

## IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

## If you want to live like a Republican, vote Democratic

For all the talk about how useless and boring the political party conventions are, one could not be a Democrat and not be mesmerized by the very first session of the Democratic National Convention Monday night. Not only could I not stop watching, but I cried most of the night. Political conventions are for those of us who grind away in the trenches of local politics and need to be inspired to keep going. We need to see national political figures who have sacrificed so much to get where they are get enthusiastic recognition for a change, instead of being constantly criticized and reviled.

For a woman like me who became active in the League of Women Voters when people would call us "Communist pinkos," and was born ten years too soon to achieve any higher political office than the county board, it was emotional to see the strong, articulate

women who are or aspire to be United States Senators. What an impressive and diverse group they are. Honestly, a couple of those women looked like they had just taken off their aprons and stepped right out of the kitchen onto the Senate floor.

The key to the success of these women is that they believe in themselves and their abilities and believe they have every right to participate in national politics. They also come from far more progressive states than ours, when it comes to politics in general and the role of women therein, in particular. You know you are probably a redneck if... you live in downstate Illinois.

I was overcome by the emotional and loud support given to Hillary Clinton, who certainly deserves the thanks and praise of the Democratic party. After an entire adult life of hard work and sacrifice for her party, it was

about time she had her day in the sun. From her efforts to organize and present a universal health plan, which were never appreciated, to her public humiliation as the betrayed wife, the last eight years must have been mostly a nightmare. Her strong and confident voice and intelligent speech (which is what conservatives hate about her) proved why she has been and will continue to be a force in our country for years to come.

If there was a failure of the Clinton administration, it was that the subject of universal health care was never revisited or presented again to Congress. The plan would be no different than the government Medicare plan we have now for citizens 65 and older. Everyone pays a small premium but everyone is covered. The complete participation in the insurance program, comparably low overhead plus the absence of profits keeps the premium low. The objection that we would not be free to choose our own doctor or hospital has been obliterated by the awful restrictions of HMOs, where we have few choices left and our medical decisions are basically made by accountants. Insurance companies are in the business to make money. The Medicare program is often screwed by doctors and patients, but at least it is subject to closer scrutiny by the government.

The final tear-jerker for the night was the appearance of President Clinton, who for all his idiocy with women and his perjurious efforts to hide it, is still the best president we've had in many a moon. His ability to work with and contain a hostile Congress since 1994 was ingenious. He has not been intimidated by the threats and games played by the Republican-controlled Congress which is still more obsessed with getting the president than getting anything accomplished. Clinton stays true to his constituents by vetoing bills that are nothing less than a form of extortion.



He will long be remembered for his foreign policy successes, his ability to bring people together for peace, or be tough and use force, if necessary. And there's no question he loves being president of this country. I can't imagine what he's going to do next, but it will be interesting to watch.

The recognition of President Carter was long overdue. He's a man who was entirely too nice and kind to be president. His term was fraught with problems, mostly not of his making and he said Monday night that his happiest times have been since he left office. How lucky we are to have a couple with clout so devoted to helping people less fortunate in this world.

So laugh if you must at those of us who are involved in politics, who are concerned about recruiting good candidates for public office and think having a choice in this democracy is basic. Those who don't care and don't bother to vote will eventually be the cause of our downfall.

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