

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Spring 2013

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Harkin Harvest Fails in Granite State

[This article originally appeared in the Spring 1992 issue of the Prairie Progressive]

MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE—The 727 landed in a dense fog. One year ago today, the ground war had begun.

One year ago, perhaps, yellow ribbons festooned the trees and telephone poles. Now the streets were littered with leaflets from yesterday's ACT-UP rally ("Read my lipstick – no new taxes on the rich!"); photos of people dead or dying from AIDS hung from bare branches.

The ground war of the First Primary had begun. Troops from the seven major campaigns skirmished up and down Elm Street. Solitary dark horse candidates (more than fifty on the ballot) sought to establish beachheads. Platoons of journalists and camera crews patrolled the perimeter.

But Manchester was not only a battlefield. It was also a small town before a big football game. Store windows and apartment buildings sported Homecoming-style banners ("Sununu for President – no more wimps!"). Pickup loads of beefy young Buchanan supporters careened through the business district, blasting their horns and chanting through bullhorns. Smug Kerrey volunteers planted themselves in front of the Merrimack Restaurant and cheered themselves hoars. Kitty-corner to them was a well-coiffed Clinton crowd, waving signs and

exchanging taunts with smaller knots of Cuomo and Harkin flagbearers who darted in and out of traffic. Occasionally a Nader mobile-home rolled through the streets, an enormous yellow write-in pencil mounted on its roof.

The crowds and the cacophony grew as Game Time neared. Warm weather on the day before the primary brought out hundreds more, as adrenaline-an-caf-feine-crazed staffers croaked "Visibility!" to their workers, who surged out of their headquarters, jockeying for position on the best turf. At one point a beat-up van screeched to the curb and disgorged a dozen pumped-up twentysomethings brandishing Laughlin signs. They claimed the corner.

By nightfall of Primary Eve, Manchester had become a surreal blend of street theater, Mardi Gras, and Prom Night. Twenty-four hours later, the party would be over for Tom Harkin.

Was Harkin's problem "the message or the messenger?" That's how the major media posed the issue of Harkin's failure to ignite Democratic primary voters.

Nothing was wrong with Harkin's fundamental message. It was a simple amalgam of: 1) Jesse Jackson's message in '88; 2) some facts and theories lifted from Republican analyst Kevin Phillips's book, "The Politics of Rich and Poor;" and 3) Harkin's own instinctive populism.

The message, however, had two strikes against it. First, the primary schedule was less than ideal. New Hampshire, one of the most anti-government, anti-tax, anti-labor states in the nation (and

the food's not very good, either), is a terrible place to begin the Democratic primaries. Even one little industrial state with a minority population could have injected some momentum into Harkin's campaign earlier in the process.

Equally problematic was the media's aversion to openly class-based politics. "Class-resentment anger," the Des Moines Register labeled Harkin's rhetoric. The Wall Street Journal dismissed his attacks on Reaganomics as "class warfare." They just don't get it. Class remains America's dirty little secret, one which well-fed columnists from the finest schools are ill-equipped to explore.

Harkin's strengths as a messenger were outweighed by two flaws. The decision to go negative in New Hampshire was a crucial mistake. His Iowa victory did give Harkin a bump going into New Hampshire, with tracking polls showing slowly but steadily inching ahead of Kerrey toward 15%.

Had Harkin been content to make a few "comparisons" of his record with Kerrey's, his upward trend probably would have continued. Instead, Harkin took shots at all of his competitors, thereby defusing the attack on Kerrey while increasing his own junkyard-dog image. What worked against Tom Tauke backfired in a larger field.

Harkin's staff apparently realized that something had gone askew, because they hastily resurrected a softer ad featuring Harkin's hearing-impaired brother.

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Why the Affordable Care Act Will Fail

President Obama delivered an inspiring defense of Social Security and Medicare in his inaugural address. For the Democratic party base, these social welfare programs represent the heart of the party's historic achievements. Among partisan Democrats, if not the general public, there is also great enthusiasm for The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, which is routinely compared to Social Security and Medicare, despite the fact that it is based on fundamentally different principles.

Social Security and Medicare are based on the principle of non-means tested entitlement, which guarantees universality, fairness, and administrative efficiency (not to mention popularity). The Affordable Care Act, insofar as it aspires to universal coverage or "health care for all" (President Obama's words), is based on two very different principles. The first is the unpopular "mandate" that requires all Americans to buy into a private health care system that is one of the wonders of the modern world in its sheer inefficiency and unfairness. (Anyone who doubts this should watch Michael Moore's movie, *Sicko*). The second is means-testing, i.e. either subsidies for private health insurance based on income or expanded eligibility for Medicaid.

Means-tested programs targeted on the basis of income are well documented failures in achieving either universality or fairness. Medicaid provides medical care to millions of poor Americans, but leaves out millions more. Food Stamps reach under 60% of the target population leaving millions of Americans, including children, hungry. Establish an entitlement, and people will seek it out. Establish a mandate, and people will evade it. Establish a means-tested welfare program and (1) some people will seek it out, and then find themselves rejected for not meeting the rules, while (2) others will evade it, hoping to escape the stigma attached to of welfare programs such as food stamps.

In addition to being based on unworkable principles of legal compulsion and "welfare." The Affordable Care Act is an administrative nightmare whose complexity is itself an impenetrable barrier to anything resembling universal coverage. Following is a list of particular examples why The Affordable Care Act will fail in comparison to its own lofty goals, and in comparison to Social Security and Medicare.

1. Despite the act's name, there are no price controls on (mandatory) private health insurance or any other mechanism in place to control the price of insurance to the consumer.

2. Because insurance purchased (under compulsion) by individuals on the exchanges will be increasingly unaffordable, the Obama administration will authorize health insurance companies to offer utterly inadequate policies, and then claim that those who purchase them are "covered." Blue Cross, which provides 80% of the individual policies in Iowa (i.e. a monopoly--so much for competition) is already up to this trick by excluding maternity care from its barely affordable individual policies for healthy young adults.

3. The subsidies to be provided to those judged unable to afford insurance on the exchanges will be delivered through the income tax system, which enrolls only half of the American people. For those who do qualify, the timing is disastrous: the tax credits, which will be inadequate, will become available too late to help them pay the bills up front.

4. There is no method of coordination in place to decipher whether an individual is to be eligible for Medicaid, or private insurance subsidies, or subject to a fine.

5. Many Americans will simply pay the fine, which will be cheaper.

6. Many other Americans will simply be invisible to the Obamacare system, a problem that could be solved by work-

ing through a payroll tax rather than the income tax.

7. Many people who cannot afford private health insurance will find themselves ineligible for subsidies, because according to government calculations they can indeed afford it.

8. Many more people who need health care will find that they do not qualify for expanded Medicaid, because it is a means-tested program with armies of bureaucrats whose sole job is to make sure that people do not receive benefits for which they are not eligible.

9. Because Obamacare is a federal system (why?), states that oppose any federal health care system will fight tooth and nail to make sure that the insurance exchanges do not work.

10. As Governor Branstad is demonstrating now, states have a role in determining eligibility and spending on Medicaid, and will fight to the end to prevent its expansion, a completely foreseeable consequence of the way Obamacare is organized.

11. Governors and legislatures around the country will fight to exclude particular benefits under Medicaid, leaving those who are "covered" according to the Obama administration without adequate health care.

12. The subsidies offered to small businesses (e.g. *Prairie Lights*) will be inadequate for them to make adequate health insurance available to their employees.

13. Many small businesses will simply pay their fines rather than provide health insurance that they cannot afford.

14. Many businesses (those with more than 50 employees) that are technically required to provide health insurance under Obamacare are already finding creative ways to reduce the number of their employees who are eligible, i.e. classifying them as part time, or as independent contractors.

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Goofy Bills Introduced at a Record Pace

Iowa women and bored baby boomers, take heart. Senate Joint Resolution 1 has the answer.

The resolution proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Iowa dealing with the composition of the Iowa militia. Currently, “the militia of this state shall be composed of all able-bodied male citizens between the age of 18 and 45 years who are not exempt by the laws of the United States or of this state.” The proposed amendment would mean that “the militia of this state shall be composed of all able-bodied citizens 18 years of age and older who are not exempt by the laws of the United States or of this state.” It’s one small step against sex and age discrimination in Iowa – which is good, since most legislators don’t want to deal with the problem of age discrimination in the workplace.

A bipartisan bill gaining attention is one that sets boundaries for sex offenders in nursing homes. You can understand that a nursing home or other similar facility would have to have a plan for housing a sex offender, but one section of the bill requires a facility to have “a plan for the safety of others . . . when a person required to register as a sex offender is not on the premises of a facility [but] remains within the care, custody, and control of the facility or program.” A different plan for being absent, as opposed to one in which the offender is home?

Don’t spend that tax refund yet! Iowa’s government needs that extra money to keep you and your family safe. When dangerous people won’t respect the laws, the penalty must be enhanced. For example:

- The scumbags tattooing and body-piercing our young without parental permission could face an aggravated misdemeanor rather than the current serious misdemeanor. An aggravated misdemeanor is punishable by confinement of no more than two years and a fine of at least \$625 but not more than \$6,250. That’s one more year in jail

and between \$310 and \$4375 more in fines.

- The new drug czar has been busy. One bill, if passed, addresses the current law of drafting false prescriptions. The penalty leaps from a serious misdemeanor, punishable by confinement for no more than one year and a fine of at least \$315 but not more than \$1,875 up to a class “C” felony, which is punishable by confinement for no more than 10 years and a fine of at least \$1,000 but not more than \$10,000. “The bill also requires the Iowa prescription monitoring program to include a warning on all reports stating that ‘Medicaid fraud is a crime. If you suspect Medicaid fraud, call the Iowa Medicaid fraud hotline.’ The warning shall include the toll-free telephone number of the hotline.” That should scare off those Medicaid fraud thugs.
- The drug czar also wants to clear up the confusion over marijuana being both a Schedule I drug with no medical benefit and a Schedule II drug with medical benefits. He chose listing marijuana as a Schedule I drug. Just to clear up the confusion.
- The drug czar also suddenly realized that the excise tax on marijuana hasn’t been increased in years. So a bill has been proposed to increase the tax on marijuana and other controlled substances, and while we’re at it, let’s include a tax on those other pesky synthetic cannabinoids. After all, drug dealers and users should pay their fair share of taxes.
- As long as we’re on the subject of drugs, there is a bill to create a new child endangerment offense. For years, this has been referred to as the “crack baby” bill. Everything is wrong about this legislation. It provides punishment instead of assistance; it encourages absence from prenatal care rather than protecting a

vulnerable fetus; and it promotes Safe Haven incidents rather than keeping a family intact. A child endangerment offense that causes bodily injury to a child is punishable as a class “D” felony.”

- The Iowa Attorney General and the Public Safety Department have dueling DNA bills that will require the harvest of DNA from people convicted of or receiving a deferred judgment for an aggravated misdemeanor. These departments are sensitive to the fact that there isn’t money now for this expense, so – with sensitivity – this expense will be projected out to the near future. The bulk of DNA harvested under these bills would come primarily from OWI second offense, joy-riding, and theft. It’s strange how this concept takes precedent over discussion of funding for effective long-term treatment for drugs and alcohol.

If you are worried about these laws being passed, a bill has been introduced to ease your anxiety. It’s been around for decades, and it’s best known as jury nullification. This proposal allows a jury to do more than decide facts in a case; it gives the jury the right to “render a verdict based upon the law and conscience,” rejecting rules of criminal or civil procedure, “the juror’s oath, a court order,” or any “procedure or practice of the court.”

All of the above occurred in the Iowa General Assembly’s first 3 weeks. Hang on, we have 12 weeks to go. ✂

— Marty Ryan and Stephanie Fawkes-Lee are public policy advocates at www.iowappa.com

The Culture of Ham

*Harkin Harvest,
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Is being a purveyor or consumer of local food progressive? To the extent we attempt to reunite the food we eat with the act of producing it, it could be.

The trouble with “local food” is that many producers would rather debate the meaning of those words rather than take steps to reduce our dependence upon row crop agriculture and large scale livestock production. That may be a progressive approach, but I believe there is a better way to go about it.

There is no food more local to Iowa than pork. Iowa’s second congressional district, where I live, is the 16th largest pork producer in the nation. If a person visits the supermarket meat counter, chances are the pre-portioned, plastic-wrapped, porcine product originated in the state—at least that’s what one hopes. Yet this is not considered to be local food by many, even as tourists seek nothing more than a thick chop of pork to sate their hunger for local food, Iowa-style.

There is a culture of ham in parts of Iowa—places progressive political operatives insist must be avoided at all costs. “If you find yourself there, get the hell out,” they say.

In a rural Iowa precinct I know, locals serve an annual ham dinner. The parking lot gets packed with patrons at the school, and the day I attended, the take-out line was longer than the dine-in line. Ham seekers do not attend to socialize as much as to get good food for a reasonable price: an economy of pork. It is a place where men sought second servings, then talked about taking a Sunday afternoon nap.

Twice a year the fire fighters offer cooked hams, at Easter and at Thanksgiving. These events are local favorites and they sell more than 1,000 pounds. It helps home cooks reduce time in the kitchen at the holidays, said one person.

I found nothing to fear in this setting, as my progressive friend suggested I might. In fact, the dinner conversations were the same as in even the most progressive places: school consolidation,

living in a bedroom community, health care, children, and sometimes the back-biting octogenarian socializing common in Iowa.

I don’t want to get on the bad side of aging, well-groomed ladies, especially the ones who generously give money to political campaigns. This setting is exactly where a progressive should find him or herself from time to time.

What does the culture of ham have to do with local food? Progressives have choices to make when it comes to food, and a lot else.

Will progressives indulge in bourgeois obsessions influenced by celebrity

“I found nothing to fear in this setting, as my progressive friend suggested I might.”

chefs, TV producers, restaurateurs and point-of-sale advertisements, or will we dine in the community and seek common ground?

Will progressives look to government for local food subsidies, land use and advice to develop a local food system, or will we band together with like-minded people to solve our own challenges of capital, labor, scalability and markets to compete with the industrial food model?

Will progressives require a forced choice between hams that are “traditional,” contract, free range or organic, or will we embrace all and engage in conversations that are both tolerant of differences, yet make social progress?

For me, I embrace the culture of ham. ✂

— Paul Deaton lives in Solon.

The kind-and-gentle persona came too late for a knock-out of Kerrey, which was crucial to the long-range goal of a Harkin-vs.-Clinton showdown. Harkin’s hopes, and the struggle to define the Democratic Party in 1992, were finished.

The messenger may have made another serious mistake by abandoning his stance as an outsider. Harkin’s claim of being “the only real Democrat in the race” was accurate in many respects, but it didn’t play well in an anti-establishment atmosphere. And Harkin’s style, epitomized by his beautifully-orchestrated announcement event on a farm in Winterset, began to reek of the Beltway. Neither Harkin nor Kerrey, flying first-class with bloated entourages, could adjust quickly enough to the twists and turns of a national campaign. Yet, with little money and less than ten staffers, Jerry Brown (a quintessential insider) is still in the race.

Withdrawing from campaigns brings out the best in presidential hopefuls. Kerrey was far more lively and appealing during his exit remarks than he ever had been as a candidate. A trace of self-deprecating humor somehow found its way into Harkin’s withdrawal speech. The account of his campaign, Harkin joshed, should be called “Memoirs of an Invisible Man.” Both he and the crowd were startled by his halting attempt to poke fun at himself, but the joke was okay for a first try. A little more of that could go a long way in ’96. ✂

— Dave Leshtz campaigned for Sen. Harkin in New Hampshire in 1992.



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- March 4, 1933
FDR appointed Frances Perkins, first woman, to presidential cabinet
- March 8
International Women's Day
- March 9-17
AmeriCorps Week
- March 19, 2003
Iraq War began
- April 4, 1968
Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated
- April 8, 563 BC
Buddha born
- April 28, 1953
Shah of Iran installed by CIA
- April 28
Workers Memorial Day
- May 9, 2012
Barack Obama became first President to support marriage equality
- May 20, 1993
Motor Voter bill became law

15. Obamacare includes provisions, opposed by organized labor, to penalize companies that provide really good health care benefits for their employees (the so-called Cadillac plans, like that provided to date by the University of Iowa), guaranteeing that many people who are covered now will find themselves "covered" according to the Obama administration, but with newly inadequate coverage.

16. With soaring unemployment among young adults, children who take advantage of the provision allowing parents to keep them on their employer-based policies will find that health security turns into a pumpkin when they turn 27, and many of them will be forced to choose between welfare and a fine.

17. The "affordability" threshold for job-based health insurance will be calculated on individual coverage--meaning that implementation is likely to fragment coverage even more for families as workers claim insurance as individuals at work and rely on means-tested provision to cover their kids.

18. Because Obamacare incorporates private employers into its system, rather than providing an individual enti-

tlement, there will be highly complicated, highly expensive, highly counterproductive, and entirely foreseeable litigation over issues of religious freedom.

I recognize The Affordable Care Act will be of great benefit to an unknown number of individuals. When compared to Social Security and Medicare, though, and to the aspirations of the designers of the policy to cover 30 million additional Americans, it cannot succeed. At the end of President Obama's second administration, America will remain what it is now: the only industrial nation without a system of universal health care. As we begin to discuss health care in the 2016 Iowa caucuses, we should urge candidates not to repeal Obamacare, but to replace it with National Health Insurance. ✂

— Jeff Cox

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IA House GOP: Nothing Better to Do?

At the beginning of a new year, a new Congress or a new Legislature, sometimes legislative leaders like to make a show about the very first bill introduced. By having the number “1” attached to a piece of legislation, it presumably carries some symbolic value as to the priorities of those in charge for the upcoming year. Even better, if those who are in charge can convince every member of their party to lend their name to bill number one, that really must show they mean business.

During the first week of the legislative session all 53 Iowa House Republicans signed their names to House Joint Resolution 1, a constitutional amendment to put the so-called “right to work” law into the State’s Constitution. Apparently, we are being led to believe that the lesson Iowa House Republicans drew from listening to voters last year is that their top priority should be to take a

sixty-three year old law, word for word, and put it into our constitution.

It usually takes more than one week of a legislative session before people start asking “don’t they have anything better to do?” Perhaps House Republicans just want to get that question out of the way quickly.

In 2011, Iowa House Republicans created a collective bargaining bill to strip away public employees’ rights to collectively bargain a contract just after similar legislation passed in Wisconsin. Now, just after the State of Michigan repealed its “union shop” status, Iowa House Republicans again seem to want to one-up another Midwestern state.

Anti-labor legislation in Wisconsin and Michigan drew far more attention than Republican efforts in Iowa have, though, for one major reason: Republicans in those states actually had the votes to make their bills law. In Iowa, they are just putting on a show.

It is not a particularly enjoyable show. The House collective bargaining bill debate in 2011 included a committee meeting that lasted all night, over 100 amendments filed to the bill, and a debate that lasted several days. After all the dust settled, the bill went to the Senate where it was promptly put in a drawer and forgotten. I guess somebody feels the need for a sequel.

It is tempting to wonder whether this is just an exercise to keep people busy while not a whole lot happens until House and Senate leaders can, hopefully, come to some agreement on bigger issues facing the State. Maybe it is a team building exercise for a much reduced majority to bond while they are subject to the ire of Democrats and a very acrimonious debate. Whatever the motivation, House Joint Resolution 1 strikes a defiant tone: no matter what message voters sent, House Republicans intend to pursue their ideological agenda whether anybody else wants it or cares. ✂

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