

What do you think?

an opinion for The People by pete edwards

Obama Clamor

Barack Obama has been sworn in as 44th President of the United States and it is time for conservatives to bury previous misgivings of his suitability and join forces with him and his chosen administration team for the betterment of our nation.

I have been intending to write a stinging editorial on the mess former President George W. Bush made of his terms in office and how he single-handedly wiped out freedom at home and American credibility abroad. I thought it not appropriate to charge him for his traitorous policies while he was a sitting president, not for his benefit but in respect for the sacred office he occupied. My feelings for Bush could not be any lower and now I have the chance to level the field the urge to do so has subsided. I think Bush has left a bad taste in so many mouths he doesn't need my input to cast dishonor upon his family and the party he represents. History will tarnish his memory and that of his family. Punishment enough, I think.

Back to President Obama. This man is faced with a most unenviable task, one doomed to almost certain failure. To recover from a financial tailspin without major casualties, and to then move forward as if nothing had happened, would tax even the most experienced financial expert. Not only does the future of the financial stability of the world rest with the policies of our president, he also happens to be our first black president, a role model future black leaders will be judged on. He carries the weight of

the whole black race on his shoulders and the world will judge him not only as a president, but as a black president.

If President Obama will have any chance of successfully maneuvering us out of what could become a major setback in global progress, he will need the full and unwavering support of all the American people. If he screws up there will be ample opportunity for criticism but now is not the time.

That's what I think. What do you think?

Courageous or calculating

Bradley County Sheriff Tim Gobble has announced his intention to run for the US Congressional seat being vacated by Zach Wamp, who is hoping to be the next governor of Tennessee. Also, he has received national media attention for an article which appeared on his sheriff's blog affirming his position and thoughts regarding the separation of church and state. Basically Gobble says this is a Christian nation with a Christian heritage proven by writings of the framers of the US Constitution and succeeding US leaders. He contends that Christianity can be seen everywhere government has left its mark, on buildings and landmarks, currency and treaties, and every state has endorsed it in their own constitutions. He says he has encouraged Bible classes at the jail, but has not forced inmates to participate or excluded other faiths from holding study groups.

In these politically correct times it is unusual for a politician to publicly take

a strong position when he knows it will bring the wrath of those who seek to remove religious and national sovereignty from the United States. I personally have little support for political correctness. In my eyes the people who practice it are either naive or hypocrites. In Bradley County we are endowed with our fair share of social jellyfish. The Cleveland City Council is loaded with them and the County Commission has its share. In fact, most of Cleveland and Bradley's leaders have no backbone when it comes to political correctness, but it appears Sheriff Gobble is not one of them.

It could be a ploy on the sheriff's part to make political points by stepping forward on an issue he knows will be popular with the voters, but I would choose to believe he is genuine in his beliefs and means what he says. In any case Gobble's credibility is a thousand times greater than slippery Zach's. Beloved by his fellow jellyfish, Wamp has proven his ability to suck up to anyone who he believes can do him good. This editor cannot recall him ever taking a controversial stand on anything. He exists in space but does not add to the total good. He is a predictable compromiser, always ready to go with the flow. Gobble, on the other hand, may shake things up in Washington, if he retains his courage.

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Protectors of the vote

A look at the Bradley County Election Commission website will prove

that a change in the leadership of that august body is long overdue. Democrat Mary Frances Armstrong has been democracy's leading defender for too many years to count, presiding over a body that is supposed to protect the integrity of the ballot. For years she has been unresponsive to voter irregularities and ballot mismanagement. I stop short in accusing her of corruption because I don't believe she is capable of recognizing ballot rigging if it were to poke her in the eye. I have personally witnessed her incompetence to the point of frustration but now she is being replaced, because Republicans control the Nashville Legislature. The rules say a Republican must now be chairman. Will the years of ineptness be behind us after the change? Don't count on it. The same republicans who have allowed Mary Frances Armstrong to ferment for years, will now be awakened from their slumbers to take control and because they are just as inadequate, it is doubtful things will improve. Conditions are no better at the state level. Coordinator of Elections, Brooke Thompson, is a disgrace to the post. This guy "is" smart enough to know when the ballot is being compromised but, despite being advised of problems in Bradley County, saw fit to ignore what was going on to protect the status quo. Bradley County deserves better. Tennessee deserves better. The State Election Commission appoints local election officials and Thompson, so

inevitably they must accept blame for the mess in Bradley County. The day will come when Tennessee will be embarrassed by the scandal of the unsecured ballot process.

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Tax exempt

Local governments everywhere are hurting for revenue due to lower tax collection. In Cleveland a sales tax is being recommended to balance the budget. Even so, the city and county will be facing a tough time financially and are desperately looking for ways to increase revenues without causing a revolt by money strapped citizens. An increase in taxes is never welcomed but it is even less palatable if a segment of the community is avoiding the tax man while still benefiting from services. In our community there are many businesses not paying property tax. There are a number of churches that are tax exempt and those are by-and-large acceptable exemptions, but many organizations claiming tax exempt status are profit making entities with profit making sidelines that pay no community taxes. Take Lee University as an example, the campus teaching space is tax exempt, which may be acceptable to most citizens, but would you support all Lee's rental properties and dorms, for which they gain revenue, be tax exempt? Did you know that if property tax is not collected then no fire tax is collected? Fire service for Lee is supported by

home owners, but Lee's homes for rent do not pay either. The Church of God and other religious organizations own numerous properties that are not used for religious worship, yet are tax exempt. Some ordinary businesses also avoid taxes even though they compete directly with the tax paying community. The YMCA comes to mind and the Creative Arts Guild, but there are sure to be others. Counting religious, educational, charitable and government there are over 1000 parcels exempt in Bradley County. While many of these are genuinely exempt in the public interest, there are many who's status is questionable which are lumped into exemption with bonafide properties. It must be remembered that every property exempt from tax, also is exempt from paying for fire protection which has to be supplemented by extra taxes on those that do pay. Every tax exempt property occupies space that could be taxable and provide commerce that is beneficial to the community. Some tax exempt parcels are located in prime areas of the city that would normally bring in premium tax dollars. Also, there may be a liability if a residential fire is neglected while a large fire is being suppressed at a tax exempt property such as Lee University. Without doubt Lee University is a tremendous asset to the City of Cleveland but it may be past time for them to start paying for the services they receive, especially on those properties that bloat their bottom line.

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