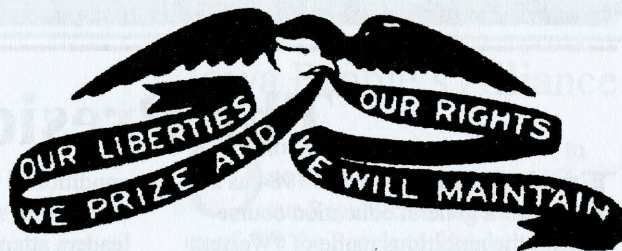


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



January 2012

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Predictions for 2012

Ron Paul wins the Iowa Caucuses. Rick Perry trails the field, further embarrassing all those who gushed over his "Bigfoot" entrance into the race last August (even the Iowa City Press-Citizen ran not one, not two, but FIVE photos of Perry's 30-minute visit to the Hamburg Inn).

The Iowa City City Council votes unanimously to prohibit pedestrians on the pedestrian mall.

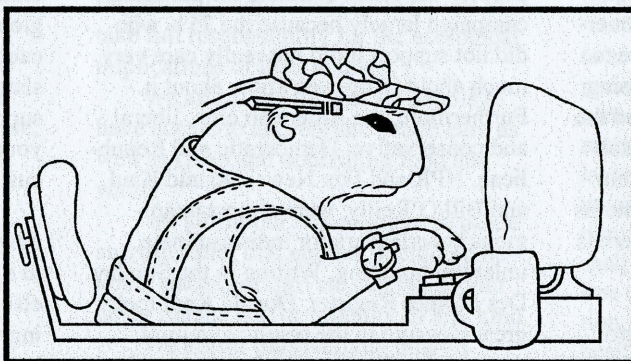
Coralville City Manager Kelly Hayworth lures Pagliai's Pizza away from Iowa City with \$20M in TIF subsidies. Hundreds of furious Regina High School alumni occupy the Coral Ridge Mall food court.

Wellmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield lowers its premiums after Chairman John Forsyth voluntarily cuts his salary and bonus package by 90%, to \$260,000.

Gov. Branstad resigns to work as a teacher's aide at a Des Moines pre-school. "It's

always been my dream job," he said, while announcing that he will continue to draw two pensions to supplement his starting salary of \$20,000.

Congress extends tax breaks to



upper income "job creators." In fairness to his secretary, Warren Buffet raises her salary to \$1 million.

The Iowa City City Council installs cameras downtown to help enforce its bans on bird costumes, gathering signatures for petitions, and anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable.

Iowa City developer Mark Moen converts Hotel Vetro into a homeless shelter.

To make up for falling basketball ticket sales, the University of Iowa Athletic Department allows Herky to be used in ads promoting jello shots in downtown bars.

The Board of Regents announces an emergency tuition surcharge to help pay for the additional cost of arresting students downtown.

The Iowa Lottery announces a new tuition aid program to provide free lottery tickets to UI students who cannot afford to pay the new tuition surcharge.

Despite a 44% approval rating and 8% unemployment, Barack Obama defeats Romney or Gingrich in November.

After business profits plummet downtown, the Iowa City City Council lowers the drinking age to 16.

Angry Prairie Dogs becomes the hottest new game of 2012. ✕

— *Prairie Dog*

The President of Oceania

I routinely assign Orwell's 1984 as a text for a general education course with the ambitious name of "Western Civilization." During the Cold War, students treated the book as an anti-communist tract, and it certainly was that among other things. The rise and fall of Communism is perhaps the great story of twentieth century history, but Communism is now gone, surviving only in Vietnam and Cuba. So, why assign 1984 now, when the greatest danger foreseen by Orwell has become "history?"

The answer is that 1984 is about more than Communism. Orwell was worried about trends in the modern world that infected every form of state, including democratic states. Many of the objectionable features of modern society that Orwell predicted have come to pass in a "soft" form in modern democracies, especially the practice of universal surveillance. Aided by the ACLU, Americans have put up a spirited resistance to surveillance, but it appears to be a losing fight. Driven by the war on crime and the war on drugs, political elites now watch us on closed circuit cameras, spy on our cell phones, and even install GPS systems secretly on our cars. Furthermore, there is the universal post-9/11 appeal to "national security."

In 1984 three giant empires control most of the world: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. Political leaders keep the population in line by stirring up war fever against a constantly shifting enemy, fighting first over one issue and then over another, allying themselves first with one former enemy, and then with another. The analogies with what President Obama has achieved are impossible to ignore when one reads 1984 with some attention to the uses of war in controlling a subject population.

Building on the achievements of his predecessors, President Obama has achieved what the leaders of Oceania achieved: a state of perpetual war conducted without any pretense of political control. He is now raining bombs daily on four countries, and possibly others, using unmanned drones directed from air

conditioned bunkers in Nevada. Far from demanding a public debate, our political leaders attempt to hand over to the President even more powers than he wants, including the power to detain American citizens on American soil indefinitely, and without trial. (To be fair to Congress, President Obama claims that he has that power without congressional authorization, and is afraid that the congressional authorization offered could be revoked by Congress in the future).

In America, as in Oceania, there is little serious political dissent to a state of perpetual war despite the unpopularity of the wars. President Obama's bombing of Libya, never authorized by Congress and arguably not authorized even by the United Nations, was one of the most unpopular war actions in American history, supported by only 25% of the American people. He could continue the bombing campaign largely because the 75% who did not support it did not really care very much about it, or even know about it. Furthermore, the American elite, liberal and conservative, Democratic and Republican, NPR and Fox News, Donald Kaul and Bill O'Reilly, were almost unanimous cheerleaders for indiscriminate, unlawful bombing. Writing in the Sunday Des Moines Register, Donald Kaul took great pleasure in the results of a joint American military operation that resulted in the sadistic torture of a sovereign head of state, recorded on video, followed by his murder.

President Obama is bombing Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Because these are guerrilla wars, the

military target is the household. By their own admission, the U. S. military is killing "non-target" people with drone bombings and night raids. Little girls are being burned alive, little boys mutilated, and elderly couples crushed to death as they lie sleeping in their beds. The political silence from American liberals is deafening. Apparently, in a classic Orwellian turn of phrase, war is not war if it's President Obama's war.

If you care about speaking out against President Obama's Oceanic war policy, you have one last chance in the Iowa caucuses on January 3. America may be conducting Oceanic wars, but we are not Oceania. We have the right to speak if we take advantage of it. We may be photographed, but we are unlikely to be arrested if we go to our ultra-democratic caucuses and protest perpetual, unlawful, unwinnable war around the globe. You can go to your Democratic caucus, and vote for an "uncommitted" slate of peace delegates. If you insist on supporting a candidate, and can bring yourself to set foot in a Republican caucus, you can vote for Ron Paul.

If you do either, twenty years from now you can respond in good conscience to a grandchild or nephew or someone else who asks: "What were you doing when President Obama was raining bombs on innocent children in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somali?" You can say, "I did what I could do in a free country. I went to my caucus, and spoke out against it." ❧

— Jeff Cox

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Occupy!

Iowa People's Alliance

The Occupy Iowa City General Assembly approved the following statement of principles over the course of a two-part discussion on Oct. 23 and 24, 2011.

In the fierce urgency of now:

We observe the destructive power of militarism throughout the globe, increasingly spurred on by national and corporate greed, fear, and desire for complete domination over people and resources.

We witness the greatest disparity in the distribution of wealth since the Great Depression.

We observe corporate and individual greed on an unprecedented scale, resulting in the upward flow of capital, the impoverishment of the working class, and the dismantling of the democratic process.

We witness the exploitation of the Earth and its natural resources, and its disastrous effects on climate, agriculture, food, waterways, and all living beings.

We witness concerted efforts to criminalize and oppress human beings on the basis of ability, age, class, gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, religion, race, ethnicity, and nationality.

We witness political repression and incarceration of dissenting voices and political ideologies.

We witness the degradation of public schools which do not provide the skills needed for creative and free thought, or for full participation in economic or political systems.

We witness the infiltration of the profit motive into all spheres of life.

Therefore, Occupy Iowa City, based on the material and social conditions of the world today, and aware of the particular responsibility we bear as people who reside in the United States, articulates the following principles:

We stand in solidarity with the brave people participating in Occupy Wall

Street and other Occupy movements throughout the world.

We affirm inherent human rights and recognize the utility of the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" as a model for the articulation of these rights, but additionally affirm the need for protection of diverse and indigenous cultures.

We affirm the need for safe and affordable housing for all human beings.

We affirm the right of human beings to choose where they live and work, and to engage in these activities free from intimidation or harassment from the state, employers, employees, financiers, or the community.

We affirm the need to protect the environment and believe that a just world requires all people and organizations to take full responsibility for the ecological implications of their actions.

We affirm the right of all people to have access to appropriate health care as well as clean and nourishing food and water.

We affirm our commitment to peace and the belief that entities, including nations, states, and private capital, should never pursue war or brutality of any kind.

We affirm transnational interdependence, which rejects colonization, military occupation, and economic and cultural imperialism.

We believe in the equitable and just distribution of all resources, opportunity, and wealth.

We affirm the necessity of affordable public education for all people, so that they may be fully informed, creative and curious participants in a just society.

We affirm our commitment to the process of democratic decision-making, and believe all people deserve an equal voice and vote.

We affirm the interconnectedness of these principles and seek new paradigms to bring about systemic change.

This is a living document and is not all-inclusive. ✂

Our Mission: Our mission is to restore confidence and pride in our Republic, to restore the ability of We the People to find democratic, constitutional solutions to challenges we face in the 21st Century. We join with fellow citizens to elect public officials, regardless of party affiliation, who are free of corporate political sponsorship.

Our Vision: America the Beautiful must no longer imply the unsustainable appropriation of natural resources for private greed, the unrestrained exploitation of labor, and the endless pursuit of global military ventures, all for the benefit and growth of multinational corporations seeking to eclipse the sovereignty of people with a system that places private profit over the public good. Just as populist movements have arisen in our past committed to a vibrant society based on economic justice, thus we act with others to renew the vision of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all citizens.

The right of individuals and families to economic emancipation shall be as paramount as free speech. Family-scale, community-based farmers shall prosper as sustainable producers of food and fiber; labor shall be at liberty to organize into unions in the workplace without intimidation; well-managed independent businesses shall compete on America's main streets free of monopolistic and predatory competition. Free public education, social security, health care for all, and a clean environment shall be secured as democratic rights of a free and independent citizenry.

Our Strategy: The evolving power of giant – often global – for-profit corporations has undermined and corrupted democratic institutions to the point of destroying citizen faith in the republic itself. Motivated by this reality, our goal is to inform our citizenry; and identify, recruit and support candidates for public office – including candidates in party primaries and convention processes – who renounce all corporate campaign contributions and join us in a truly democratic and popular educational and electoral struggle for the common good. ✂

Adopted 08-20-11 and ratified 10-29-11. For more information contact Jay Howe, Greenfield, Iowa. Jehowe3@iowatelecom.net

What Am I, Chopped Liver?

This is really out of my comfort zone. I'm just not the type to step up and advertise my position, to express a political agenda, and in a publication no less. I'm more apt to co-sign a letter to the editor, or be a committee member, a behind-the-scenes type. And this is also true of my religious identity: I tend not to draw attention to myself as a Jew. I don't wear a Star of David, or talk about the Israelis and the Palestinians a lot, not because I am afraid of anti-Semitism, I just try to wear my Jewishness lightly. It always does chill me when I see the private security the Synagogue hires to stand near the entrance where the Jews are gathering on the High Holidays for our most important holy days of the year. Yes, I have had two experiences where "looking Jewish" has been an issue either for my boss or my co-workers, but two experiences in over 30 years is nothing. Mostly, I am very comfortable being Jewish in Iowa.

When the request for sponsors for the annual Johnson County Democratic BBQ arrived in the mail, I took out the checkbook to send \$100. After all, my husband and I had been sponsors many times. As I filled out the contribution form, I checked the calendar and saw that October 8th was Yom Kippur. I scribbled a note on the form: "Are you aware the BBQ falls on Yom Kippur?" and put the envelope in the mail. Two days later I awakened thinking: why am I sponsoring an event that I will not be able to attend as it falls on a major, if not the most important day of the Jewish calendar?

Was I being overly sensitive? Don't most folks know that the Jews have two big holidays in the autumn, Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)? Don't most folks know, in this age of embracing and respecting diversity, that Jewish holidays start at sunset on the day before the holiday is listed on the Hallmark calendar? But, don't I really want to support the Johnson County Democrats in their big annual fundraiser? Why was this becoming such a "thing" in my mind and why did it hurt my feelings so much?

So after a few days of going around in circles in my mind, I called Terry Dahms, the chair of the Johnson County Democrats, and asked him to put my check aside while I thought this through. He was most apologetic and said when the date was set last spring, no one had been aware of the conflict with Yom Kippur. (It is on most calendars.) By the time it was realized, he reported, it was "too late" to change the date. "But," I said, "it's more than six weeks away, people change dates all the time." No, they weren't going to do that. So I said, just put my check aside and I think I'll talk to Rabbi Portman about it.

Rabbi Jeff listened to my concern and said: "You'll have lots of opportunities to support the Johnson County Democrats; you can pass on this one." That confirmed my misgivings and I called Terry and told him to rip up my check. He apologized again, but didn't offer to change the date.

I started to check with friends. How do they handle work responsibilities on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? Jews are all over the place. Some don't go to work and they observe the fast and spend the better part of the day in the synagogue. Some go about their regular routines. Some just go to evening services. Some eat lightly; one reported he has a bacon cheeseburger to usher in the New Year. University policy allows a professor to cancel class and some do, but many don't. The school district has accommodations for faculty and staff, and students can have excused absences if they miss school. Most teachers try not to schedule tests for that day.

Many folks try not to schedule events during the Jewish Holidays. But then I started to notice all sorts of meetings and performances scheduled on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I noticed the University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra was performing on Rosh Hashanah—what do the Jewish student musicians do? Not to mention the Jewish music-lovers. And someone said the Hawks had an away game on Yom Kippur, but then quickly added: There are

lots of football games on Christmas. And although the Iowa City School Board meeting was rescheduled, City High was having their Homecoming Parade on Rosh Hashanah. And I noticed there was an art lecture scheduled on Rosh Hashanah that I really wanted to attend. I contacted John Beldon Scott of the School of Art and Art History and he said his unit wasn't sponsoring the event, but he would check into it and see if it could be rescheduled. Wow that felt great.

I kept asking people: should events be scheduled on the major Jewish Holidays? This isn't like George Washington's Birthday, I would explain to my non-Jewish friends; these are big deal religious days. Over Happy Hour one evening with friends, we talked about how difficult it is to accommodate everybody's special days, like what about important days on the Wiccans' calendar? "The real issue" a friend said "is the Hawkeyes. When the Hawks are playing away, everybody jumps on that weekend to have an event." Of course. And I do recognize it is a gnarly issue, but somehow it really hurt my feelings that the "big tent" party, the party of the inclusive didn't care enough about including me. Not to be crass, but the tailgaters trumped the Jews. And in terms of real numbers that does make sense.

This is not anti-Semitism, I know that. It's just "hard-to-schedule-ism". So, I missed the art lecture. (It wasn't re-scheduled.) I missed the University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra concert. I missed all sorts of things. And I didn't attend or help with a sponsorship of the Johnson County Democrats BBQ this year. As my grandma would have said, it would be a big deal to change the date?

But then I remember that the High Holy Days are all about repairing the relationships that you have strained and broken, and about forgiveness. I forgive everyone and the Hawks too for "hard-to-schedule-ism." And I step up to write this piece as my small part of repairing an unfortunate situation. ✕

— Carrie Z. Norton lives in Iowa City

Reagan Revisited

In a recent poll, Americans were asked which President they wish was in the White House to handle the current economic crisis.

They chose Ronald Reagan. Excuse me? Does anybody teach history around here?

In 1980, RR was confronted with rampant inflation and depressed income advances (in real terms, not inflated), a bad combination that was nick-named: stagflation.

In 1932, FDR was confronted with massive unemployment (25%), the imminent collapse of the banking system (4000 had failed in the previous year), a contracting world trade exchange (exacerbated by Hoover's Smoot-Hawley Tariff), a major farm crisis of depressed commodity prices versus the inflated cost of land and other production factors, and a corrupt Stock Market which had lost 40% of its value since 1929.

The economic problems in 2008: the imminent collapse of the major banking system and the domestic auto industry, a shrinking stock market, and rapidly increasing unemployment (serious, but certainly not in FDR territory). I do not include the increasing federal debt because that was never a serious "crisis" in preceding administrations. It was a contrived crisis in 2011, but it will still be a serious problem in the not-immediate future.

I began talking to myself (yes, my wife is worried), and I'll loosely paraphrase my conversation: "Larry, this is all hypothetical. The only thing you can do is establish what each man did in his own administration, to solve his own problems, to then understand each man's basic political/philosophical foundation. Then you have to 'imagine' how they would handle 2008. But, remember, the original question was predicated on an implied assumption...how would each man use the power of the government to solve those problems. Thus, their decisions are political as much as economic."

FDR was a patrician conservative surrounded by progressive left-wingers for the most part. I was surprised to learn that he had originally opposed the creation of the FDIC. The big banks in the East thought that such insurance was designed to protect the smaller banks. The big banks did not think the government should be propping up any small bank that could not survive the crisis. Darwinism personified. But FDR's advisors swung him around. In fact, he was much more sympathetic to the Glass-Steagall Act than to the FDIC. And, while 4000 banks failed in 1932, after the passage of the FDIC only about 60 banks failed in America the next year.

FDR was willing to try almost anything to get a result, and then try something else. He had a public works program for big projects (headed by Harold Ickes), and a big employment program of small jobs (headed by Harry Hopkins). His overall approach was pragmatic (some critics said he could be pragmatic in two different directions at the same time, and they did not mean it as a compliment), Keynesian (before that concept was actually a household word), and regulatory.

RR? As for breaking inflation, the biggest economic problem, almost all economists agree that the credit for that is 99% due to the actions of the Federal Reserve (under Paul Volcker?). That contraction soon led to a very painful recession, but interest rates went down and stabilized. RR's contribution was negligible.

But here's the crux of the distinction between RR and FDR.

RR was famous for his clear declaration that "Government is not the solution to our problems. Government is the cause of our problems." His administration was noted for two things: tax cuts and deregulation. Neither of those is a pro-active use of government power. In fact, they are passive responses to an economic crisis. Their consequences are seldom immediate, whereas a "crisis" requires immediate action. (To be fair to RR, he did actually raise taxes

eleven times in his administration, a fact ignored by his disciples today)

FDR very clearly believed the opposite. In fact, RR's approach most clearly resembled that of FDR's predecessor Herbert Hoover. RR's approach is also the model for how GW Bush "managed" the economy. And it was the GWB Presidency that made the 2008 crisis inevitable. His administration was merely a continuation of policies that began earlier, but continued on steroids. In fact, some of the current problems are tied to decisions in the Clinton administration, which was always pro-(big)business. NAFTA and the repeal of Glass-Steagall are clear examples.

So, back to 2008. Whose approach was more appropriate? FDR or RR? Obama should have been more like FDR. Obama under-estimated the depth of the problems, advocated half-hearted solutions, and capitulated too much in the face of intransigent Republican opposition. Still, he tried to use government to solve a mountain of immediate problems. He could have done more, but his conciliatory personality handicapped him for the first few years of his administration.

In some ways, RR was like FDR. Each was less ideologically rigid than his opponents believed, but RR's basic philosophy, as seen in his Presidential record, would have made it inevitable that he would have failed to use government to any effective degree for the immediate crisis. FDR would have seized the opportunity afforded by a crisis (yes, a crass thing to say, but true) and started re-structuring the relationship between government and business that was, and is, needed.

If you're a regular Prairie Progressive reader, you already knew all this. The important question is...why doesn't anybody else? ❧

— Larry Baker of Iowa City is the author of *A Good Man*.



Dec 25
Federal holiday

Jan 3
Iowa Caucuses (for the last time?)

Jan 10
Occupy the Statehouse Day in
Des Moines, iowacaci@iowacaci.org

Jan 19
Iowa City Federation of Labor
Annual Chili Supper and Meeting,
5:00 at Coralville Public Library

Jan 19
Emma Goldman Clinic Annual
Choice Event in Iowa City,
info@emmagoldman.com

Jan 24, 1962
Jackie Robinson elected to the
Baseball Hall of Fame

Jan 27, 1947
First meeting of UN Human Rights
Commission

Feb 1, 1902
Langston Hughes born

Feb 11, 1937
General Motors recognized United
Auto Workers after sit-down strike
in Flint, MI

Feb 12, 1947
Draft cards burned for first time in
US to resist peacetime draft

Feb 24, 1912
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn led Bread
and Roses strike of 20,000 women
in Lawrence, MA

Mar 2, 1807
US Congress prohibited

importation of slaves

Mar 4, 1917
Jeanette Rankin of
Montana became first female
member of US Congress

Mar 6, 1857
US Supreme Court's Dred Scott
decision denied citizenship to
millions of Americans

Mar 7, 1932
Cops killed strikers at Ford auto
plant in Dearborn, MI

Mar 10
Iowa Democratic Party
County Conventions

March 14, 1917
US Army established first camp for
training Black army officers at Ft.
Des Moines, IA

March 31, 1927
Cesar Chavez born

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

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"I have no mercy or compassion in me
for a society that will crush people,
and then penalize them for not being
able to stand up under the weight."

— Malcolm X