Bush Is Kicking Away His Base

by Phyllis Schlafly Feb. 1, 2006

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The conservative movement that elected Ronald Reagan twice, George Bush I once, and George Bush II twice, is essentially a movement of grassrooters who don't like to take orders from the top and who revolt when they believe they are betrayed or bossed by those they elected. That's why the grassroots abandoned the first George Bush when he reneged on his "no new taxes, read my lips" promise.

The tough political tactics used by union bosses and Democratic machine bosses simply don't sit well with conservative Republicans.

Resentment against the Bush Administration is still festering about the combination of threats and bribes that pushed through close votes in Congress to pass the costly Medicare prescription drug bill in 2003 and CAFTA (Central American Trade Agreement) in 2004.

Maybe the intra-party divisions between fiscal vs. Big Government conservatives that lay behind the former battle, and between pro vs. anti free-traders in the latter battle, were evenly balanced enough that the Bush Administration alienated only a handful of Republicans. But in demanding guest-worker/amnesty, the Bush Administration is taking the unpopular side of a Party division that is at least 80-20.

In December, the House passed Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner's (R-WI) border-security bill, which rejected support for Bush's guest-worker/amnesty plan. Since 88 percent of Republican House Members voted for this bill, that should have been a wake-up call to the President.

Shortly thereafter, Arizona Republican National Committeeman Randy Pullen gathered enough signatures to present a resolution to the Republican National Committee (RNC) at its January 19-20 meeting in Washington, DC, which endorsed border security measures and opposed any guest-worker plan.

A competing resolution endorsing border security plus a guest-worker plan was floated by Texas Committeeman Bill Crocker. He began negotiating a compromise with Pullen, and one version of the compromise eliminated guest-worker.

When the RNC Resolutions Committee met on January 19, the chairman, Idaho Committeeman Blake Hall, brought up the original Crocker resolution that included guest-worker language. An attempt by one committeeman to substitute the Crocker-Pullen compromise was ruled out of order, and then a motion to remove the guest-worker language was voted down 6 to 3.

That evening, the Bush Administration sent in its big guns, Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), to insist that RNC members support the guest-worker plan or else they would be labeled disloyal and disrespectful of President Bush. RNC Chairman Ken Mehlman made the rounds to regional caucuses to demand approval of Bush's guest-worker plan and defeat of the Pullen resolution.

At the RNC meeting on January 20, the Hall-approved resolution was incorporated and passed as part of a package of nine resolutions in order to preclude a specific vote on the border-security guest-worker issue. The Pullen resolution was not voted on.

This donnybrook happened on the same day that the New York Times reported that 18,207 illegal OTMs (Other Than Mexicans) have been the beneficiaries of the Bush Administration's scandalous "catch and release" procedure in the three months since Homeland Secretary Michael Chertoff promised to "return every single illegal entrant — no exceptions." Catch and release means that the illegal OTMs are not deported but, after catch, are released on their own recognizance with instructions to reappear a few weeks hence, with everybody understanding that they will disappear into the American population.

Also on the same day, Lou Dobbs reported on CNN-TV that Mexican troops are crossing our southern border twice a month in uniform, in military vehicles and carrying military weapons. The Bush Administration's response to this invasion is don't-ask-don't-tell.

It's bad enough that President Bush is pursuing a vastly unpopular guest-worker/amnesty plan, but the Administration's bullying to prevent debate and a vote by the full Republican National Committee was intolerable. It forecasts the sort of intimidation we can anticipate in the upcoming Senate debate about Bush's guest-worker plan.

Why are President Bush and Karl Rove so tone deaf on this issue? Some speculate that the Bush Administration is in the pocket of big business lobbying interests that want the cheap labor made available by the government's failure to enforce our immigration laws.

Others speculate that Bush and Rove are hallucinating that the Hispanics will vote Republican. That won't happen; Hispanics vote 55 to 75 percent Democratic because, since they are mostly in the low-income sector of our economy, they vote for the party that promises the social benefits of the welfare state, not for the party that pretends to support fiscal integrity and small government.

The Administration-imposed RNC defeat of the majority view of Republicans is bad news for the 2006 congressional elections because Bush is alienating his political base and creating what one RNC member calls an "enthusiasm deficit." In the words of the old adage, elephants (i.e., conservative Republicans) never forget.