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PLENTY OF ANGER TO GO AROUND

If anything is certain about Donald Trump's bizarre bid for the Republican presidential nomination, it is the huge favors he does for the Democrats.

That thought occurred to me, for example, as Trump was lobbing verbal mud balls at Sen. John McCain's heroic war record at an appearance in Ames, Iowa.

CLARENCE PAGE
From the Left

Had national attention not been so captivated by the audacity of Trump, more people would have noticed the recent Neuros Nation conference in Phoenix. The progressive activists who disrupted a presidential candidates' forum at the liberal gathering demonstrated how the right has no monopoly on recklessly unbridled anger.

How else does one describe the sight of Democratic presidential candidate Martin O'Malley shouting down for saying, "Black lives matter. White lives matter. All lives matter?" O'Malley was responding to demonstrators who were chanting, "Black lives matter" to protest the mistreatment of black Americans by law enforcement. The protesters disrupted the forum at Ames, Iowa. O'Malley, a former Maryland governor, was interviewed on stage. And he later apologized. That's right. O'Malley apologized for being inclusive enough to say, "All lives matter," as if that were an insult to protesters who had chanted, "Black lives matter."

It took conservatives no time to pounce on the obvious irony of this political correctness clash. Rich Lowry, editor of the conservative National Review, let his sarcasm fly. "One wonders if O'Malley spends any time on the Internet," Lowry wrote. "Everyone knows you can't tell a left-wing audience that all lives matter anymore."

Well, sadly enough in my view, Lowry's right. I believe all lives should matter, whether slogans say it or not.

Unfortunately, angry movements don't let such niceties get in the way of a serviceable slogan. Besides, as one "Black lives matter" supporter revealed, adding "White lives matter" makes you sound like you've walked into somebody's funeral to decline, "I, too, have suffered."

That's why O'Malley thought it would be more prudent to apologize than to argue semantics. "That was a mistake on my part, and I meant no disrespect," O'Malley said in an online interview after the event. "I did not mean to be insensitive in any way or communicate that I did not understand the tremendous passion, commitment and feeling and depth of feeling that all of us should be attaching to this issue."

The group later heckled Sen. Bernie Sanders, too. The self-described socialist from Vermont knew better than to dilute the "Black lives matter" slogan in front of this crowd but also failed to show enough preparation on police issues to satisfy this crowd. Racial issues aren't as big a deal in Vermont, his supporters admit.

Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton suffered through a similar boxing-fest eight years ago and managed to skip this one.

Clinton faces the same sort of criticisms — from her party's angry left wing for being "not liberal enough" — that are faced by almost the entire Republican field from their right, currently dominated by Trump.

Fortunately for them, Trump appears to be determined to talk his way out of any chance to win the Grand Old Party's nomination. Apparently miffed that McCain had accused Trump of attacking illegal immigrants to incite the "crazies" in the GOP base, Trump shot back: "He's not a war hero. He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people that weren't captured."

Anti-McCain comments like that triggered a backlash from fellow Republicans and may have dampened Trump's ratings.

That must come as a relief to Republicans in the party's sensible center. That's also probably a disappointment to Democrats. It may take more than troubles in the other party's ranks to make up for the dissatisfaction that's brewing in their own.

Send email to cpag@tribune.com. Eugene Robinson will return.

PUNCH LINES



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medicaid expansion too costly

Re: "Keep an open mind," July 20.
I believe Virginia House Speaker Bill Howell is wisely leading the fight against efforts to expand Medicaid in Virginia.

The letter writer seems to have cherry-picked studies and projections. Latest data pouring in from other states proves Virginia and Speaker Howell have made the right call. For example, a recent Associated Press article, "Medicaid enrollment surges, stirs worry about state budgets," highlighted the exploding growth in states that have expanded Medicaid and the new cost concerns that are emerging in those states. For example, Kentucky's share of the expansion cost is 124 percent higher than originally projected.

As it turns out, putting more people in a government program does not save money, though I'm not sure why anyone would think we could save money by making an already massively underfunded government program even bigger. The letter writer also neglected to mention the latest report from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which concluded that the cost of covering Medicaid expansion enrollees is about \$1,000 more per person, per year than originally projected.

As history has proven time and time again, government programs always cost more than original projections. Medicaid expansion is no different. Speaker Howell and the House of Delegates have created a tremendous amount of good among our state's poorest residents by increasing funding for our free clinics, mental health care system and other safety net services. These are better ways to care for the most vulnerable citizens than Medicaid expansion.

Speaker Howell's efforts to stop Medicaid expansion in Virginia should be commended.

Melissa Anderson
Newport News

Pushing for cleaner air

Re: Air pollution solution in the Southeast community.
In Newport News, 72 percent of all the toxic air emissions occurred in the Southeast Community in 2013 (most current data available).

That is 246,759 pounds of toxic air released in the East End alone, which includes more than 39,000 pounds of tobacco, a recognized developmental toxin, according to the most current data available from the Environmental Protection Agency's Toxic Release Inventory.

The legacy of industrialization in this community dates back to 1850, 1890 and 1892, respectively, with the creation of the Old Dominion Land Company's Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and the infamous coal pier.

Now, residents are taking a stand and asking that Secretary of Natural Resources Moly Ward champion this issue and stand up for air monitoring in the community.

I applaud the Southeast CARE Coalition for all of the work being done to raise awareness. Although it is not widely known, respiratory disease death rates for African-Americans in Newport News are nearly twice the average rate in Virginia.

Kendyl Crawford
Hampton

Give Trump his due

Donald Trump may be considered a sideshow by many, but he raises important issues that are crucial to this country's survival.

The Washington weenies are starting to carefully choose their words in response. I just hope he's not another Rose Portno, who ran from the battlefield.

Tom Hank
Grafton

A universal mystery?

What? Pluto is an active spheroid, not just a ball of ice and dirt?
Something has been going on there for the last 100 million years. Is it "spheroid warming"? It can't be man-made!

It is possible that a spheroid in space, in orbit around the sun, can have a natural internal mechanism like molten rock, that can keep the surface in a constant state of flux?
Just asking.
Robert J. Huston
Yorktown

Traffic laws can pay off

Re: "Official: More highway funding vital," July 23.

If they would enforce the traffic laws, they would have all the funding they need.

Sylvia Snow
Poquoson

REVEALING ABORTION MARKETING

Planned Parenthood's reaction to the release of a clandestinely recorded conversation about the sale of fetal body parts was highly revealing. After protesting that it did nothing illegal, it apologized for the "tone" of one of its senior directors.

Her remarks lacked compassion, admitted Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards. As if Dr. Deborah Nuccitola's cold and casual discussion over salad and wine of how the fetal body can be crushed with forceps in a way that leaves valuable organs intact for sale is some kind of personal klesmeria. On the contrary, it's precisely the kind of psychic numbing that occurs when dealing daily with industrial scale destruction of the growing, thriving, recognizably human fetus.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
From the Right

Abortion critics have long warned that the problem is not only the sale of body parts — what abortion does to the fetus — but also what it does to us. It's the same kind of desensitization that has occurred in the Netherlands with another mass exercise in life termination: assisted suicide. It began as a way to prevent the suffering of the terminally ill. It has now become so widespread and rampant that one-fifth of all Dutch assisted-suicide patients are euthanized without their explicit consent.

These Planned Parenthood revelations will have an effect on public perception. Just as ultrasound altered feelings about abortion by showing the image, the movement, the vibrant living-ness of the developing infant in utero, so too, I suspect, will these Planned Parenthood revelations, by throwing open the door to the bedroom of the clinic where that being is destroyed.

It's an ugly scene. The issue is less the sale of body parts than how they are obtained. The nightmare for abortion advocates is a spreading consciousness of how exactly a healthy fetus is turned into a mass of marketable organs, how, in the words of a senior Planned Parenthood official, one might use "a less crunchy technique" — to crush the head, spare the organs — "if most women who speculate."

The effect on the public is a two-step change in sensibilities. First, when ultrasound reveals how human the living fetus appears. Next, when people learn, as in these inadvertent admissions, what killing the fetus involves.

Remember, the advent of ultrasound has coincided with a remarkable phenomenon: Of all the major social issues, abortion is the only one that has not moved toward increasing liberalization. While the legalization of drugs, the redefinition of marriage and other assertions of individual autonomy have advanced, some with astonishing rapidity, abortion attitudes have remained largely static. The country remains evenly split.

What will be the reaction to these Planned Parenthood revelations? Right now, to try to deprive it of taxpayer money. Citizens repelled by its activities should not be made complicit in them. But why not shift the focus from the facilitator to the procedure itself?

The House has already passed a bill banning abortion after 20 weeks. That's far more fruitful than trying to ban it entirely because, apart from the obvious constitutional issue, there is no national consensus about the moral status of the early embryo. There's more agreement on the moral status of the later-term fetus. Indeed, about two-thirds of Americans would ban abortion after the first trimester.

There is more division about the first trimester because one's views of the early embryo are largely a matter of belief, often religious belief. One's view of the later-term fetus, however, is more a matter of what might be called sympathetic identification — seeing the image of a recognizable human infant and, now, hearing from the experts exactly what it takes to "terminate" its existence.

The role of democratic politics is to turn such moral sensibilities into law. This is a moment to press relentlessly for a national ban on late-term abortions.

Krauthammer is a columnist for The Washington Post. Send email to letters@charleskrauthammer.com.

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