



The Lancaster County Democrat

December 2013

The Lancaster County Democratic Party is your Local Contact for Democratic Politics.

From the Chair

Remembering John Fitzgerald Kennedy by John Yoakum Chair, Lancaster County Democratic Party



On November 22, 1963, I bounced into the house to announce that I was home from Kindergarten but my mood soon turned somber. Why were Mom and her friends in tears, sitting around the living room glued to our television set? Mom quickly jumped up to fix me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with the request to “please be quiet,” as she returned to her chair just in time to hear Walter Cronkite make the announcement that would change America forever. “President Kennedy died at 1 p.m. Central Standard Time, (glancing up at the clock) 2 o’clock Eastern Standard Time, some 38 minutes ago.” Cronkite then paused briefly, put his glasses back on, and swallowed hard to maintain his composure. It is a scene that has been seared into our collective memories. It’s a tragic moment in American history that we commemorate fifty years after that scene played out in my boyhood home and around the world.

Several days later my family was glued to that same television set again as we viewed the farewell ritual unfolding on the streets of Washington D.C. and within the Capital’s Rotunda. It would seem that the entire nation had united in paying respects to the memory of John F. Kennedy. The truth is, however, that there were many radical right-wing groups that had been a nemesis for this President. These groups wouldn’t miss a single opportunity to level silly, unfounded charges. They’d call Kennedy a Socialist or a Communist, they were suspicious of his Catholic faith, and they didn’t like the wealth and power of the Kennedy family. Their hatefulness could whip crowds into frenzy. The events that unfolded in Dallas, Texas, fifty years ago continue

as a sobering reminder of how radical, polarizing ideologies can poison a city and a nation.

French Journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr reportedly gave us the quote: “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Fifty years later America is still trying to figure out how to live as a diverse, tolerant, and multicultural society. Today, radical right-wing groups still attempt to fill Americans’ heads and hearts with fear and hate.

President Obama is also called a Socialist or a Communist, these groups are not embarrassed by their raciest rants, and they will stop at nothing in order to defeat this President’s agenda.

So how do Democrats respond in the face of such radicalism? We are united in the belief that truth and justice will triumph in the end. Our message is a powerful one. Diversity is an American virtue, service to the community is essential, and working to elect Democrats to public service is critical. This is our challenge as we work every day to make positive change.

County Party History

County Party Memories by Mike Donlan

Jean Sanders and Marlene Cupp have embarked on a history of the County Party. This is an opportunity to reminisce. Anyone who's been around politics for any length of time has a memorable story to tell. Like so many others, my interest in politics was born out of the Presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. It was a time when the country was united in youthful enthusiasm and belief that we could accomplish great things.

Much has transpired between then and now. The optimism of that time has been tempered by many tragic events. It's become easy, if not popular, to be cynical of politics and the future. However, the Presidential call to make a contribution is still relevant today. Each of us can make a difference even in a small way.

My interest in politics continued for many years. In the mid 1990's I joined the Lancaster County Democratic Party's Central Committee. As the minority party in the state, I thought the Party needed to find a way to expand its influence by increasing its active membership. One way of doing that would be to make membership more relevant and attractive.

With the encouragement and help of many friends in the Party, I ran for Lancaster County Chair. A main part of our campaign was to reorganize the County Party by setting up a group of committees that could focus in on individual interests and talents. These committees would include such things as candidate recruitment, fundraising, issues, and events. People get involved in politics for many different reasons whether it's supporting a particular candidate, advancing the cause of an issue, or simply wanting to have a voice in the future. We felt that these committees would provide a vehicle for developing those interests in more depth. We also thought if people were on a specific committee with specific goals and objectives we might produce more constructive results rather than membership being simply a spectator sport where only a handful do all the work.

This was a time where I thought I could make that small contribution by helping the Party grow. I soon found out that making change can be harder than you think. As a



relative newcomer, I was running against a Party activist who I hadn't seen around much. His name was Ross Tegeler. He was a teacher at Lincoln High School and sponsor of their Young Democrat organization. I'd underestimated his influence with candidates that he had previously worked for and the loyalty of his students. I saw this as a campaign of new ideas versus the status quo.

The County Convention was scheduled to be a short one with some candidate speeches, adoption of a platform, and election of County Party officers. The date was Friday, June 7, 1996. The setting was a party room at the Villager Motel. We had a bar for refreshments but no arrangements for food as we planned to eat afterwards. All went rather smoothly until the election for County Chair. The first ballot was thrown out because there were more votes than registered delegates. Another vote was taken and that ended up in a 94-94 tie! The evening was dragging on and people were getting hungry. The Convention officers suggested we could either decide the election with the flip of a coin or take yet another vote. It was pushing 11 p.m. I told Ross that people were getting tired and wanting to leave so let's just flip a coin. Some delegates had already left. He said, "No, I want another ballot." We took a third ballot and I won 88-81.

I had no idea that change was going to be that hard. Fortunately for most, getting involved in politics doesn't have to be that complicated or stressful.

I served for 3-1/2 terms or 7 years as Chair. During that time we helped elect Don Wesely and Coleen Seng to the Mayor's office, Ben Nelson to the Senate and several Democratic City Council members.

The system of committees we were able to set up in the County Party has proven to be successful. Subsequent officers and members have built on the system to make what I consider the best County Party organization in the State. This new History committee is yet another example of its success.

Do you have stories to share about the Lancaster County Democratic Party? If you do, please contact History Committee Co-Chairs Jean Sanders at jsanders@neb.rr.com or Marlene Cupp at rc34712@windstream.net.

You are also invited to be part of the next History Committee meeting at the County Party office, 2215 C Street, Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

Meet Our Candidates

We Are The Party Of The People

By Dennis Crawford

Candidate for Congress, District 1

<http://denniscrawford2014.com/>

I have had the pleasure of reading *Big Jim Exon* by Chuck Pallesen and Sam Van Pelt. A prescient quote from Senator Exon back in 1981 really caught my attention:

“The intent of the Republican hierarchy in Nebraska is that being a Democrat in Nebraska is akin to having an unacceptable social disease. It is political quackery of the first order but it sells well in some quarters in Nebraska, and some politicians have turned such tactics into a successful political career. It is based, of course, on the theory of Darth Vader, that if you hate enough to send the very best to do your self-serving power goals, reason and thoughtfulness are of little importance.”



The problem that Exon identified over thirty years ago, has only been amplified in the last fifteen years. We now have a very lucrative industry that is devoted to demonizing Democrats 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The Right Wing Media isn't really a legitimate source of news. Instead, it's a bunch of entertainers whose goal is drive up ratings by keeping the GOP base in a constant state of outrage.

Obviously, the right wing media is a real problem for us Democrats, especially in the rural areas. It's time that we get our message out and let the voters know about our accomplishments and what we truly stand for.

We Democrats have every reason to be proud of our party and what we have accomplished over the years. We are the party of Social Security and Medicare. These successful programs have reduced poverty among the elderly from 50% to 10% since their inception.

The conservative wing of the GOP has always hated Social Security and Medicare because these programs rebut their core ideological belief that government is always a failure. Johanns, Fortenberry, Terry and Smith are all on record in favor of privatizing Medicare and turning it into a voucher program. The extreme changes these Nebraska Republicans favor would cost senior citizens an additional \$6,000.00 per year in out of pocket medical expenses.

Congressman Lee Terry has been a consistent supporter of Social Security privatization. Terry would like to turn over senior citizens' retirement money to Wall Street and have them invest it in the stock market. If Mr. Terry and then President Bush had gotten their way back in 2005, America's senior citizens would've been devastated by the stock market crash of 2008.

We are the party of Obamacare. Beginning in 2014, an additional 30 million Americans will have health insurance and access to affordable, decent health care.

Obamacare is already working. Older Americans and people with disabilities are now paying less for their prescription drugs under Medicare. According to a report issued by the Obama administration, Obamacare has saved 6.1 million people more than \$5.7 billion. In addition, 6.6 million young people are now covered by health insurance since they have signed up for coverage through their parents' health insurance plans.

The Nebraska Congressional delegation would like to repeal Obamacare in its entirety. Apparently, they would prefer to see the pharmaceutical industry keep the \$5.7 billion and strip over 6 million young people of their health insurance coverage.

The Democrats are the party of fiscal responsibility. President Bill Clinton's 1993 budget package converted what was then the largest budget deficit in American history to the largest surplus. Under President Obama, the deficit has declined from the \$1.4 trillion he inherited from Bush in 2009 to \$845 billion in 2013. The budget deficit has declined from 10% of GDP when Obama took office, to 6% of GDP in 2013.

On the other hand, Republican icon Ronald Reagan tripled the national debt during his Presidency and George W. Bush doubled the national debt during his eight years in office. The last Republican President to balance the budget was Dwight Eisenhower during the 1950s.

We are the party of prosperity. A report from Bloomberg News Services shows that since John F. Kennedy took office in January 1961, non-government payrolls in the U.S. increased by almost 42 million jobs under Democrats, compared with 24 million for Republican presidents, according to Labor Department figures. Democrats hold the edge even though they occupied the Oval Office for 23 years since Kennedy's inauguration, compared with 28 for the Republicans. Through April 2012, Democratic presidents accounted for an average of 150,000 additional private-sector paychecks per month over that period, more than double the 71,000 average for Republicans.

The Democrats are the party of national security. President Obama was the President who finally brought Osama Bin Laden to justice. Shortly after he took office, President Obama directed the CIA to make the killing or capture of Bin Laden a top priority.

The entertainers in the Right Wing Media would lead you to believe that somehow former President Bush should take credit for taking out Osama Bin Laden. I would remind these entertainers that history doesn't begin when they take the podium. In December 2001, the Bush Administration's failed strategy allowed Bin Laden to escape from the battle of Tora Bora.

After the failure at Tora Bora, George W. Bush didn't make the killing of OBL a high priority. On March 13, 2002, George W. Bush said of bin Laden, "I truly am not that concerned about him." Subsequently, in July 2006, the Bush administration closed its unit that had been hunting bin Laden. In September 2006, Bush told Fred Barnes that an "emphasis on bin Laden doesn't fit with the administration's strategy for combating terrorism."

The Democratic Party is best suited to govern America and Nebraska because our ideas are superior to those of the GOP. We believe that government isn't the solution to all of our problems. We also believe that the free market isn't the solution to all of our problems. The free market does a lot of things well but it does a poor job of providing retirement and health care security. We believe in a combination of government and free market solutions to our problems.

Conservative ideology is intellectually bankrupt and doomed to fail because it's hard to craft a governing agenda when your ideology is based on hostility to government. Over the last thirty years, the GOP has embraced an ideology which sees government as wasteful, inefficient, and incapable of doing anything for ordinary Americans.

If the Republican Party has left itself any space for embracing constructive governing solutions, it's hard to find.

We need to get our message out loud and clear. The Democratic Party is ready to govern and to improve the lives of all Americans. We are the party of the people because the wealthy are already represented by the GOP and the conservative movement.

Labor's Perspective

by John Kretzschmar

At the holiday season, we are reminded of that for which we are thankful, and we are made aware of those less fortunate than ourselves. It is a time for reflection as well. I'd like to take some time to do that while at the same time "talking union."

Labor unions are probably the most misunderstood institution in America. Too often our popular culture puts unions and their members up to ridicule. That's a pity. Labor unions are the tools that everyday wage earners use to bring meaningful democracy to the workplace. Unions played a critical role in humanizing the employment relationship. Unions are the tools that literally millions of everyday wage earners use to increase levels of fairness and justice in their workplaces across this great state and nation.

This is a nation that loves democracy. Our democratic republic was established to give a voice to the previously voiceless. So it is with labor unions, they give voice to the previously voiceless. In an economy where "leaner and meaner" and "do more with less" are the standard operating memos for employers in the public and private sectors, unions are difference makers. A binding mutually negotiated labor contract establishes wages, hours of work, and other terms of employment that stay in place for the contract's duration. Those contracts bring both increased opportunities and increased security for the covered employees, their families, and even their communities.

Union contracts also indirectly benefit employees who are not protected from arbitrary, capricious, and discriminatory employer behavior by a union contract. Unions were key players in passing every piece of legislation that establishes and protects employee rights and safeguards. When unions disappear, so will protective legislation. One of the biggest misunderstandings about unions is how they affect the economy. Unions are essential to a healthy growing economy. Obviously unions directly benefit their members, but when a union negotiates a contract it also indirectly benefits non-union employees through both the "trickle up" and "spill over" effects. We mustn't forget that well-paid employees are also consumers and it is consumer dollars that keep employers producing goods and services. Without a predictable set of buyers, employers would be laying people off rather than hiring them.

So for this holiday season let's be thankful for what we have and work to help others by supporting wage earners everywhere who work to promote and defend meaningful workplace democracy. After all, we all do better when we all do better.

Columnist

Women and the New Governor

by Rick Boucher

Who will win Nebraska's women voters in the race for Governor in 2014?

Chuck Hassebrook's campaign chair is the charming and savvy Jane Raybould. She is well-known in Lincoln and in Democratic circles around the state. As Chuck ramps up his efforts to become the first Democratic governor of Nebraska since Ben Nelson left office in 1999 the question remains: how can Chuck take center stage among the state's women voters? To pull off such a staggering victory will depend on Chuck's knack for mobilizing and persuading the state's female voters—White, Black, Hispanic and Asian—from the ranks of Democrats, Independents and Republicans. Can he enlist the help of proven vote getters of the past and present—Maxine Moul, Kim Robak, Sandy Scofield, Marsha Malone, Patte Newman, DiAnna Schimek, Linda Steinman, Leirion Gaylord Baird, Jane Kleebe, Gwen Howard, Anne Boyle, Dawn Rockey, Kate Witek, Marsha Babcock, Mrs. Raikes, Mrs. Wallman, Linda Crump, Marsha Fangmeyer and so many other civilian supporters.

With the notion that knowledge of the past increases the likelihood of success in the present, how did Exon, Kerrey and Nelson do with the state's women voters? A few preliminary details might be useful.

In 1970, 471,055 votes were cast. Exon defeated Republican "Nobby" Tiemann with 248,552 votes to 201,994. Popular women candidates were running for the State Board of Education. Of local interest, Stan Cohen ran for Attorney General.

In the 1982 general election, there were 832,000+ registered voters—461K were Republicans, 362k were Democrats and just under 53K were Independents. Kerrey/McGinley received 277,436 votes and Thone/Luedtke 270,203 votes. Virginia Smith received 171,853 votes. Bereuter gathered 137K votes and Curt Donaldson 45K in the First District race. Kay Orr became Treasurer with 312K votes. Darl Nauman ran for Auditor.

In 1990, registered voters totaled 890K. Of registered voters, 449K were Republican, 374K Democrat and 67K Independent. Exon was elected US Senator with 349K votes to Daub's 243K, Bereuter took Hall with 129K votes, and Hoagland defeated Milder 111k to 80K. Barrett narrowly defeated Democrat Sandy Scofield 98K

to 94K in the 3rd District. Nelson/Moul got 292K and Orr/Maddux received 288K. Dawn Rockey was elected Treasurer over Frank Marsh 350K to 191K. Gene Crump received 256K votes in a close campaign against Don Stenberg for Attorney General.

How did the Democrat candidates Exon, Kerrey and Nelson do with the women voters? I don't know. The Secretary of State compiles raw data. No exit polls of record are easy to find. Surely the demographics of the campaigns are somewhere—state headquarters, Accountability Commission, UNL Political Science Department, newspapers, County Election Commissioner and elsewhere. It is useful data. I will defer to the candidates, their political operatives and the County and State Democratic Parties.

Chuck will need to make deep inroads among all women—White, Black, Hispanic and Asian. The very Conservative Republican Candidate who emerges from the primary is not likely to follow the losing strategy of "bold pronouncements" like the 2012 Missouri U.S. Senate Candidate Todd Akin. Chuck's share of women's votes will have to improve dramatically over state elections after 1999. Women will have a paramount role in determining the outcome of the 2014 gubernatorial race. If they flock to Hassebrook, Chuck will be sworn in as governor in 2015. In this Governor's race with an open seat, Democratic plans for turning Nebraska slightly purple will suffer a devastating setback if Chuck loses when the other party is so completely out of step with Omaha, Lincoln, the Interstate 80 corridor along with Chadron, Columbus, Norfolk, Falls City, Auburn, Seward, Nebraska City, Beatrice and Wahoo. If Chuck succeeds in altering the state's partisan landscape and does as well as Governor as we know he can, he will set the stage for an epic partisan clash in 2016 and 2018 with profound implications for Democrats for state constitutional offices and federal offices.

There is so much to lose in 2014 and so much to gain for now with an eye on 2016 and 2018.

Meet Our Volunteers

Ron and Carolyn Hiatt

This has been Ron and Carolyn's first year of volunteering for the Lancaster County Democratic Party. They were chosen as Volunteers of the Year at the 2013 Patriots' Dinner. Carolyn's reminiscences follow.

Ron and I started volunteering when Ron retired from Local #464 Pipefitters in July. Ron kept saying we should find out if the Democratic Party could find a place for us. Ron listens to the radio and watches TV to keep up with politics. I just tag along when he talks about different things the Democrats are fighting for.

We drove past 2215 C Street and Ron went in to see if there was anything we could do. We always work together and enjoy learning new things. They needed people to deliver leaflets to Democrats. We went each day and picked up a bundle of leaflets to pass out. We started at 9 a.m. and quit at 5:30 p.m. We got to see how big Lincoln was and how crazy some of the streets were. We enjoy meeting people and talking about the issues on the leaflets.

Each day Ron and I would go in to see if there were more leaflets to pass out. Several candidates asked us to help them with leaflets and put out yard signs. We never said NO. I even cooked for the other volunteers who were making phone calls in the office.

Ron and I learn so much and enjoy contributing or trying to contribute new ideas to the Issues and Forums Committees. Ron and I hope we can continue to help wherever we are needed.

The Watchful Citizen

by Jim Johnson

In case you haven't discovered the County Party TV show on community access TV, check us out. The show—*The Watchful Citizen*—airs on Time-Warner Cable Channel 13, at 10:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays. We have an interview style format. Guests are Democrats chosen by party leaders, sometimes because they're politically well-known but occasionally they are just ordinary citizens who have a message to give their audience.

The show which is currently airing (now until Saturday 12/15/2013) is a rebroadcast of an interview with State Senator Bill Avery that we taped last summer, regarding his priorities as a legislator and his thoughts about the future. We hope to have Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler on the show for at least the two weeks following 12/13/2013.

If you're a Time-Warner subscriber but can't get that channel, call Time-Warner. They recently moved the channel from analog to digital and you may need to either reprogram your TV channels if you have a digital TV or, in the worst case, rent additional equipment from Time-Warner at \$1 per month.

Book Review

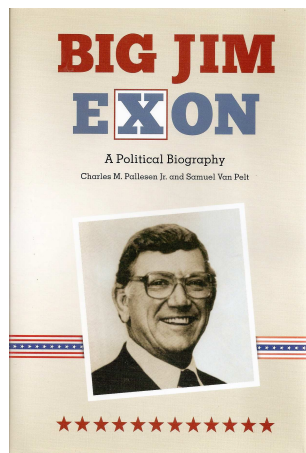
Charles M. Pallesen, Jr. and Samuel Van Pelt, *Big Jim Exon: A Political Biography*. Infusion Media. Lincoln, Nebraska, 2012

This volume covers the political history of J.J. Exon by concentrating on his long involvement in the public arena, first as an activist in the State Democratic Party and later as a frequent successful candidate for high political office.

The work sets the stage by recounting Exon's birth and childhood in South Dakota where his forbearers settled after immigrating from England. He moved to Omaha upon graduation from high school in 1939 and attended college until WWII started when he enlisted in the Army. He met Pat Pros in Omaha and they were married in 1943 while he was on furlough. After his discharge the couple lived in Omaha and he worked for a financial company and they raised a family of three children. In 1953 they moved to Lincoln with the same company and Exon later started an office equipment store on his own, which he ran until he was elected governor in 1970.

Then the book shifts to Exon's entry into Democratic Party activities and his service in leadership positions where he encouraged others to do likewise. He became Frank Morrison's campaign manager in his gubernatorial bid in 1960 as the fortunes of the Democratic Party were rising. Exon spent the time from then until 1970, working to unify the city and rural, union and farm segments of the Party into a cohesive force.

Then the authors, using their interviewee responses, have alternating chapters covering Exon's successful gubernatorial campaigns in 1970 and 1974, and his winning US Senate campaigns from 1978-1990 and how he fulfilled his roles in these offices; this is the bulk of the book. There are additional chapters covering incidental but related topics as well as one dealing with Exon's lifelong fascination with baseball and another summarizing his stands on issues using letters to constituents and



his reaction to the policy proposals made by the presidents he served with (Carter, Reagan, Bush, Sr. and Clinton) in their messages and appeals to Congress.

Of primary importance here is what this extensive solicitation of over 100 interviews of colleagues, friends, staffers, campaigners, media reporters, rivals, party leaders, Republicans and lobbyists, does to inform the reader. I'll summarize it all by saying that Exon's attributes were grounded in two watchwords: teamwork and loyalty. He preached them, he practiced them and expected to receive them in return.

Teamwork was an operational absolute and loyalty was to be given to the Democratic Party—no ifs, ands or buts about it. His early life had exposed him to the inner workings of the Democratic Party through his parents who were both longtime high party organizational leaders in South Dakota, and his adult experiences must have galvanized this party commitment even more firmly. This feature of his being and manner attracted scores of young volunteers to him when he ran for office, as well as those candidates he recruited and blessed; this atmosphere also provided a reservoir of staffers for the candidates who became public officials. This display of collegiality under the umbrella of the Democratic Party is remarkable given the steady drift nowadays toward candidates for high office who are self-recruited and funded, and who rely on private interest groups and large public paid staffs to sustain them in office with resources that assures their reelection for as long as they desire to serve. Lots of candidates, prospective and actual, casually claim public fealty to their party, but with Exon every single corpuscle in his body must have been attuned and programmed, first and foremost, to the interests and goals of his cherished Democratic Party.

Almost all of the interviewees credited Exon with being the catalyst for the improved election performances by Democratic candidates in recent decades. I happened to have found the responses of Wm. Berryman and Jon Oberg to be among the most insightful and provocative in the book. Looking at all the examples recounted in Pallesen's and Van Pelt's work, and placing Exon's impact in the modern political history of the State, one could say that Nebraska Democrats have had two

unusually prophetic leaders—William Jennings Bryan and J.J. Exon. Bryan was inspirationally important to his party early in the last century, and this fed into the Wilson and FDR victories that re-established the Democrats as a viable contender in national elections. However, any electoral boost during these years was modest here in Nebraska. Exon, however, concentrated on unifying the Democratic geographic factions and personality rifts he encountered after settling here; he achieved this through skill and persistence and by working for other candidates until he decided he too would seek public office. Election returns show that this “share the wealth” strategy of Democrats and their leader Exon, contributed to a steady, although uneven, improvement of the party especially in these areas: occasional Democratic wins for major offices; increased numbers of party members who “joined” during the voter registration process, and an achievement not mentioned by those lauding Exon in the book—parity with Republicans by the mid-70s in the number of seats won in the “nonpartisan” Unicameral legislature.



Going beyond Exon’s accomplishments in building up the Democratic Party, let us look at his personality and behavioral style, foibles and all. These mannerisms are culled from the interviews of those who knew and worked with him closely. First off, Exon was indefatigable when it came to staff briefings on budgets, programs, periodic data reports, etc.—the taxpayers got their money’s worth from these sessions; he also had a boisterous laugh and demeanor; a bone crushing handshake; a pipe smoking addiction which was unsightly, smelly and often a fire hazard. He had a gregarious personality; a fondness for “baiting” the legislature and individual senators; an imposing physical stature; a robust delight when vetoing enacted laws. He (and

wife Pat) had a disdain for the D.C. social and media scene; a penchant for owning gas-guzzling cars; a rocky and combative rapport with the local media, especially the print reporters and editorialists; driving skills that were sorely lacking; and he waged a perpetual frugality crusade. Were these traits warts or beauty marks? Interviewees were pretty much agreed that the reaction to many of his personality traits varied based on whether you experienced them directly, or you observed them from a distance.



There were at least a few instances detailed in the book when party leaders deviated from Exon’s velvet glove approach when dealing with internal party squabbles, often disagreements about candidates seeking party leadership posts or nominations for public offices. In 1976, Ed Zorinsky, mayor of Omaha and a longtime Republican, claimed that the party’s “hierarchy” or “bosses” shunned him when he expressed interest in running for a vacant Senate seat; he took offense and shifted his affiliation to Democrat and was elected over the Republican, Congressman John McCollister. Similarly, in Lincoln, a group of County Democratic leaders “warned” Democratic County Commissioner Mike Johanns in 1986, he would not get their endorsement in the upcoming nonpartisan city mayoral election, which he was gearing up for, unless he made “changes” in his campaign organization which included some

prominent Republicans. He too, balked at this boldness, shifted his affiliation, won the race and later was twice elected Governor and twice elected to the U.S. Senate.

Another such thorny case involved Exon and severely tested his oft repeated commitment to unity and teamwork. It occurred in 1970 and is described in the book by Bill Berryman, Exon's campaign manager. Exon had decided to run for governor and he encouraged Wallace Peterson, an economics professor at the University of Nebraska who came for advice on a possible U.S. Senate bid. Peterson filed and began campaigning. At the very last moment, Frank Morrison unexpectedly filed, much to Peterson's chagrin. Morrison, a former governor and a frequent candidate had been "drafted" by Berryman and Jack McCoy, a prominent Omaha labor leader. McCoy, the instigator of the plot; persuaded Berryman that Peterson's presence on the ticket as an "anti-war" candidate would jeopardize the party's chances for victory. They were concerned that Nebraska would be a rerun of the 1968 Democratic debacle when LBJ, Eugene McCarthy, Robert Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey were unable to unify the party after that tumultuous nominating campaign. Berryman and McCoy "floated" the concern by the "party's leaders," starting with Exon, and were not dissuaded, so they decided on Morrison given his proven appeal and convinced him to run. Morrison prevailed over Peterson, in the primary but lost in November. Exon also won in the primary and then upset the incumbent Governor, Norbert "Nobby" Tiemann in the general election. Berryman said Exon was upset when they first broached the strategy with him, but he reluctantly justified their plan by saying there was a need for "party unity." Politics can be a pretty sordid business at times, eh? There are other political "shenanigans" revealed in the book, but this particular one stands out to me because it was not typical of Exon's customary operating style. Some caution may be needed here because we get only one version of these clashes, so these apparent indiscretions may never be definitively "put to bed."

One other matter: Considering all the accolades Exon receives in this book, remember that in his first bid for public office he prevailed, but with a very narrow margin, in his own party's primary after years of effective party service. In my mind, this nomination should have been awarded by

acclamation because it was merited and he used it wisely and helped his party by logging three decades of valuable service in our state and national governments.

Overall, I believe political party officials need to communicate more clearly and instructively with their rank and file members to assure their most qualified nominees advance to the general election. I also believe our century-old state laws regulating political party nominating procedures should be reviewed and updated. In the meantime, this book is a good read and satisfies a number of needs; most importantly it provides a thorough account of a crucial era in Nebraska civic affairs, with a focus on one of its most dedicated and successful politicians—Jim Exon.

by Robert Sittig, 5531 So. 73rd Street, Lincoln, NE 68516, bsittig12@gmail.com, 402-489-9463. Sittig is a retired UNL professor of political science with a continuing interest in public affairs.

Reprinted with thanks and permission from *Prairie Fire*: www.prairiefirenewspaper.com.

Opinion

Recently Pope Francis addressed his church and had some critical comments about free market policy and trickle down economics. A good example of a case where free market may be detrimental to people in a disadvantaged economic situation is the payday lending business. This is a business that has seen good growth since the recession of 2008. Free market supporters see it as a needed service that creates jobs. Each location has at least one employee. People such as the Pope see it as preying on the poor. These businesses charge an approximate annual percentage rate in excess of 400 percent with little or no options if the borrower fails to make the payment.

Governor candidate Mike Foley indicated his perspective of poverty is that most of it is self inflicted. Others try to alleviate the burden by supporting charities that provide services for the poor. Some make contributions during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons and ignore the situation the rest of the year.

Maybe we could best serve people struggling with poverty by trying to lower or eliminate some of the burdens they face. We can petition our political representatives to place more restrictions on payday lenders by requiring them to offer loan terms more in line with credit card lending.

– Ken Snyder



Lancaster County
Democratic Party
P.O. Box 83213
Lincoln NE 68501-3213
402-476-2268
<http://www.LancasterCountyDemocrats.Org>

Printed In-House with Donated Labor
Return Service Requested

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1067
Lincoln, NE

Join the Lancaster County Democrats today!

Your membership helps support party activities including GOTV efforts, candidate support services, political forums and the *Lancaster County Democrat*.

_____ \$15 Student/Limited Income

_____ \$30 Basic Membership

Return this coupon to the Lancaster County Democratic Party, PO Box 83213, Lincoln NE 68501-3213.
Make check or money order payable to Lancaster County Democratic Party or charge to:

_____ VISA _____ MasterCard # _____ Exp Date _____

I prefer to get my newsletter (please check one): _____ via e-mail or _____ via US mail.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

I would also like to volunteer: _____ Prepare Mailings _____ Phone Banking _____ GOTV