

Tsongas' ideas clearly resemble Bush's

Dan Williamson
Staff Writer

Watching C-SPAN on the day of the New Hampshire primary, I was shocked to see a group of congressional leaders talking about how much they liked Paul Tsongas, what a formidable candidate he would make against President Bush, and what a powerful message his success would send to America.

Who were these congressmen? House and Senate Democrats supporting their party's current front-runner for the presidential nomination? No, these were *Republicans*. Coming straight out of the White House from a conference with President Bush, it was Republican congressional leaders who were saying these nice things about one of the men who is working to dethrone him.

When former Massachusetts Senator Paul E. Tsongas decided to run for president early last year, long before any other major Democratic candidate, nobody noticed. President Bush was basking in a 92 percent approval rating in the wake of his Desert Storm adventure, and eligible Democrats who had been expected to run earlier were making other plans. Even later in the year when Bush's popularity began to slip and speculation of potential candidates heightened in the news media, there were only occasional sentences included saying that Paul Tsongas, whoever he was, was the only formally declared Democrat running.

Now, however, not only has Tsongas gained respect, but he is currently leading the other four major Democratic candidates in the race for the nomination. Written off early in the race as being "unelectable" because of his less-than-glamorous appearance, his absolute lack of charisma, and the fact that he is of the same state and nationality as the Democrat's last presidential election nightmare, Michael Dukakis, Tsongas has baffled everybody, including himself, with his success. Going into the Super Tuesday primary states, the former senator can change his favorite soundbite, "The Cold War is over: Japan won" to, "The New Hampshire Primary is over: I won."

In many ways, Tsongas' victory sheds a positive light upon this year's White House race. After a presidential election that was won with Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance, it's refreshing to see a candidate do so well who is running on substance alone. Though Tsongas may practice sloganeering as much as some of his rivals, he has a comprehensive blueprint, "A Call to Economic Arms" for voters to read to back up his rhetoric. Tsongas prides himself on not telling voters what they want to hear, but rather the harsh "economic truth" and boldly rejects a token middle-class tax cut, dismissing it as a "Santa Claus" gimmick. The tax cut, which in reality offers more symbolism than relief to the middle class, is popular among most of the other Democrats with only Senator Tom Harkin joining him

in opposing it.

But Paul Tsongas isn't the one the Democrats want—or should want, anyway. His support of nuclear power has already brought criticism from his opponents and if his success continues, environmental groups will come down hard on the issue. He champions similar trickle-down economics that have been the Regan-Bush legacy, insisting that assisting the big businesses will eventually help out the little guy—a theory that has been disproved by the disappearing middle-class and increased poverty of the last decade. Calling for a "full-blown capital-gains tax cut," two-thirds of which would benefit the wealthiest percentile of Americans, Tsongas moves closer to the Republicans than any of his Democratic rivals and firmly allies himself with Big Business, whose interests have always marred U.S. foreign and domestic policy in the past. Even Tsongas' liberal positions seem to have a technical fiscal base. He explains his courageous support for gay rights in the past as well as racial and sexual equality not with values of human compassion, but by saying that if we divide Americans, we will be less able to compete with the Japanese and the Germans.

It is conceivable that Tsongas could continue to baffle strategists and end up winning the party nomination, particularly if Governor Bill Clinton continues to be hurt by questions concerning his character and Harkin and Senator Bob Kerrey are unable to pump new life into their currently dormant campaigns. But, even so, his success would end there. The Republican Congressmen in front of the White House last Tuesday either were demonstrating political open-mindedness and party defiance by all but

endorsing the man who is leading the race against their leader, or they were smart enough to realize that a Tsongas nomination is just what George Bush needs. Bush wouldn't really have run against Tsongas, he could run with him. Condescendingly expressing admiration for Tsongas' economics, so similar to his own, Bush could ease over him in November simply with his stature as President of the United States.

It is difficult to figure out a November winning scenario for Tsongas. The rich and big corporations will vote for the Republican candidate, if only out of habit, and loyal Democrats will support their nominee, no matter who it is. That leaves the Regan Democrats, the people who have gone to the Republicans in the past three presidential elections, rejecting Democratic candidates as wimps and traitors for their positions on issues like defense, gun control, Affirmative Action, and the death penalty. Tsongas' mixture of fiscal conservatism and social liberalism would alienate these voters on all counts, whereas other candidates like the more socially conservative Clinton or the populist, labor-oriented Harkin would have a chance to win them back.

The Democrats can win back the White House this year, but not with a candidate whose policies are respected by the Republicans on Capital Hill; they're not going to vote for him anyway. The Democratic party needs to produce a nominee who will attack the president's policies by offering a strong alternative, not just a different shade of the same ideas. If Tsongas wins the Democratic nomination, the only choice voters will get in November will be between Bush and Bush Light, and they're going to end up staying with the real thing.

Boy Scouts

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American public, it will certainly have to pay an economic penalty as well as a moral one for its indifference to the values of contemporary society. Revenue from the Bay Area Scouts represents sixteen percent of the organization's national budget, and the Scouts stand to lose some of its 100,000 members in the region. With a membership of some 4.2 million boys nationwide, the Scouts cannot afford to lose such a large contingent of due-paying members. The loss of credibility that will result if the Boy Scouts continue their tactics of exclusion will unfortunately be serious enough to permanently damage the reputation of this once highly-respected group.

As a former Boy Scout, I deplore the actions of an organization that has apparently violated some basic civil liberties by discriminating on the basis of sexual preference, gender, and religious affiliation. The lessons and values that I learned during my years as a Boy Scout were valuable to me later in life, and I hope that the boys who are Scouts currently will realize that what their group leadership has done is wrong. It is also my wish that these boys will vehemently protest the actions of the national Boy Scout administration like the troops in Ber-

keley and San Jose did.

During my involvement in the Boy Scouts, I was taught a reverence for nature and my fellow human being. This respect was designed to transcend all social barriers, and I believe that the true mission of the Boy Scouts is to promote understanding and tolerance and not to exclude people from its ranks because they are gay, female or do not believe in God.

Instead, the Boy Scouts must serve as an instrument to educate the young people of this country so they do not hold the old prejudices and hatreds that have been a shameful quality of American society ever since its inception. If we do not educate our children about the evils of hating someone simply because he or she is not like ourselves, a crime of unimaginable proportions has been committed.

Although the Boy Scouts of America is a private organization, it has an obligation to respect the opinions of modern society. I would like to believe that most if not all Americans are open-minded and intelligent enough to understand that the discrimination that the Boy Scouts is practicing is immoral and should be abandoned. Despite all of the debate, there is only one proper way to deal with this question. The people of our democratic society must be the ones to decide whether if the Boy Scouts of America have the constitutional and moral right to block the admission of certain people into its membership.

Letters

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pages, double-spacing, and placing multiple copies of the same flyer next to each other. In other words, let's begin with the clearly unnecessary and the just plain stupid; then we can begin to work for serious change.

Mike Livingston

Guilford must strive for diversity

To the editor:

Guilford College needs Black students, fac-

ulty and staff to keep its diversity legitimate. Imagine Guilford claiming to be a community welcoming of racial differences if it does not exist here.

The trap many of us with minority status often fall into is the notion that we need the Guilford experience more than it needs us. This trap leads to self doubt and frustration when the community is not fully welcoming.

On Wednesday, March 4 at 1 p.m. there is a tele-conference at A & T State University entitled "Recruiting and Retaining Minority Students, Faculty and Administration: Strategies for the 90s." I plan to attend and encourage all members of this community to join me. Perhaps we can learn what we are doing right in this regard and learn some new strategies to support our diversity.

Richard A. Ford
Associate Dean of Students

Please send your letters, opinions, insights, questions, criticisms or random gibberish to **The Guilfordian**, PO Box 17717.