

from other pens...

Dem campaigns melting down

How can you tell when a political campaign is melting down? Easy. When you see candidates pick their noses in search of issues.

And that best explains the current situation as it affects the Democrats.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Bill's wife, is trying to attach the "elitist" tag on Sen. Barack Obama for a comment he made about bitter small town folks. The Illinois senator probably was more right than wrong in what he had to say, but the way he said it seemed to have rekindled the fire under the Clinton campaign.

It's a non issue.

Calling Obama an elitist, in as serious a fashion as she could muster, made Clinton look like she was auditioning for Comedy Central. Here is a lady who, in concert with her husband, made \$109 million dollars over the seven years they've been away from the White House.

\$109 million? And she's trying to play the role of the good ol' girl, just one of the gang?

Pardon us for chuckling.

The bickering between these two camps has to be music to the ears of Sen. John McCain. He's running free. No media. This gives the Arizona senator a chance to work on fence mending instead of being bogged down with silly questions from a corps of reporters who have not the slightest hint as to what day of the week it is. Or what plane they are on. Or whom they are covering.

It's a blur, the side effect of a campaign that has lasted too long and that, in the end, could spell total disaster for a party once thought to have a solid grip on increasing its control of both the House and Senate.

When the Democrats finally convene in Denver in August, what will we hear:

"Obama! Obama! Obama!"

Or,

"They're b-a-a-a-c-k!"

— Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

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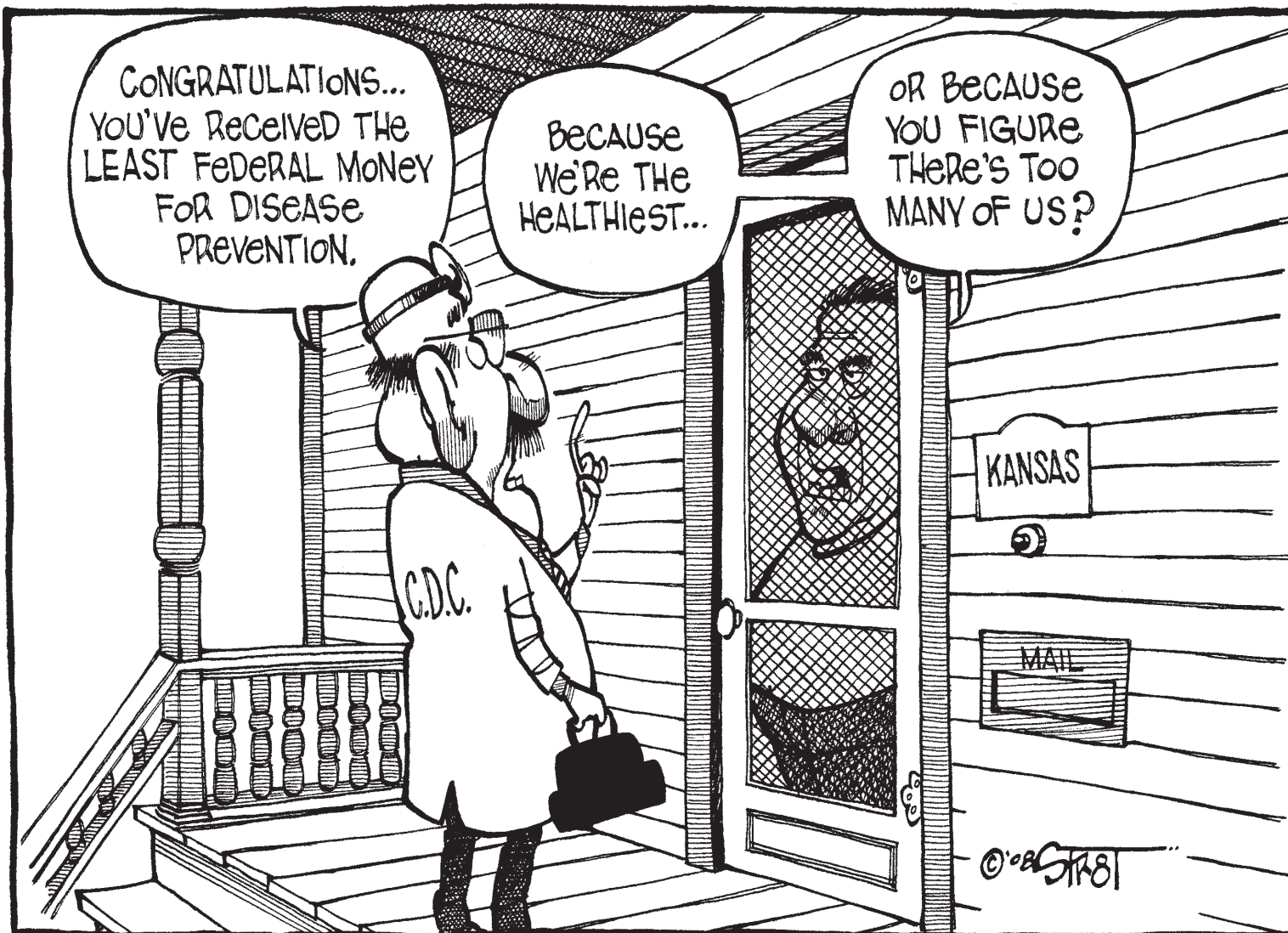
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Male alimony



tom purcell

• commentary

Hey, ladies, turnabout is fair play.

I refer to the Wall Street Journal report on an interesting trend: As more women excel in the workplace, more ex-husbands are winning juicy divorce settlements.

As it goes, the Supreme Court ruled, 30 years ago, against gender discrimination in divorce settlements. A man, if he earns less than his wife, can demand alimony, too.

Back then, however, men were much more likely to pay alimony than receive it — no man worth his salt would accept dough from a lady.

But times have changed. There's no longer a stigma for a man to receive support from his ex-wife.

Take one fellow. Though he earned \$500,000 a year, his wife earned \$1.5 million. When they moved to California to advance her career, he had to take a pay cut.

When their marriage dissolved, he demanded and won a sizable settlement. It was the only way, he explained to *The Journal*, he could maintain the standard of living he'd become accustomed to.

Who can blame him? For years, ex-wives have used the same logic to win big settlements from their high-earner ex-husbands, a sentiment that can be summed up in two words: Heather Mills.

Besides, these days, the old sayings are just as true -- in reverse.

Behind every successful woman is a man — a sensitive fellow who stays home with the kids and claps heartily the first time junior uses the potty to go number two. He manages the

domestic chores so the big woman can climb the corporate ladder.

Of course such fellows deserve the same payouts as ex-wives have long been getting.

But some in the old girls club aren't going along with the program. These female chauvinists cling to a prehistoric double standard — that it's OK for women to accept alimony, but men who do should be ashamed.

One woman, who earns \$500,000 a year, says she can't understand why she has to send her ex-husband thousands a month just because she used to be married to him.

Another refers to the payments she gives her ex, a toilet salesman, as a social-welfare program for ex-husbands funded by working women. Her relatives are more succinct. They call her ex-husband "a deadbeat."

A third says she spits on the alimony check she writes each month before handing it over. She's especially agitated that her slacker ex-husband used her money to hire crafty lawyers who helped him seize a large share of her assets.

But I don't know what these women are complaining about.

For years, they've demanded equality at home and in the workplace. For years, they've

demanding that men take on more of the domestic chores — that men become more sensitive and caring, more like them.

Hey, ladies, you got exactly what you wanted. I'm all for it.

I'm all for men using their wives to woo highly paid wives so they can get at their money. Isn't it about time "guy diggers" do to women what gold diggers have long done to us?

I have half a mind to give it a go myself. I'll use my wit and charm to trick a well-to-do lady into falling for me. I'll talk her into marriage, then use her means to drive nice cars and enjoy lavish vacations. I'll stick out the marriage until her stock options are cashed.

Then I'll take half of everything she's got.

I used to hold traditional views toward men and women — I used to think it unmanly for any man to use a woman for her dough, but there's no need for manliness anymore.

In the past, I would have felt odd asking my ex-wife to support me, but I'm catching on to the new ways — I like that there is virtually no difference between men and women anymore.

That's why I applaud the shop foreman *The Journal* interviewed. During his divorce, he told the judge he needed \$20,000 a year just to maintain his collection of classic cars. The judge awarded him \$40,000.

You go, guy!

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'Breaches' show system works

There's been a lot of political hysteria about supposed "security breaches" with presidential candidates' passport files, but it seems to me that what the whole thing shows is that the State Department's system works.

It'll be a long time, I'd bet, before a contractor or regular employee tries to hack a VIP profile. State Department computer security people were onto the violations almost as soon as they occurred.

And with computers, there's not much more you can ask.

Security is supposed to keep people from getting into sensitive information, of course, but these were workers with authorization to look into passport files as part of their duties.

They got caught playing around, and they paid the price. The records were protected, no damage done.

Because people are people, this kind of stupid curiosity is to be expected. A security system can't keep insiders out of a file. It can flag violations. That's what happened.

So what does this mean to you and me?

Most likely, someone at State or another government agency could look in our passport files. It's not clear if we have the same kind of security that a presidential candidate gets, but we may not need it.

Most of us don't have a Secret Service detail, either, but nobody wants to kill us and nobody wants to hack our files. Because we're not somebody.

It also shows the inherent dangers in government databases, dangers which will only grow as the databases become larger and more closely linked.

The security apparatus always pushes for more data and more linkage, but that's not always to the public's advantage.

Security people say they only want more power and more linkage so they can catch bad guys. And sure, that might happen, but information is information. It can be used against anyone.

Just ask Gov. Elliot Spitzer, whose bank



steve haynes

• along the sappa

turned him in for having too much cash.

Some might say if you haven't done anything wrong, you have nothing to fear from the databases, from the security people who run it or from abuse. But that's not entirely true.

Information has a lot of uses, not all of them aboveboard. And if government contractors with idle time on their hands can get into Hillary Clinton's passport file, they surely can get into yours or mine.

So could people with mischief on their minds, political operatives, who know who all else. The average person would never know who has been snooping in his or her file.

Or what use they put that information to.

Maybe none. Maybe it's just harmless fooling around.

Maybe they got your Social Security number or your birth date.

The only way you'll know will be when something happens, and by then, it'll be too late.

The myth that data banks are our friends is just that, a myth. We'd all be better off if the government knew a lot less about us. But in this day and age, that's not likely to happen.

