

**Wanted: A Fighting Party**by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

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As was evident at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, it is déjà vu, 1961, all over again. We have a young, cool, witty, personable president -- and an adoring press corps.

"I am Barack Obama," the president introduced himself. "Most of you covered me. All of you voted for me. (Laughter and applause.) Apologies to the Fox table. (Laughter.)"

What is also evident is that, without its new superstar in the lineup, the Democratic Party is a second-division ball club. Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi are not terribly formidable. Last fall, the Congress they ran had an approval rating below Vice President Cheney.

Why then is the Republican Party agonizing publicly over what it is supposed to do? If history is any guide, the pendulum will swing back in 2010.

After all, in 1952, Eisenhower was elected in a more impressive victory than Obama's, and ended the Korean War by June. And, in 1954, he lost both houses of Congress.

Lyndon Johnson crushed Goldwater by three times the margin of Obama's victory. He got Medicare, Medicaid, voting rights, and a host of Great Society programs. And, in 1966, he lost 47 House seats.

Ronald Reagan won a 44-state landslide in 1980, cut tax rates -- and proceeded to lose 26 seats in 1982.

Bill Clinton recaptured the presidency for his party in 1992 after 12 years of Republican rule. In 1994, he lost 52 seats and both houses of Congress.

Though, demographically, the nation is tilting toward the Party of Government, the GOP must remain the party of free enterprise, and should follow the counsel of Australia's Robert Menzies, long ago:

"(T)he duty of an opposition ... is to oppose selectively. No government is always wrong on everything. . The opposition must choose the ground on which it is to attack. To attack indiscriminately is to risk public opinion, which has a reserve of fairness not always understood."

Rather than debating what the national party position should be on foreign policy, health care, education, or social issues -- which the party will decide when it chooses a nominee in 2012 -- the GOP should focus now, and unite now, on what it will stand against.

Here the party has a good start. With the exception of Specter the Defector and the ladies from Maine, it united against the \$800 billion stimulus bill. And as it is impossible to shovel out an added 6 percent of GDP in two years, without vast waste, fraud and abuse, this stimulus package is going to come back and bite Obama by 2010.

And, recall, in his address to Congress, Obama assigned Joe Biden to see to it there was no waste, fraud or abuse in spending the \$800 billion: "And that's why I've asked Vice President Biden to lead a tough, unprecedented oversight effort -- because nobody messes with Joe."

Joe has been set up to take the fall.

The next place to take a stand is against "cap and trade."

More and more Americans are coming to conclude, after the record cold temperatures in many cities this winter, that global warming is a crock -- that there is no conclusive proof it is happening, no conclusive proof man is the cause, no conclusive proof it would be a calamity for us or the polar bears.

But cap and trade would mean a huge hike in the cost of energy for all Americans, the shutdown of fuel-efficient U.S. factories, and their replacement by dirtier and less fuel-efficient Chinese plants.

And we do know the agenda here is a vast transfer of wealth and power from U.S. citizens to government bureaucrats, and from the U.S. Government to global bureaucrats who will run the oversight and enforcement machinery set up by the Kyoto II conclave in Copenhagen.

A third issue on which Republicans ought to stand and fight is health care. For the end goal of Obamacare is the same end goal as Hillarycare: nationalization, bureaucrats deciding what care each of us shall receive, when we may receive it, and whether we even ought to have it.

If the Republican Party remains the party of the individual and the private sector, does it have any choice but to fight?

For if cap-and-trade passes, and Obamacare becomes law, the government share of GDP rises to European socialist levels, and, as we saw after the Great Society, there is no going back.

A party defines itself by what it stands for, and what it stands against. After the Bush era, the Republican Party has been given the opportunity to redeem and redefine itself -- in opposition to a party and a president who are further left than any in American history.

A true conservative party would relish such an opportunity.

After all, the Goldwater young did not lie down and die after a defeat far more crushing than the one the party suffered last fall.

Is this Republican Party made of similar stuff?

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