

If This Be Partisan ... **by Dan Jacoby**

For the past decade or so, old-time politicians have complained bitterly about the increased partisan split in Washington's political circles, especially in the Senate. They like to hearken back, in a fit of pseudo-nostalgia, to a "simpler time" when everyone worked together. It is no coincidence that most of the complainers are Democrats; after all, Democrats have been in the minority for most of the last twelve years.

Their complaints have fallen mostly on deaf ears, and for two good reasons. First, the complainants sound too much like sore losers to be taken seriously. Second, there is no more partisanship now than at most times in our history, particularly when we are at war.

During World War II, Senate Republicans attacked President Roosevelt's personality and his policies with equal relish. In all the years of World War I, both before and after we entered the "European War," the minority party both warned President Wilson of dire consequences of every action (and inaction). In the lead-up to the Civil War, one Senator was beaten almost to death following a heated speech.

These are very partisan political times. So what? Message for Democratic leaders: Get over it! Force Democratic bills through Congress, and demand that George W. Bush sign them, or hammer him – and the Republicans – if he doesn't. To misquote an old saying, "If this be partisan, make the most of it." Twist Democratic arms, hold votes open in the middle of the night, make deals, do whatever it takes, but get the job done.

Did the partisan Republicans spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a drug plan that benefits drug makers and insurance companies rather than seniors? Did they illegally keep voting open on the House floor for hours in the middle of the night to get this scheme passed? Fine! Pass a Democratic plan to extend health coverage to all Americans. If George W. Bush vetoes it, use his veto in the upcoming election.

Did the partisan Republicans pass an "energy bill" loaded with billions of dollars for big oil companies, and nothing to reduce our addiction to oil? Great! Pass a new bill that requires new mileage standards for all cars and trucks. Pass another bill that doubles taxes on oil consumption and uses that money to subsidize high-speed, intercity rail and upgrade Amtrak. Pass another bill to provide real tax breaks for expanded use of clean, renewable energy sources. Don't worry if the Republicans hate it and Bush vetoes it. Pass it anyway, and use their opposition against them.

Did Bush and the Republicans create an "education" bill that forces teachers to spend less time teaching and more time preparing kids for standardized tests? Fine. Refuse to extend any of the provisions of that bill, and require that states maintain or expand their education budgets in order to keep the federal aid they're now receiving. Require smaller class sizes, better facilities and higher teacher salaries, especially in poorer school districts. Let the Republicans scream "accountability" while you're improving education. You'll pick up votes.

Did the Bush/Republican tax cuts help only the wealthy, while leaving the rest of us in the lurch, and creating record deficits? Repeal them, while expanding child tax credits and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Remind everyone that in the years before Bush took office we had budget surpluses and the longest economic expansion in American history. If Bush and the Republicans want to shout "class warfare," rise to the challenge. Defend the middle class; you'll win both the battle and the war.

Did Attorney General Alberto Gonzales really say that there is no Constitutional right to habeas corpus? Demand his resignation, hold hearings on his fitness to serve, expose the torture memo he wrote before becoming Attorney General – get his political head on a silver platter. Let the word go forth throughout the land that George W. Bush and the Republicans do not support the Constitution.

Did George W. Bush invade a country that was never a threat to us? Did he lie to Congress, the American people, the United Nations and the world in order to gain support for his war of choice? Has he killed more Americans than Osama bin Laden, and more Iraqis than Saddam Hussein? Is he the worst war criminal in the world?

Impeach him.

America hates wimps. That's why the Republicans have won most of the last several elections – even if they had to steal them. Now that Democrats have gotten their foot in the door of power, the time has come to prove that Democrats are not the party of wimps, but the party of achievers, the party of reformers, the party of success.

It was only six short years between Richard Nixon's resignation in disgrace and the rise of the "Reagan revolution." Times change more quickly now. The period between the Republican defeat in a morass of corruption and a new Republican victory, proving once again that Democrats don't have what it takes to lead, could be as short as one election cycle. There is no time to waste; we must move powerfully, and we must move now.

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