

from our viewpoint...

Federal planning won't be adequate

Government officials say it'll be different the next time. When a big disaster strikes, they'll have all sorts of plans, crews ready, command structure, transportation, you name it. Sure. "We're FEMA. We're from the government, and we're here to help."

Sound familiar?

The truth is, in a disaster, as in battle, *nothing* goes according to plan.

It makes no difference how well the feds plan, the volumes will go on a shelf somewhere to be forgotten.

When a disaster the size and scope of Katrina comes around again, the bureaucracy will have settled in. No one will know what to do, and there won't be time to dust off the plan.

As one area official said, the thing he'd learned is all disasters have to be handled first by local officials, city and county. It takes hours to get help from the next county, and a day at least to have state troops on the move. Local workers need to be trained and practiced for emergencies.

There's just no substitute for that kind of preparation, but all too often, it doesn't happen. Katrina and the threat of a terrorist attack have many people working on the problem, but interest is apt to die down in a year or two.

It shouldn't.

Every county ought to have a disaster plan and hold a disaster exercise every year, focusing on what is most likely to happen and on the unpredictability of combat. You just never know what will happen. You might prepare for a tornado, then a tanker-load of chemicals explodes the next week.

Every agency should be practiced to work together. Commanders should be trained, but they earn their stars by dealing with the unexpected. Everyone must be able to communicate with everyone else — radios that talk to only one team will be useless — and did we say, practice makes perfect?

That's why only the Army seemed capable of making sense out of Katrina. The same was true after the San Francisco earthquake and fire a century ago.

It's because the Army trains and drills for combat, and good officers know how to make decisions and deal with the unexpected.

If we want results, we probably ought to hand preparation for real disasters, like a multi-state hurricane or nuclear explosion, over to the military and relegate the bureaucrats to some lesser role.

A Kansan, Gen. Fred Funston, was in command at San Francisco, and he led by all accounts a sterling response to the devastation there. The same was true in New Orleans. Nothing much happened until the Army rolled into town.

Perhaps no one could have been prepared for the awesome power of Katrina, but we need to learn some lessons from it.

One should be that every town and county needs to drill, practice and be prepared. The effort will pay off when it is needed.

The other is that when the big one comes, we should rely on professionals trained for the task, not on a bunch of bureaucrats with dusty plans. Leadership must be bold and move quickly.

Federal Emergency Management Agency indeed. Just call the Army. — *Steve Haynes*

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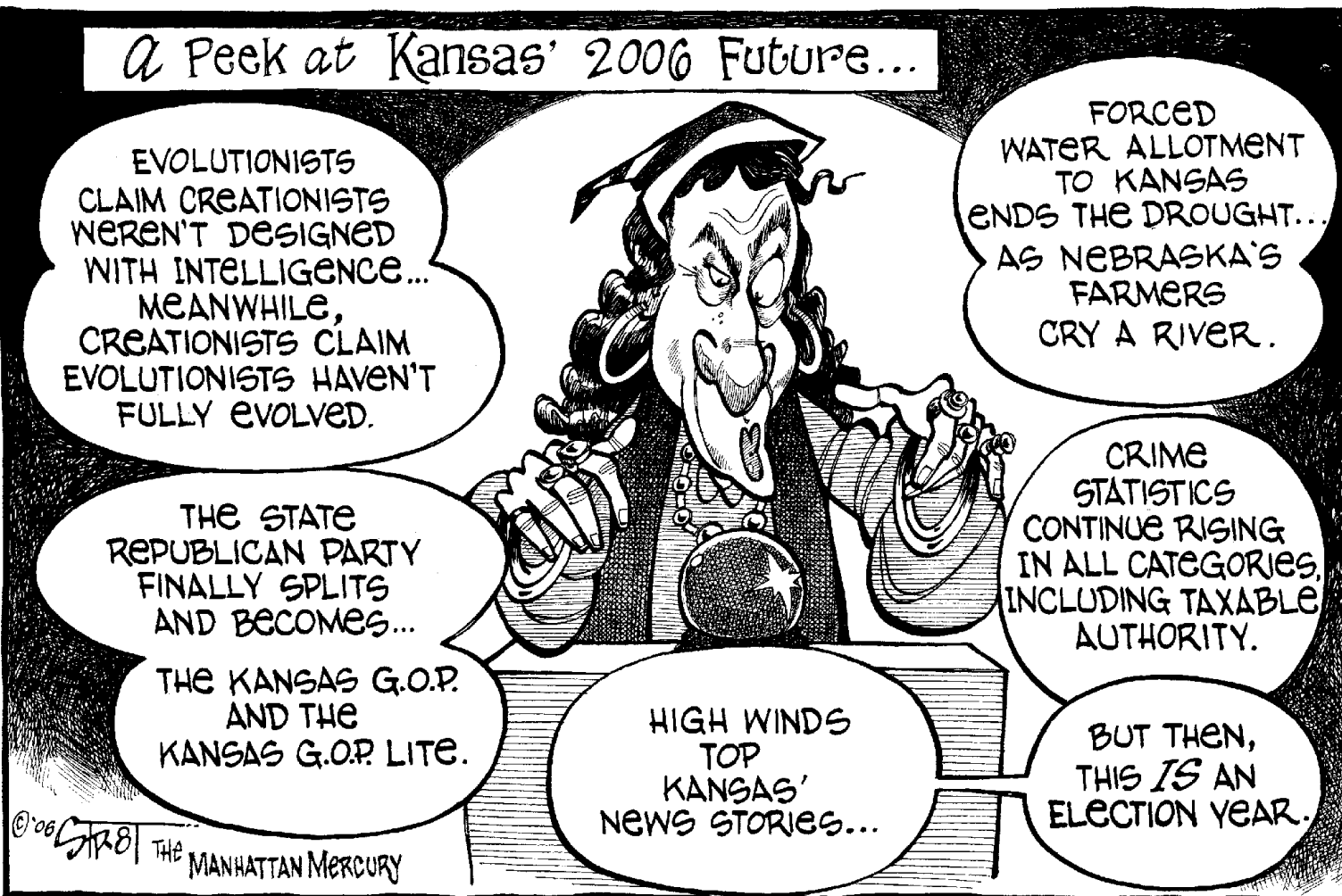
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How the Democrats saved Bush

Why have President Bush's poll ratings improved lately? Some say it is because he became more visible and vocal in defense of his policies. But I believe the Democrats drove voters back to his camp with their attacks on the Patriot Act and the administration's wire-tapping policies.

Bush's Democratic and liberal critics tend to see opposition to the war in Iraq and complaints about domestic spying as two sides of the same coin — both positions that defend what they see as our values in the face of government recklessness.

But while the critics have a plurality on the question of whether the war in Iraq was a mistake, they're in the minority in complaining about the Bush anti-terror policies at home.

Why do majorities support the Patriot Act and NSA wiretapping but oppose the war in Iraq? Because the true swing voters in politics today are isolationists, who vote with the left on Iraq and with the right on homeland security.

It is impossible to understand politics today without grasping the essential power of isolationism in our political community. The voters who rate Bush's performance in Iraq negatively or who call for a pullout are not, in the main, dedicated liberals or even Democrats. Rather, they're marching to the beat of a drummer never stilled in our political music — the desire for the rest of the world to go away.

The spokespeople for the Democratic Party and the anti-war movement may be liberals and even internationalists, but they represent a thin veneer atop a constituency that is far more isolationist than liberal in its perspective and orientation.



dick morris

• commentary

This coalition of liberals and isolationists brought down the Vietnam War and serves as the mainstay of the opposition to the current war in Iraq.

In 1996, I did a series of polls for President Bill Clinton to quantify the isolationist element in the American electorate. The surveys indicated that 15 percent of the voters were global in outlook while 35 percent were isolationist. (The balance — 50 percent — was either open to internationalism or closed to it based on the particulars of each situation.)

And the isolationist 35 percent divided evenly among the political parties, constituting a third of each party's base voters.

On the left, they tended to say that we needed to pay attention to America's poor and our own problems rather than squander our resources abroad. On the right, they complained that the rest of the world was at least ungrateful and perhaps unworthy of our attention and money. But left or right, it was an undiluted block of opposition to any foreign involvement.

I doubt that the numbers have changed much since then. Indeed, Iraq may have expanded the ranks of the isolationists.

Never defeated at the polls, isolationism became the politically incorrect view in American politics as a result of Pearl Harbor

in 1941 and the anti-communist crusades that began in the mid 1940s. The closest isolationists ever came to national success was Ohio Sen. Bob Taft's bid for the 1952 Republican nomination — which Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower won at the convention with a delegate count of 599 to 500.

Isolationism lost its power in the '50s and '60s as the white Catholic voters who were prominent in its ranks defected, rallying behind the Vatican in opposing atheistic communism. In the Vietnam era, it resurfaced and linked with the left in undoing three decades of interventionist consensus in our foreign policy.

Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton avoided offending the isolationists by adopting foreign policies that limited overseas military intervention — and limited casualties even more. But President George W. Bush has aroused the isolationist left and right by his determination in Iraq.

Yet the irony is that the very same voters the Democrats attract by attacking the war they lose by condemning domestic wiretaps and the Patriot Act — policies that isolationism argues for.

By figuring that all antiwar sentiment is liberal, Democrats misread the public — about the isolationists, whom the Democrats will keep in their corner when the argument is 4,000 miles away but will lose when it is right at home.

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President green genes

NBC's Brian Williams asked George Bush if the federal government's faltering response to Hurricane Katrina was due to racial indifference, and for a half a second you could almost hear Dubya's vertebrae fuse together as he perceptibly grew about a quarter of a millimeter. His voice trembled, and he snarled with a noticeable lack of tele-prompting, "You can call me anything you want, but do not call me a racist."

Which was not the point, but it is true. It's not fair to call the president of the United States a racist. This is not a man who gives the tiniest whit about black or white. This is a man who only cares about green, and whether or not you have any. In this country, if you're rich, you'll get taken care of. If you're not, you won't. Pretty much as simple as that.

He is neither an ageist or a sexist or a fascist or a typist. Or a homophobe. Or a xenophobe. Or a xylophone. Rather, he is a cashist. The first Green President, but the only whales he's saving are the Vegas kind. Tax cuts for the wealthy. Economic stimuli for the wealthy. Legislative amendments for the wealthy. Overseas incentives for the wealthy. Judicial appointments designed to nurture favorable decisions for the wealthy. Secret, winking loopholes for the wealthy. Complimentary all-you-can-eat seafood buffets with a pearl in every oyster for the wealthy. No-bid contracts for his buddies, who



will durst

• raging moderate

happen to be, say it with me now... wealthy.

For the poor: you got your cuts. Winter heating subsidy cuts for the poor. Student aid cuts for the poor. Health cuts for the poor. Food stamp and nutritional cuts for the poor. Education cuts for the poor. Outlandish dress codes at state dinners to further disenfranchise the poor. Outsourcing jobs to create more poor. With George Bush in charge, it's a bull market for poor.

In other words, if you got money, just sit still and you will be showered with more. If you ain't got, he and his people will throw up plexiglass, guard dogs, razor wire, enough red tape to wrap a moose: whatever it takes to keep you from getting.

I know the theory on paper is trickle-down. Rich people spend their money and it trickles down to the poor. But the theory on paper is crap. Rich people hang onto their money. That's how they got rich. You give us poor people money and we'll spend every damn penny we get our grubby little hands on. Why

do you think we're poor? Blowing it on superfluous stuff like food and rent and medicine and gasoline. Silly profligate us. Besides, I'm tired of being trickled on.

So, let's be straight about this. Kanye West is dead wrong about the president. George Bush doesn't hate black people. George Bush doesn't hate poor people either. He just LOVES rich people. A whole lot. Like a fellow waiter back in Milwaukee used to say, "It's not that I like the rich more than the poor, it's just that they tip so much better."

Political comic Will Durst actually thinks poor people tip better. But the rich do order more expensive bottles of wine. E-mail Will at willdurst@sbcglobal.net.

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garfield

