

America casts its vote for change ... yet again

■ OUR OPINION: A 'need' for quick solutions elects gridlock to the Congress

Chain Chain Chain ...
Change of fools.
Americans just can't seem to get enough change in federal government.

Three years ago the electoral majority elected Bill Clinton on his platform of a new vision for this country. We voted for, among other things, an end to the gridlock between the legislative and executive branches.

But, we got tired of that (not enough change) and elected a Republican majority to the House and Senate two years ago. Republicans, who one year before had been the bastions of status-quo politics, became the harbingers of a new spring for America.

Right.
Since christening the Contract-with-America revolution, the Republicans have been preparing and pushing their balanced-budget proposals through both houses. Last week the House and Senate approved the GOP budget, and Newt, et. al. stood and applauded their efforts. Of course, Clinton has said he plans to veto the package.

Welcome back to gridlock. Americans are politically restless. Our attention span for long-term reform is equal to our willingness to wait through commercials between sitcoms. Real political work is boring and lengthy. Rather than waiting to see if programs such as a health-care reform and Americorps will have an effect, Americans voted for instant gratification.

And what we are left

CAMPUS COLOR LINES

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with, is a mirror image of the nation's budget problems under the Bush administration — illuminating for us, once again, what we hate about American politics.

"All these people do is argue. They never get anything accomplished. I'm voting for change in the next election."

But the quick fix isn't working. Voting for "change" without an understanding of what that change will mean is counterproductive.

"Change" has bought us two years of legislative salaries to cut Medicare, college loans, welfare, national service, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts — two years of wasted time to lay waste to the poorest of Americans — two years to prepare "sweeping reform" that will never get past the Oval Office.

America does need a change. We need to learn that our responsibility for the future of this country does not end when we check our ballots. It is where it begins.

If politicians are ignorant, arrogant, belligerent and wasteful, if they are out of touch with America, if they are power-hungry and ineffective it is not their fault. In our haste to kill the boredom of legislative [in]activity, we elected them and then changed the channel.



U.S. isolationists threaten U.N.'s future

Dithering" was the word *Emerald* columnist Primo Fontana chose to describe the United Nations last week (*ODE*, Oct. 25), on the 50th anniversary of its founding.

Reading through his simultaneous indictment and sentencing of the United Nations convinced this reader that dithering had but one accurate function — to describe the polemic of the columnist. Whether or not his sermon was well-intended, he dithered.

COMMENTARY

George Beres

In an age of new isolationism in the United States, a column about the United Nations in a college daily might suggest a welcome counterbalance to the short-sighted revival of ultra-nationalism. But not with Fontana.

The temptation for some patient souls might be to say, "give him time to gain the perspective of experience, when he'll recognize that the United Nations — for all its warts, its human failings — is a better alternative than that offered by pompous flag-wavers."

I'm not that patient — not when I see the spectacle of a veteran legislator, Robert Dole, pandering to a right-wing constituency by using the United Nations as the scapegoat for the world's problems. The time is overdue for citizens (and readers) to rebut the shallow bully-boy behavior of politicians who would exploit us and of the bandwagon writers who mimic them.

Fontana, paranoid over the United Nations impinging on his nation's sovereignty, described "the chains of the United Nations shackling nations" who otherwise might, as individuals or in treaty, perform more effectively on the world stage. Then he used the Gulf War as an example of how the United States was able to evade those shackles. How was this achieved? By acting, he wrote, under the guise of the United Nations.

Hypocritical as it was, the Gulf War, which the United States strong-armed its allies into acting in a U.N. disguise, at least was open in its blatant illegality that served U.S. oil interests. Too often during the Cold War years, it

“
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”

was the hidden U.S. agenda that (through undercover activity of the CIA) frustrated what most of us thought our agenda was: to aid the growth of democracies throughout the world.

That contradiction of our stated goals with our hidden behavior is what valid journalists research for their published reports. But Fontana follows the path of least resistance just like too many of his colleagues out in the "real world." He, and they, take the easy way out; dutifully digesting the data fed them by authorities, then regurgitating the party line for their readers. As they quickly learn, it's so much easier to wave the flag.

Fontana described himself as one of those outside the American journalistic and political elite, not having "a stake in the U.N.'s survival."

He's wrong. Everyone on this globe has a life-or-death stake in its survival.

Granted, if the United Nations is to be sustained, some of its goals must be re-evaluated; the veto dominance of Security Council members must be diminished; it must reform procedures that are wasteful.

Most important, it must develop an independent police force capable of rapid deployment while still being directly accountable to the Security Council.

The last thing you and I (and Primo) need for survival is empty-headed indictments of the United Nations that are pushed by politicians and newspaper columnists whose heads lie buried deep in the sandbox of isolationism.

George Beres is a board member of the Oregon United Nations Association. He is the former University of Oregon Sports Information director, past editor of the faculty/staff newsletter Inside Oregon and current manager of the University Speakers Bureau. His latest book is The Year of the Duck.

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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