nebraska can offer a reminder to the nation that other options exist, that freedom of thought is more than a platitude. The split-the-vote system exemplifies fairness to the minority party. It's worth preserving.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
 Today is Thursday, Sept. 13, the 257th day of 2012. There are 109 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 13, 1997, funeral services were held in Calcutta, India, for Nobel peace laureate Mother Teresa.

On this date: In 1759, during the final French and Indian War, the British defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham overlooking Quebec City.

In 1788, the Congress of the Confederation authorized the first national election, and declared New York City the temporary national capital.

In 1803, Commodore John Barry, considered by many the father of the American Navy, died in Philadelphia.

In 1912, a state funeral was held in Japan for Emperor Meiji.

In 1948, Republican Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was elected to the U.S. Senate; she became the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress.

In 1959, Elvis Presley met his future wife, 14-year-old Priscilla Beaulieu, while stationed in West Germany with the U.S. Army. (They married in 1967, but divorced in 1973.)

In 1962, Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett rejected the U.S. Supreme Court's order for the University of Mississippi to admit James Meredith, a black student, declaring in a televised address, "We will not drink from the cup of genocide."

In 1970, the first New York City Marathon was held; winner Gary Muhrke finished the 26.2-mile run, which took place entirely inside Central Park, in 2:31:38.

In 1971, a four-day inmates' rebellion at the Attica Correctional Facility in western New York ended as police and guards stormed the prison; the ordeal and final assault claimed the lives of 32 inmates and 11 employees.

In 1989, Fay Vincent was elected commissioner of Major League Baseball, succeeding the late A. Bartlett Giamatti.

In 1993, at the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat shook hands after signing an accord granting limited Palestinian autonomy.

In 1996, rapper Tupac Shakur died at a Las Vegas hospital six days after he was wounded in a drive-by shooting; he was 25.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush said it was "highly doubtful" that Saddam Hussein would comply with demands that he disarm and avoid a confrontation with the world community. And Bush mocked Democrats and other lawmakers who wanted U.N. action before a congressional vote on confronting Saddam.

FROM THE BIBLE

This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. 1 John 5:6. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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The DNC Freak Show

BY PETER HECK

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Not since the tear gas and mass arrests of Chicago 1968 have the Democrats put on a convention that better demonstrated to the American people the sorry state of the left's values and ideals than what just happened in Charlotte. From the opening refrains that echoed the macabre yet unifying obsession amongst Democrats to promote the killing of unborn children, to the culminating moment of President Barack Obama telling us why we need more of him in our lives to survive, the Democrat National Convention revealed just how deplorable things have become in that party.

Truth be told, most casual observers could see the train wreck coming a mile away. Once the speaker line-up for the convention's opening day had been released, the ensuing circus was completely predictable. First, the Democrats would give the floor to a communist from the SEIU, followed by the most rabid abortion fanatic in the country. Then, Harry Reid would take to the stage, presumably to tell everyone of a secret phone call he had just received informing him Mitt Romney had once molested a pack of wild penguins. He wouldn't have professed because it's Romney's job to prove it didn't happen.

And just in case the mentally unstable Senate Majority Leader wasn't embarrassing enough, corrupt Mayor Rahm Emanuel was invited to take a break from his busy schedule of presiding over Chicago's descent into the third layer of Hell to come lecture on good government. Not that Emanuel's speech was necessary to depict exactly what Democrats see as an effective administration. The stirring video tribute to the disastrous Carter years, as well as the keynote address from a man with the appropriate last name of Castro, pretty much said it all.

When Michelle Obama finally approached the microphone, she was following a procession of idiocy and buffoonery that no conservative commentator could even hope to parody. And keep in mind that was just the first day.

But lest you were tempted to think that the Democrats are incapable of equaling such incoherence, day two should have laid those fears to rest. For that was the moment when the podium was handed over to a thirty year old woman whose life mission appears dedicated to getting you to pay for her birth control. Perhaps nothing better defines or encapsulates the left's view of government's appropriate role than having it function as a prophylactic Pez Dispenser. And what does it say about the extent of liberal visionaries when prime speaking roles are given to individuals who are significant only because

a popular radio host called her a nasty name?

Yet amazingly, Sandra Fluke wasn't the real spectacle of the evening. Nor was the keynote speaker, former President Bill Clinton, who spent his time reminding Americans how he balanced the budget and created jobs. Apparently, we were all supposed to just ignore the inconvenient reality that such success was predicated upon him following the pro-business, free market policies enacted by a Republican Congress. Absent from Clinton's speech, of course, were the multiple criticisms he has made in recent years of President Obama's decision to abandon that pro-growth approach in favor of economy-crushing, high tax, big government regulation.

But the pinnacle of the week came in two key moments. The first occurred in an opening DNC video that included the jaw-dropping line, "Government is the only thing that we all belong to." Who, exactly, wrote the script for this video? Chairman Mao? As Mitt Romney appropriately tweeted in response: In America, "We don't belong to the government. Government belongs to us." That Democrats see this foundational reality completely backwards is extraordinarily instructive.

Couple that revelation with the Democrats' decision to drop the one reference to God from their platform. Now, in some ways this was a mere formality — codifying what their public policy agenda has embraced for some time. After all, when the leader of your party and President of the United States shakes his fist at the sky and tells God that His definition of marriage is bigoted, removing His name from the platform shouldn't really be a surprise.

And yes, after public outrage, the Democrats reinserted God — to much consternation, boos and hisses from the raucous crowd. But the larger point comes in the context of a convention dedicated to the proposition that government is the new god. It cares for us, provides for us, nurtures us, teaches us, corrects us, props us up and wipes the tears from our eyes. Without it, we can do nothing — we are nothing. We are a people of, by and for the government.

So while we didn't witness SWAT teams and riot gear this time around, we were left to consider this pathetic reality: in 1968, most mainstream Democrats were embarrassed by what happened in Chicago. In 2012, they are thumping their chests with pride over the spectacle in Charlotte.

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Peter HECK

Sandwiches, Football And Human Rights

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

The Miami Herald (MCT)

We are gathered here today to discuss two recent controversies about same-sex marriage. One comes from the world of pignskin, the other from the world of chicken fat.

You are surely familiar with the latter. It unfolded a few weeks ago over comments by Dan Cathy, president of Chick-fil-A. In interviews with the *Biblical Recorder* newspaper and radio host Ken Coleman, he confirmed his company's opposition to same-sex marriage. "Guilty as charged," he told the paper.

Cathy's comments kicked off one of those only-in-America firestorms. Gay rights groups denounced the fast-food chain. Conservatives responded with a Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day, which reportedly drove the company to record sales. Gay rights activists held a "kiss-in" that was less successful. The mayors of San Francisco, Chicago and Boston pronounced Chick-fil-A unwelcome in their towns. Conservative pundits noted, correctly, that an elected official who seeks to punish an unpopular opinion tramples the First Amendment. The Jim Henson Co. withdrew the Muppets from promotional deals with the restaurant chain.

And, oh yeah, some idiot carrying a bag filled with Chick-fil-A sandwiches walked into the Washington offices of the conservative Family Research Council where he shot and wounded a guard. "I don't like your politics," he reportedly said.

That's a lot of furor over one man's opinion. And you have to wonder why Dan Cathy's views were news. Chick-fil-A's conservative Christian orientation has been known for years — it supports groups like the FRC and even closes on Sundays. So Cathy's comments, objectionable as they are to supporters of marriage equality, did not really tell us anything new.

Which brings us to pignskin. It seems one Emmett C. Burns Jr., a Maryland state lawmaker, recently wrote Steve Bisciotti, owner of the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, insisting that he "inhibit" one of his players, Brendon Ayanbadejo, who has been working in sup-

port of gay marriage. The Ravens refused, and Burns' letter brought him a ton of condemnation, most notably from another player, Chris Kluwe of the Minnesota Vikings, who penned a profane, yet cogent reply online.

For what it's worth, if the Ravens wanted to punish Ayanbadejo, they theoretically could. Sports leagues have broad latitude to police behavior deemed "detrimental" to the game. John Rocker was banished from baseball for 14 days in 2000 for remarks offensive to gay people, foreigners and minorities. Kobe Bryant was fined \$100,000 in 2011 for using an anti-gay slur.

But the NFL has taken no such action here. To the contrary, Ayanbadejo says he has been overwhelmed by support from his teammates and other players.

Think about that: the NFL is a temple of testosterone, a shrine to manly men doing manly things and as such, you would expect it to be ground zero of heebie jeebies over all things gay. Apparently, it is not.

Apologies to Sam Cooke, then, but a change has come. What else can you conclude when even young conservatives like Meghan McCain now disavow conservatism's opposition to marriage equality? Or when you consider that in 1995, just 27 percent of us supported it and now half of us do?

This is not to say the battle is won. It is not. Still, things being as they are, one finds it difficult to worry overmuch about a bunch of people who think buying chicken sandwiches can forestall what seems increasingly inevitable. Every revolution has its dead-enders who bring up the rear, fighting for the lost cause.

But the trajectory of this particular revolution seems clear. So the headline here is not the old news that Dan Cathy opposes this human right, but the pleasant surprise that Brendon Ayanbadejo does not.

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