

from our viewpoint...

Dems draft idea bad way to start

Talk about the bad old days. Congressman Charles Rangel, the New York Democrat poised to take over the House Ways and Means Committee, can't wait to start a draft.

He claims it will keep the country from jumping into foreign misadventures on shaky pretense cooked up by politicians.

Sure, Chuck. That's what kept us from spending billions to send millions of men to Vietnam in the 1960s to lose a war and hundreds of thousands of lives.

It worked then. Oh, wait.

We had a draft then, something about the Cold War threat. That was a draftee army we sent to Vietnam to lose and die while an earlier version of Donald Rumsfeld tried to micro manage the war.

It was a lousy Army then, Chuck, and it got worse as the draft filled its ranks with people who neither knew how to be soldiers nor much cared. Drugs, violence, poor leadership, no direction at the top. It was a mess.

The burden fell not on the rich, who finagled to keep their sons out of combat, as always, but on the poor, the middle class, the minorities, the same people it always falls on. The draft didn't help then.

The draft didn't keep Congress from passing the bogus Gulf of Tonkin Resolution or from appropriating all those millions to fight that war.

Sure, there were good people in combat then. Also a lot of losers who had no business at the front lines.

A conscript Army seems like a good idea some days, egalitarian and democratic. As a fighting force, though, it's a difficult proposition. The Romans found that out. The Russian Army was, many days, a paper tiger, a hollow machine run by conscripts who cared little and knew less.

Even in World War II, it took years of effort and training for the U.S. (or the Russians) to mold a draftee force into a fighting machine. And then, people cared about the war.

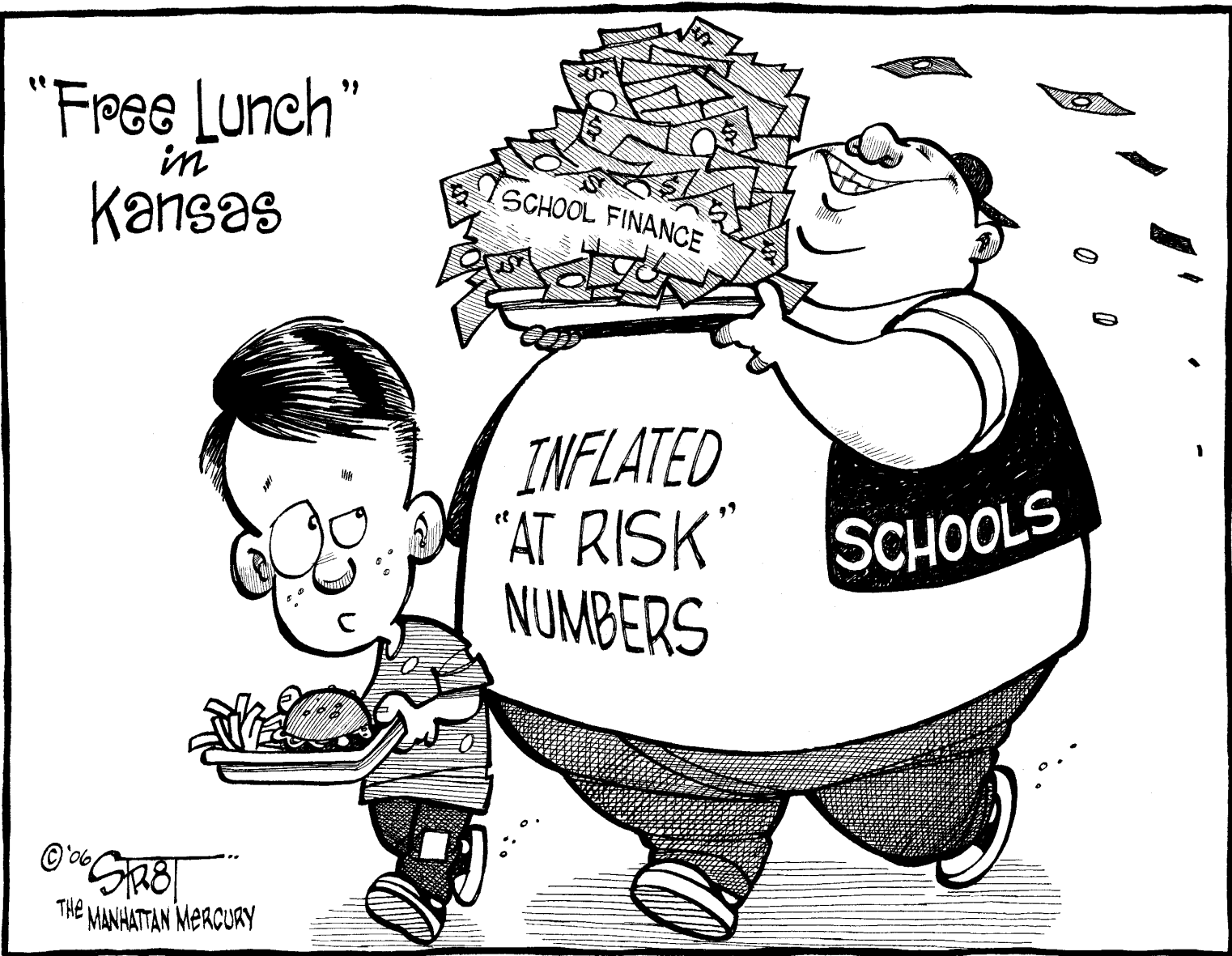
Today's Army is different, prouder, better trained, more sophisticated, peopled by men and women — active duty and reserve — who know their job, think it's important and don't mind doing it. Talk to some of them.

Many say it's the finest army in the world. We won't argue. A year or two of mandatory public service may sound like a fine and noble idea, but to many, it's involuntary servitude, something Americans rebel at.

There's plenty wrong in Washington: Congress is a scandal, no matter who runs it. The administration is out of touch. Regulations and pork-barrel spending multiply while our rights are trampled.

The Republicans failed to lead us anywhere but to Abramoff's for dinner. Now it's the Democrats' turn.

But a draft? Not a good idea. Unless they will take Congressman Rangel. — *Steve Haynes*



Our first Thanksgiving without children

Our children won't be able to get home for dinner on Thursday. It will be the first Thanksgiving we won't have at least one child home for more than 30 years.

The girls can't make it this year. The oldest and her husband are leaving for Europe on Thursday and the youngest is going to meet her in-laws-to-be in Arizona.

Son will make it home for the weekend and we'll have our feast then, so it's not like we'll miss the holiday.

I was trying to remember feasts past and somehow my mind came up with odd little memories.

There was the Thanksgiving that both Steve and I had to work. We lived in Kansas City and he had to do "color" for the Chiefs football game. It was my holiday to work at the drug store.

I didn't think to take anything for lunch — the store was in the middle of fast-food alley. But, on Thanksgiving, everything was closed. No one was selling hamburgers or fried chicken on Thanksgiving. A friendly customer brought me dinner.

We moved to the mountains of Colorado a few days before Thanksgiving in 1980. There



cynthia haynes

• open season

were five of us, plus all our house plants, in a one-bedroom cabin. We ate at a fancy restaurant, which served Cornish game hens and other things the children wouldn't eat.

Most years after that, we had our Thanksgiving meal at home, just the five of us. As the children grew older, they started to help make the food. First they learned to peel, cook and mash potatoes. Soon they were helping make the stuffing and finally they took over the pies — one apple, one pumpkin.

Then we moved to Kansas and our oldest daughter got a job in Casper, Wyo. She had Thanksgiving off, but not the day after, so couldn't come home. We packed up and went to Wyoming — turkey, dressing, cranberries and potatoes. She made the pies and introduced us to a photographer who was also far from home on Thanksgiving.

We all ate on the floor and fought her cats for the turkey.

We had a great time and liked the photographer. Good thing. He's our son-in-law now.

Soon, all three of our children were in Lawrence — two in school, one working for the newspaper. The younger ones came home every Thanksgiving break and the oldest had dinner with us and then went on to Denver to son-in-law's folks.

Now the girls are in Augusta, Ga., and son is still in Lawrence with a job.

We'd eat and decorate the house for Christmas. I remember the youngsters climbing all over the porch roof stringing lights.

This year we'll probably just light the bushes and other parts of the house that don't require a ladder.

Steve and I will go to the annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Lutheran church and enjoy our meal with lots of friends. Then we'll have turkey, dressing, cranberries and mashed potatoes and gravy on Saturday with our son.

I know he can cook, make mashed potatoes and stuffing, but I just can't remember if I ever taught him to make a pie, so it's a good thing he's coming home.

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Oust Boehner and Blunt

Did the Republican leadership learn anything on Election Day?

Did they finally get it that voters are fed up with politicians who use their office to raise money and get perks?

Will the GOP return to the lean, ascetic, committed politics that animated its 1994 surge to power or will it resist change and choose leaders who skate on the edge of corruption in their bid for privilege?

In the Senate, will the Republicans realize that they need a mechanic who can make the trains run on time to tie the Democrats in knots?

And do the Democrats realize that their surge to the top was not due to the outpouring of true leftist believers but because centrist, moderate candidates won swing states and districts, just as Bill Clinton did in 1996?

The answer to these questions will be apparent in the leadership elections coming soon in both houses of Congress.

In the House, Majority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) will try to take Dennis Hastert's place at the head of the diminished ranks of Republicans. This is the same John Boehner who took to the House floor a few years back and distributed checks from tobacco PACs to those congressmen who put their desire for cigarette money ahead of the health of their constituents and voted against government regulation of this hideous industry.

This kind of self-serving, money-focused politics is just what landed the GOP in sufficient trouble to lose the House in the first place. Letting the escalator move up one notch and inviting Boehner to head the party's House delegation will send a clear signal that House Republicans have, like the Bourbon kings of France, in Talleyrand's words, had "learned nothing and forgotten nothing."

Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) represents the kind of politics that puts ideas ahead of cash and privilege. Electing a man with his kind of conservative principles would show that the Republican minority understands the frustration of their base voters who ejected them from the leadership.

By the same token, Rep. John Shadegg (R-Ariz.) also stands for principled politics and deserves the support of those who understand what hit them on Nov. 7. Not so of his opponent. Majority Whip Roy Blunt's (R-Mo.)



dick morris

• commentary

wife, Abigail Perlman, and his son, Andrew, both lobby for Altria, which is the newly sanitized name for Philip Morris. If Blunt is limited to the standard congressional salary of \$165,500, there is no reason why he shouldn't take care of his family finances by letting lobbying firms that represent this death-dealing industry hire his son.

Blunt and Boehner deserve to be thrown out of leadership.

In the Senate, Republicans must realize that they lost power because Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) couldn't find the men's room, much less understand how to run the floor. He just never understood how to use the arcane rules and traditions of the Senate to get things done. The consensus that the 109th Congress passed almost nothing was not the fault of the House but of the Senate. The lack of a skilled Senate practitioner undermined the Republican Party badly.

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) will be a vast improvement over Frist. At least he is a politician, not a misplaced doctor. But McConnell will be Mr. Outside, the party's face to the media. Like former Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), he will be an aggressive partisan who will shape the Republican case to the voters and

the press. McConnell and the Republicans need to bring back the man who is their answer to Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.): Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss). Lott is a Lyndon Johnson/Richard Russell kind of character who knows how to use the Senate to get things done and enjoys twisting the Democrats into a pretzel.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Lott's opponent for minority whip, just got to the Senate four years ago after a disastrous run for president. He would make a fine Mr. Outside, but to give him the task of running the vote counts and making the trains run on time is to minimize the importance of this vital function. Lott has been in the Senate 18 years and knows how to implement the wishes of the Republican conference and McConnell, the minority leader.

House Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) showed that she is determined to hijack an election won by Democratic moderates and interpret it as a mandate for the extreme left. Her support of Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) for majority leader signals that she values ideology over cohesiveness.

Murtha's rival, Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), is a moderate who can work to smooth out Pelosi's rough edges. But Pelosi apparently doesn't want to be smoothed. She would rather be the Madame Lafarge of the House, knitting an extra stitch for each swipe of the guillotine as it slices off the heads of the very moderates who made her speaker.

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