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Democrats' tactics shrewd but irresponsible

By JONATHAN RICH

Even in the shifting world of politics, the Democratic Party has undergone a remarkable transformation. After months of defeat and depression, the party is feeling psychologically, if not politically, invigorated. Equally important, it has altered its traditional approach to political involvement.

Disorganized and disheartened by the presidential election results, the Democrats were unable to oppose or significantly alter any of Reagan's budget or tax legislation. The *Conservative Digest* ran a two-page spread of cartoons ridiculing U.S. House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill and his futile attempts to block the Reagan administration's proposals, and to some, "Tip," began to appear as an anachronistic symbol from a bygone era. Meanwhile, Republicans confidently pronounced that their golden age had finally arrived.

O'Neill and other Democratic leaders are now almost gloating over the increasing criticism of Reagan's economic and foreign policies. As the administration strives to cope with high interest rates, a credibility gap with Wall Street and the seemingly impossible task of balancing the budget, the Democratic Party has consciously decided to accept a secondary role. For a party with a long history of active political involvement and legislation, it's a radical departure from tradition.

Much of the new passivism can be attributed to the painful defeats suffered in the early days of the Reagan Administration. Torn by strife between the party's conservative, moderate and liberal elements, the Democrats failed to draft an attractive alternative to Reagan's economic package. They could only propose a plan that would have given Reagan 75 percent of his desired tax cuts, and a tax cut that was virtually indistinguishable from the president's.



as Democrats, have opposed further cuts in social spending, while the division between the supply-siders and monetarists in Reagan's camp has become more marked. As O'Neill summed it up: "Republicans are fighting with Wall Street, Republicans are fighting with themselves — I think I'll sit on the sidelines for a while."

Thus, when the White House announced it was pressing for a new round of social cuts, both House and Senate Democrats agreed not to draft an alternate proposal. The Democrats' new attitude was also reflected in their decision not to propose reforms for the Social Security system, even though this has traditionally been their area of expertise. Democratic leaders have been so enthused over the prospect of Reagan's controversial cuts becoming a serious burden during the 1982 elections that they reportedly discouraged House social-security subcommittee chairman J.J. Pickle to suggest his own reforms.

The Democrats are pursuing a shrewd policy of non-involvement. It is in many ways similar to that of the traditional opposition party in European parliamentary politics, which by its complete disassociation from the government's policies hopes to benefit upon their failure.

Democrats can now claim they are not responsible for high interest rates, social security cuts or other unpleasant conditions — a position that would be challenged if they succeeded in implementing their own bills. Hoping to capitalize on popular opposition to the administration's budget cuts, Democratic officials also have been instructed to tour the country, holding hearings to assess the results of cutbacks in various social programs.

Although the Democrats' concern over the 1982 con-

gressional elections is understandable, their new policy can only be detrimental to those people they claim to represent. With 36 million people presently dependent on Social Security, the fate of this multi-billion-dollar system will have great impact on this and future generations. Unless reforms are enacted, the system's basic retirement fund could temporarily run out around election day next year, and the problems will multiply when the baby-boom generation retires early in the next century. Such a politically hazardous problem cannot be adequately addressed by one party. The Democrats must join with the Republicans in a bipartisan solution that will benefit the entire nation.

The Democrats' inaction on the question of budget cuts is equally irresponsible. Both parties recognize the importance of balancing the budget and reducing inflation. Rather than wait for Reagan's attempt to squeeze more cuts out of social services to backfire, the Democrats might point out that the administration's inflated military budget, if anything, deserves trimming. It is the Democratic Party's responsibility to propose a workable alternative to cuts in social spending.

The primary object of any politician is winning — in our political system there is no place for coming in second. But if winning involves abrogating responsibility to those who elected you, the whole purpose of representative government has been undermined. If the Democrats do not recognize this fact, their constituents soon will.

Jonathan Rich, a junior history and political science major from Quogue, N.Y., is associate editor for The Daily Tar Heel.

Alcohol alternative

Considering the recent controversy that has surrounded the Chapel Hill Police Department's strict enforcement of the public consumption law, it is encouraging to finally see the University and town working together to solve the problem.

Over the past month a large number of students, without any warning, were issued citations for public consumption violations, facing a \$31 fine in addition to acquiring a criminal record.

But earlier this week, Student Body President Scott Norberg and Chapel Hill Mayor Joe Nassif announced a plan that allowed arrested students to enroll in an alcohol abuse program, rather than receive a fine and conviction. The option is open to all students arrested before Oct. 6.

The proposal is a welcome move on the part of Nassif, who has been criticized for taking a hard line on the enforcement of the ordinance. By taking a step back and offering the involved students an option, the mayor demonstrated that he was willing to work out some type of agreement.

In addition, Nassif said this week that policemen would be issuing warnings first, instead of immediately issuing citations. This should give students that are unaware of the town's policies a fair chance to familiarize themselves with the law, avoiding a fine and criminal record.

The town has every right to work toward correcting what it sees as a real problem — namely teenage drinking and public consumption. And students should not neglect their own responsibilities. The main concern, however, has been the methods that Nassif and the Chapel Hill Police Department used to fight the problem.

Norberg should be praised for coming up with this innovative plan. Nassif's willingness to compromise, or at least accept this alternate plan is commendable and should help to improve town-university relations in the months ahead.

What's in a name?

A recent decision made by a district court judge has changed the status of man's only permanent possession — his name. By removing an outdated law regarding parents' rights over a child's surname, the court commendably defended the right of self-expression.

Handed down last week by Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr., the decision will allow parents to assign their children any last name they choose, be it the mother's surname, a combination of the parents' surnames or even that of a fictional cartoon character.

The previous law required that a child born to a married couple be given the father's last name. But such rigid absolutism, Merhige said, violated the couple's right to privacy and to freedom of expression.

The ruling is long overdue. In the realm of so private and personal an event as the birth of a child, it is important that couple be allowed to name their child without unnecessary interference from the state.

The ruling resulted from a 1979 lawsuit filed by the N.C. Civil Liberties Union on behalf of three couples. One, a Chapel Hill couple, wanted to give their son, Adrian, a hyphenated combination of their last names — Moore-Pleasant. According to state law, the hospital had to drop the hyphen, making Moore the child's middle name instead.

The ruling is an appropriate move by the state to allow parents to make their claim to individual freedom and self-expression. It will also eliminate the discriminatory innuendoes of the old law, which implied that a mother's name is automatically secondary to that of the father's. It is encouraging that the state, upon re-examination, has recognized the importance of supporting personal freedom and has acted to remove those laws which threatened it.

at large

The Democratic Party was also damaged by the defection of the "boll-weevils," a group of conservative Southern Democrats who were successfully wooed by Reagan to support his new bipartisan legislation. Shaken ideologically as well as politically, the party was forced to re-evaluate its traditional emphasis on government spending and involvement, and confront the harsh reality of an electorate grown weary of excessive inflation, taxation and regulation.

The Democrats have since discovered the advantages of inaction over action. As Wall Street and the business community remain skeptical over Reagan's ability to lower interest rates and balance the budget, there has been increasing dissent within the ranks of Republicans and the administration itself. Republicans, as well

Letters to the editor

Warren comments on CGC election loss

To the editor:

Losing is something every person who seeks political office must learn to accept. I accept my loss in the Graduate District I Campus Governing Council race. I do not, however, accept the notion that the negative, dirty, and unethical tactics used against me should go unanswered. Such tactics should not become the norm on our campus.

By their own statements, the write-in candidate and Doug Berger, his campaign organizer, admitted that they launched a purely negative attack in reaction to my candidacy. The object was not to win so much as to keep a non-liberal person from winning.

Although my candidacy was announced in the *DTH* at least five days before the election, nobody from the Coalition for a Better Student Government attempted to raise any issues or engage in any debate over any issue. Rather, they waited until election day to flood the law school with flyers denouncing me and an-

nouncing their write-in effort. The flyers had created many incorrect inferences and distorted my views, but of course there was no time to answer them.

I do not understand why nobody else in the law school took time to seek the vacant CGC seat before the filing deadline passed. I fail to understand why the mysterious new coalition Mr. Berger (who is not even a constituent of my district) formed never attempted to ask my position on any issue or allow me to reply to their charges. I am at a loss to explain why the organization Women in Law chose to endorse my opponent on the basis of hearsay without ever asking me to express my own views.

I do understand, however, that Doug Berger, who so often entertains us with self-righteous homilies on the morality of campaign tactics, has once again resorted to the art of personal attacks and last minute distortions. For all the hype about openmindedness, UNC remains one of the last pockets of bigoted, narrow minded, and self-righteous liberalism. And the lit-

tle leftist ayatollahs in the Law School care more about stopping those who fail their litmus test of righteousness than about taking positive steps to offer their services to the students.

For the record, I do read *National Review* and admire William F. Buckley. I am a member of an organization supported by the president and 103 members of Congress called Young Americans for Freedom. I do not, however, consider myself a radical or an "ultra" anything. On occasion, I even anger my conservative friends with such views as support for the Voting Rights Act or opposition to draft registration. That I could strike fear into the heart of anyone is somewhat puzzling to me.

Andy Harkov has now won election on the sole basis of his "get that radical Ray Warren" campaign. He now owes the students of his district (the majority of whom did not vote at all) some assurances of more positive action. Will he defend the right of students to address the CGC (a right denied last spring to several per-

sons)? Will he seek to protect graduate scholarship and aid money from transfer to undergraduate use? Will he communicate with his constituents about CGC activities?

As for Andy's assertion that CGC-funded groups can act as political action committees, I ask him whatever happened to his much ballyhooed belief in freedom of choice? It bothers me that, despite the fact that my grandparents and parents labored all their lives in textile mills (and other hard labor) to pay the taxes which support this university, some think I have no right to attend it unless I also pay "tribute money" to their pet political causes.

Yes, I think students have a right to make up their own minds about which political movements they choose to support. But apparently we only have the right to agree with the leftist agenda; compulsory liberalism is still the true Carolina creed.

Ray Warren
 School of Law

Cobb deaths shocked campus 20 years ago

By JOHN DRESCHER

It was Friday, Oct. 6, 1961. It was a day that started off like any other day for Cobb Residence Hall janitor Bobby Holt. Performing his usual chores of emptying trash cans and cleaning rooms in the then male dormitory, Holt entered one second floor room about 10 a.m. and thought it strange to find both students still in bed. He knew the students and knew they didn't sleep late, but gave it little thought and left the room.

An hour later, Holt received a request from the manager of the Lenoir Hall cafeteria. The manager, curious as to why two of his student workers had not reported to work, asked the janitor to check on the students, who were roommates. The janitor again opened the door he had entered an hour before, but this time he noticed something that was to make this day different from any other day in his life.

The two students, William Henry Harrison Johnson Jr., of Statesville, and James Michael Barham of Burlington, were dead. Holt called the cafeteria manager, who summoned a campus policeman and drove the two to Cobb. Holt then notified the University and police officials.

Clad in pajamas, both students lay on their backs in bed. A pillow completely covered the face of one student and a blanket nearly covered the face of another. Holt said he saw traces of foam on the faces of both.

Soon a barrage of police and University officials were on the scene. Detectives and a coroner also arrived. The bodies were removed amid a pack of bystanders and photographers. The only investigative information released for the day was released at 3 p.m. from the coroner, who said only that the students had been dead for several hours. Shortly after 3 p.m., a new lock was installed on the students' room and campus policemen were ordered to guard the door to the room.

Twenty years later, Holt, who still works for the University, says he remembers the day well.

"It's been a long time, but I still think about it every now and then."

Holt remembers the students as being fairly typical, although he did say both were involved in various activities and kept busy. The mood around campus after the deaths, however, was anything but typical, Holt said.

"It was real spooky like for about three or four days," he recalled. Although new students eventually moved into the room, they did so with some hesitation. "People kind of shied away from it for a while," he said. "Yeah, I still think about it every now and then."

Immediately, investigators attempted to unravel the case. Barham, 21, a junior and the dormitory floor manager, was described by friends as outgoing and friendly. Johnson, 24, a graduate student in Industrial Relations, was said to be "very quiet." The two were rooming together for the first time that semester.

locally

While an autopsy revealed that the two students had died of cyanide poisoning, after three days of investigation, the amount, the form and the means of administering were not known. No cyanide was found in the room and pathologists said they could find no trace of it in the two milkshake cups found in the room.

Investigators questioned 30 to 40 students, trying to piece together the events that led to the students' deaths. Barham's whereabouts for most of Thursday were known, but Johnson's activities from about 9:30 to 11 p.m. Thursday were unknown. The two did not eat supper together. Barham was seen playing pool downtown about 9:30 p.m. and then back in his dorm room shortly after that. About 11 p.m., Barham was found in the bathroom violently ill. He collapsed and had to be carried to his room. A student said Johnson did not seem to be con-

cerned and hardly helped Barham back to their room.

After placing Barham on a bed, the student said he asked to call a doctor, but Johnson replied that he did not think it was necessary. Johnson told the student that he would call a doctor if Barham did not improve and the student then left the room. Neither Barham nor Johnson was seen alive again.

At least seven policemen continued to work on the case. On Tuesday, police received the first clue in solving the case: The day before the students' deaths, Johnson had made inquiries about a "fast-acting poison." Several students reported hearing Johnson making inquiries about attaining poison.

Police Chief W.D. Blake said accidental poisoning had been ruled out by the police, saying it was either murder-suicide, double murder or a suicide pact. Because of interviews with friends of Barham, police were doubtful that Barham had taken part in a planned suicide.

"It's almost impossible to arrive at any definite conclusions," Blake told *DTH* reporters. "I'm just hoping we'll be able to have enough evidence to prove when and what happened."

On Saturday, Oct. 14, the State Bureau of Investigation chemist began an analysis of vomit found on the beds and floor of the dormitory room to determine the amount of cyanide used. Because cyanide was easily available in campus laboratories, Chief Blake said he thought the chance of finding the source of the poison was very small. As the investigation continued, the *DTH* reported that "many doubt that anything but theories will turn up."

As the investigation continued into its fourth week, police became frustrated. The SBI painstakingly continued its laboratory tests. The contents of the boys' stomachs, bed clothes, clothing and regurgitated food particles were all stud-



ied.

In January, the SBI finally released a statement that said the students "died as a result of the act of one of them or both of them." Superior Court Solicitor Ike Andrews said there was no evidence that any third party was involved.

"I don't believe it will serve any purpose to elaborate further," Andrews said.

Local police had theorized in late October that the deaths resulted from powdered cyanide sprinkled on peanut butter crackers the two may have eaten while playing a game of rook on the final night.

Around campus there were rumors that Johnson was upset at Barham's indifference to him, but the SBI never went farther than saying no third party was involved.

Ironically, as if to forget the dorm's past and give it a new beginning, University officials switched Cobb to a women's dormitory in the following fall. The memory of Mike Barham and Bill Johnson slowly faded, until today, 20 years to the week after their deaths, their bizarre deaths have all but been forgotten.

John Drescher, a senior journalism and history major from Raleigh, is associate editor of The Daily Tar Heel.