

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Winning the battle without firing a shot

When you are chairman of a county political party, as I am, you fantasize about winning a political battle without firing a shot, so to speak; without getting shin splints from walking door to door, holding fund raisers and praying somebody comes, visiting every chicken, pancake, spaghetti, ham and bean dinner open to the public. We dream about getting elected without doing anything at all, like Republicans did in Knox county for a century.

So, as a Democrat (oops, you found out), it was pretty darn exciting last Thursday morning to watch Senator Jeffords from Vermont announce he was shedding the "Republican" label and officially becoming an Independent. Talk about one person making a difference! By this time most of us know the vast implications of this change. The Democrats will control the United States Senate, Republican committee chairs will be replaced by Democrats and Senator Tom Daschle will become majority leader.

In the Peoria Journal Star Tuesday morning were three columns devoted to this subject. Much as I would like to plagerize a whole bunch of stuff, I will simply quote the three headlines. David Broder, "Arrogance cost GOP Senate control," Cal Thomas, whose column I never read, "GOP must fight back to reclaim Senate," and E. J. Dionne, "Right wing pushed Jeffords from party." Of course, Cal Thomas, ever the arrogant and sleezy rightwinger, is nearly apoplectic.

To me, the key word of all the headlines is, "arrogance." This was the hallmark of the Republicans "Contract with America" in 1994 with "take no prisoners" Newt Gingrich at the helm. "Contract on America" was more accurate, and history speaks for itself. Stories abound of pushy political operatives and other Senators shunning and not so subtly insulting Senator Jeffords, a respected and consistent political servant for many years. I'm sorry, but that's pretty much the general position of the Republican party about people of different views, life-styles, religions, skin colors and economic status. For Republicans to constantly refer to themselves as the party of Abraham Lincoln is ludicrous. Even a poor history student as I, know the Republican party of those days was the liberal party. As usual, modern Repubs are looking down their noses at the masses and hoping we don't know any better.

What the Bush administration and it's followers are not willing to face is that they have no mandate from the people to do anything. This is old territory, but the Bush administration needs to constantly remind itself that George W. did not win the popular vote and there will always be a question of whether he won the Electoral vote. Whether Bush and his cohorts believe it or not, they need to understand that at least half the people in this country think the United States Supreme Court put them in the White House.

Republican Congressmen are facing the daunting task of picking up the pieces of their party and trying to look to their uncomprehending President for leadership. It just ain't going to be there. Like our favorite medical operation, we'll have to by-pass the President to get to the heart of the problem, find the pulse of the nation, strip the veins of arrogance from our leadership and pump forward. (Sorry, I just lost control.)

Cal Thomas did make one priceless comment, "Unified government under Republican control for the first time in nearly 50 years lasted a few days more than four months." To many of us, this is no surprise.

Caroline Porter is a freelance writer from Galesburg who can be reached at (309) 342-1337 or cporter@galesburg.net.