

commentary

from other pens...

Conservatives reminded power can be fleeting

By Will Lester

Associated Press Writer

ARLINGTON, Va. — Conservative activists at their winter meeting were reveling in the Republicans' newfound authority in Washington even talking about how great it felt to be "America's majority party." But others reminded the Republicans they really aren't the majority in this country because Al Gore, the Democratic presidential nominee, and Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate, combined to get more than 3 million votes more than eventual winner George W. Bush. As for holding onto power, "You can't do it long if you're a minority," veteran consultant Don Devine told the conservatives. "We have to be concerned about building a majority."

Several at the meeting said the best way to do that was to reinvigorate the conservative base, which they said was neglected in 2000 when both major candidates focused heavily on swing voters.

Jim Gilmore, Virginia governor and chairman of the Republican National Committee, pointed to the Republican-held White House, GOP dominance in both houses of Congress and the fact Republicans hold more governors' mansions than do Democrats.

"We're clearly America's majority party," Gilmore said. But he acknowledged the close political split in the nation, saying, "the challenge we face is profound."

The conservatives questioned whether Bush's proposed new programs on education, helping church groups aid the poor and prescription drugs would fire up the GOP's conservative base. There's more talk about the size of tax cuts lately than Republican talk about shutting down programs and departments.

Passage of a tax cut is crucial to keeping the economy strong, several said. They said a strong economy is the key to holding power.

"If that size tax cut doesn't pass, the economy is going to go into a tailspin and we're going to get blamed for it," Devine said.

"We have to hold Republicans' feet to the fire," said Steve Moore, a conservative activist and writer. "I'm already seeing some retreats on the tax cut I'm getting nervous about."

"Bush ran a great campaign," he said, "but he did not talk about making government smaller."

Even if the activists wanted to hear more hardline talk from the White House, they were pleased with Bush's fast start and political skills.

"When he began the campaign, there was a great deal of skepticism," said David A. Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union, main sponsor of the conference, which attracted about 3,000 activists.

"He just found a different way of saying the same thing."

Bush has shown "how easy it is to hornswoggle liberals," said Anne Coulter, an author and political commentator. "All you have to do is go around calling yourself nice. He just treats liberals like small children having nightmares. Darn if it didn't work."

At the opening the conference, Keene was asked if conservatives are concerned about holding the Senate as some of its longtime conservative senators like Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Jesse Helms of North Carolina get older. Both Carolinas have Democratic governors who could appoint replacements from their own party to the Senate that is now split 50-50 between the two parties.

"Strom Thurmond is immortal," Keene said of the 98-year-old senator. "He'll be around long after we are gone."

Helms appeared at the conference later and said he was generally feeling healthy despite his difficulties walking. He dismissed recent reports he had cancer as untrue, saying he is not leaving anytime soon.

Several conservatives said former President Clinton helped the conservative cause by uniting them as never before.

"We made more progress during the eight Clinton years," said Moore, "than we did during Papa Bush's term."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers polling and politics for The Associated Press.

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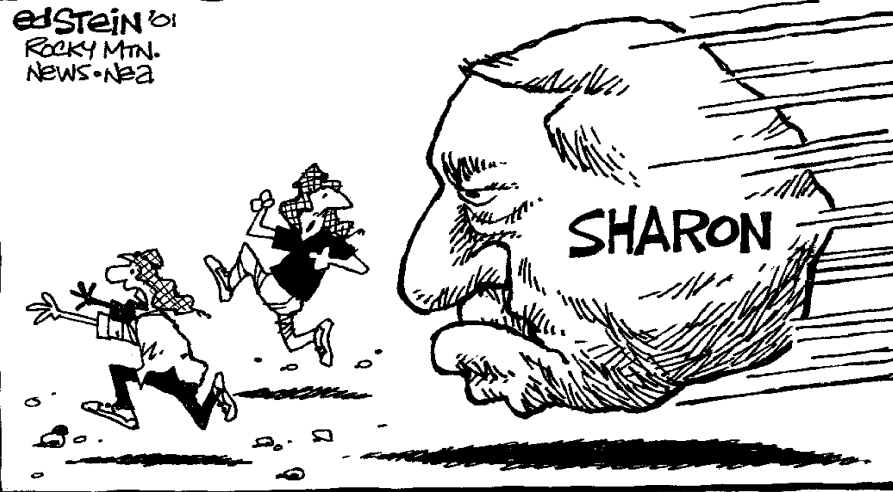
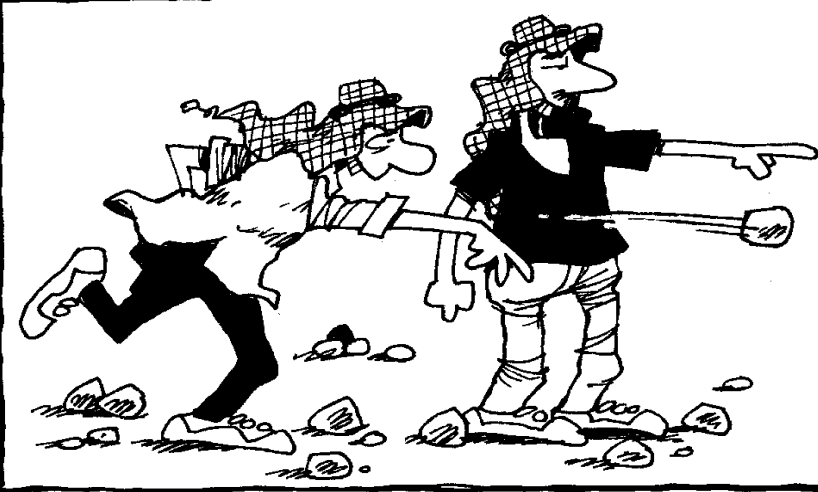
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Valentines Day can bring 'love-shock'

I don't know about you, but I've been wondering if people are in "love-shock" now that Valentine's Day is over.

Did anyone overdose on love (or candy)? Did all those financial expressions of love really change anyone for the better? I sincerely hope the answer is yes to those questions — except for the one about candy.

Expressing love is a good thing. Thinking that you only have to do it when social occasions demand it is not a good thing.

A lot of things in life have both good and bad sides, but it's hard to find anything wrong with real love.

Mitch Albom in Tuesday's *With Morrie* tells this story: "(Life is) a tension of opposites, like a pull on a rubber band. And most of us live somewhere in the middle."

"Sounds like a wrestling match," I say, "a wrestling match."

He laughs. "Yes, you could describe life that



lorna g. t.

• commentary

way."

"So which side wins," I ask? "Which side wins?"

He smiles at me. "Love wins. Love always wins."

Of course many people have wrong expectations about love. I offer you this story by an unknown author:

Even romance can (seem) wrong sometimes.

A young couple got married and left on their honeymoon. When they got back, the bride immediately called her mother.

"Well, how was the honeymoon?" asked the

mother.

"Oh, mama," she replied, "the honeymoon was wonderful! So romantic"

Suddenly she burst out crying. "But, mama, as soon as we returned, Sam started using the most horrible language. He's been saying things I've never heard before! All these awful four-letter words! You've got to come get me and take me home ... please, mama!"

"Sarah, Sarah," her mother said, "calm down! Tell me, what could be so awful? What four-letter words has he been using?"

"Please don't make me tell you, mama," wept the daughter, "I'm so embarrassed! They're just too awful! You've got to come get me and take me home ... please, mama!"

"Darling, baby, you must tell me what has you so upset Tell your mother these horrible four-letter words!"

Still sobbing, the bride replied, "Oh, mama ... words like dust, wash, iron and cook"

Power woes are punishment for gluttons

When I stop by my local coffee shop on my way to work these days, the talk is about California's Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (PG&E) bills. The usual \$165 bill has jumped to \$280, one woman says. Another says her bill for the last three months was \$4,500, probably because she left her pool heater on. One man rails against PG&E's backroom deals. Another says the problem is Enron and the other energy wholesalers, as well as our stupid government.

Fingers are swiveling from one culprit to another faster than weather vanes in a storm. Yet in our justified haste to assign blame and find solutions, we tend to overlook the root of the problem.

Us.

North Americans make up 7 percent of the world's population. But we use 33 percent of the world's nuclear, hydroelectric and other renewable energy, 32 percent of the world's natural gas, 30 percent of the oil and 25 percent of the coal.

Yet it's still not enough.

As outrageous as our energy bills might be, they ought to serve as a wake-up call. We use way more than our share of Earth's energy. We use way more than our share of this generation's energy.



joan ryan

• commentary

We're global gluttons going back for seconds and thirds.

Despite public-service campaigns and periodic the-sky-is-falling warnings, we leave the lights on by the front door all night. We keep the water heater on full blast when we're away on vacation. We have multiple televisions, plus VCRs, computers, video games, answering machines, dishwashers, washers and dryers, microwaves, gas fireplaces, heated pools, not to mention gas-gulping SUVs.

I have been as guilty as anyone. We take our conveniences for granted, as though it were our divine right to have CNN murmuring on the television in the background and the CD player humming Santana and the computer delivering Dow Jones updates as the coffee-maker keeps our decaf hot for hours.

I won't be editor for the day

Did you guys miss me, since I haven't written a column for awhile? Well, I hope you didn't too much. But they (some of the newspaper employees) were bugging me so much I practically had to write this Thursday, that is.

Here it is Thursday Feb. 8, and I'm out of school because of the weather. That's not so bad, but it's my birthday.

Mom stayed up last night baking me a cake, slapping on pink frosting and putting red heart decorations on top. When they said they were canceling school for Goodland U.S.D. 352, I got so mad. I then had to come with my mom to her job. I took a seat at Rachel's desk and started reading. I found some other things to interest me and did them.

Since Rachel was gone Thursday, everybody started saying "You could be editor for the day." I didn't have a clue what to do, so I said "no." Besides if I was editor I would have to do the front page and then I'd really mess it up. Everybody would probably hate me for it. My decisions were quickly made.

After a little bit they all found out somehow that it was my birthday. My mom said you should walk down to Carol Lee's Doughnuts. Then we could celebrate my birthday with doughnuts right here at the office. I said "No, I don't want to." It was only because it was freezing outside and it was very slippery in some places. I didn't want to walk down the sidewalk, fall on my butt and have everyone looking at me. That would be humiliating. Fortunately, Doug said he would go get the doughnuts, instead of me.

Today is Friday Feb. 9. I'm still out of school and writing this column. We get a four day break. Awesome! Anyway it was pretty much the same routine today. Tom asked me if I had started doing



kathryn craft

• youthful chatter

the front page.

Didn't you guys hear me? Obviously not. I said yesterday that I wasn't going to do it. If anyone of you customers get a paper that has wacky headlines and crooked pictures, then you'll know that somebody with very little experience did it.

You'll know it was probably me because they've been bugging me about doing it. But you'll probably have a pretty decent paper today because I'm going to be playing games on the Internet. And they can't make me do anything I don't want to.

Letter Policy

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