Buchanan Knows Where the Votes Are

Feb. 29, 1996 by Phyllis Schlafly

The Inside the Beltway pundits and others who think they are movers and shakers of the establishment are wracking their brains to try to figure out why Pat Buchanan has such an enthusiastic following. His social conservatism is part of the reason, but there is another part they don't understand.

The day after the Iowa caucuses, I received a subscription appeal from the Wall Street Journal. Let me share it with you.

"On a beautiful late spring afternoon, 25 years ago, two young men graduated from the same college. They were very much alike, these two young men. Both had been better than average students, both were personable, and both were filled with ambitious dreams for the future.

"Recently, these men returned to their college for their 25th reunion. They were still very much alike. Both were happily married. Both had three children. Both had gone to work for the same midwestern manufacturing company after graduation, and were still there.

"But there was a difference. One of the men was manager of a small department of that company. The other was its president."

The letter's sales talk conveyed the impression (although it didn't say so) that the difference between the one man's mediocre job and the other man's rise to the top was that he had the benefit of the information in the Wall Street Journal.

The president of the company reads the Wall Street Journal for all the business news he needs on technology, competition and marketing around the world. He can track his investments on easy-to-scan market quotations.

The Wall Street Journal speaks to and for those successful businessmen, and it should. Entrepreneurs are great people; they make America prosperous by investing their savings in plant expansion and in creating new jobs.

It may be that the guy who didn't rise any higher than middle management, or who is a blue-collar worker, had less smarts or opportunity or energy or perseverance, but he is an American, too, and he expected to share in the American dream of a rising standard of living. But his real wages haven't risen in ten years, and now he lives in fear and dread of losing his job altogether if his manufacturing plant is relocated overseas.

There are tens of thousands more of these guys than there are of the bosses. The Wall Street Journal doesn't speak for them, but Pat Buchanan does.

In fact, he is the only presidential candidate of either party who speaks for them (Bill Clinton, who never had any contact with real life in the working world, is bragging about the rise in the stock market), and that's why Buchanan's campaign is rising like a rocket. He is changing the Republican Party from Wall Street to Main Street.

Before the Iowa caucuses, the other presidential candidates never appeared to care about or want this immense constituency of working Americans. Chanting the mantra "free trade," their attitude toward displaced workers was, "Tough! That's the breaks in a free market. We live in a global economy, and you need to look for another job."

The other Presidential candidates, as well as the Republican leadership in Congress, all backed Clinton on NAFTA, GATT, the Mexican bailout, and sending American troops to Bosnia. It is ridiculous to think that any Republican who agrees with Bill Clinton on those gut issues about jobs and American sovereignty can defeat him in November.

Whoever advised the Republican leadership in Congress to make "a balanced budget in seven years with CBO numbers" and government- regulated HMOs for Medicare the 1995-96 Republican legislative goals must have been a double-agent for Bill Clinton. The former is unintelligible to the voters and the latter is unacceptable to seniors, so adopting those as goals served up an immense public relations victory to Clinton.

The Wall Street Journal and conservative publications that like to give advice to Republicans are saying that the Party must "integrate the views" of the two blocs in the conservative movement, the social and the economic (a.k.a. the balanced budget bloc). They have it all wrong; the balanced budget is irrelevant at the grass roots.

To win against Clinton, the Republican candidate must get the votes of the Reagan Democrats, those pro-life, pro-family, working-class Democrats who voted for Reagan, whom George Bush kicked away. To win against Clinton, the Republican candidate must get the votes of the Perot voters, the independent voters who oppose NAFTA and GATT and favor term limits and campaign reform.

The conservative publications that supported NAFTA, GATT, the failed balanced-budget strategy, and Clinton-lite health care "reform," feel threatened by Buchanan's success. That's why they have started a campaign of invective and epithets on a scale unseen in American politics since the Barry Goldwater campaign of 1964.

When Bob Dole got to New Hampshire, he ran negative TV ads attacking Buchanan at the same time that he adopted Buchanan's winning rhetoric when talking to the voters. Dole attacked the reduction in real average hourly wages and tax increases on family income and said, "Corporate profits are setting records and so are corporate layoffs."

Buchanan knows where the votes are. The others are just starting to find out, but they are hopelessly compromised by their long record of supporting Clinton's disastrous foreign and domestic policies.