

Opinions

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Lines drawn not in sand but on a map

By Leo Chappelle

With time on my hands for nothing but mischief, I dropped by the Police Jury office and spoke with the lovely and pleasant Tammie Edwards who told me that I couldn't write anything about her without asking first, so there goes my column for this week. Mrs. Edwards warned me that she and my wife are cousins, so that pretty much shut things down right there. I wanted to discuss her roll in implementing the Police Jury's take over of the garbage tax collection, but couldn't do that when all three of the women in the Police Jury office yelled in chorus, "It's a FEE!"

Earlier I talked about thirty minutes out in the courthouse parking lot with Police Jury President Harold Sones. I think he and I are pretty much in agreement that Catahoula Parish, probably just like all of the rural parishes in Louisiana, are virtually at the mercy of the state government. And the way things are going nationally, it's becoming somewhat questionable as to how independent the state governments really are.

What I am referring to with respect to our "independence" has to do, of course, with the

money to operate. But there's a significant catch even to that. With the federal government printing money like newspapers, the availability of money per se isn't the problem. We're being told there'll be plenty of cash to fix our roads and bridges. What we're not being told is where we'll find the laborers who want to do the work.

As I recall (pardon my poor memory, Harold), as Mr. Sones put it, "It doesn't matter that we can get three million dollars to spend on our roads and bridges. We can't spend even a million dollars of it because we can't find people to hire."

The bottom line is that printing money won't solve our problems in Catahoula Parish, and if it won't solve ours here, it won't solve America's either.

Another issue we discussed had to do with the reapportionment of our representation in not just our Police Jury but our representation in the United States Congress as well. We may be in serious danger of federal overreaching, allegedly to address racial injustice, but potentially to secure more seats in the house for the

Democrat party. It will affect our own 5th Congressional district. Remember, as the population increases, the number of United States Representatives does not increase. There will still be 435 of them. Each one will speak for more people and that requires redrawing the district boundaries and changing the actual people who are within those new geo-political boundaries.

Allow me to remind you of Elbridge Gerry, fifth vice-president of the United States. In 1812, Gerry, then Governor of Massachusetts, drew a political district of such an odd shape as to be said to bring to mind a salamander. Thus originated the name "gerrymander" for any drawing of a political district's lines to secure an advantageous political outcome. The point of this historical example is that we are at this moment in a circumstance in which the same sort of political shenanigans is possibly in the wind.

The people of Catahoula in particular and the people of the 5th Congressional District of Louisiana cannot afford to be indifferent to what may be about to take place.



The high-water mark of Biden-Era progressivism

By Rich Lowry

Joe Manchin and London Breed have nothing in common.

One is an old-school Democratic senator from West Virginia, surviving and thriving in an increasingly red state; the other is the progressive mayor of San Francisco, a city that is a byword for cutting-edge left-wing politics.

Yet both, in their own ways signaled that Biden-era progressivism has reached its high-water mark. Manchin, of course, delivered an emphatic thumbs down to Joe Biden's signature Build Back Better plan, while Breed reversed field on crime in a stunningly frank endorsement of law-and-order in a jurisdiction infamous for the opposite.

The de facto pincer movement by the wildly different Democrats from wildly different parts of the country -- San Francisco is roughly 19 times as large as the biggest city in West Virginia -- shows that the progressive tide that built in the Trump years is finally colliding with political reality and the real-world consequences of progressive extravagance.

This doesn't mean that progressivism is spent obviously. It dominates the media, academia and almost all the rest of elite culture. At the same time, Democrats still control the elected branches of government in Washington. But a growing backlash against progressive excess has found expression in two notable acts of Democratic defiance.

By now, the context of Manchin's "no" on Build Back Better is familiar. Joe Biden campaigned as a pragmatic Democrat only to reverse field after his election and develop a heroic image of himself as the next transformational Democratic president in the line of FDR and LBJ.

This drove the mistake of not realizing that Manchin or any other Democratic dissenter in the 50-50 Senate had the power to derail Build Back Better and accordingly scaling it back from

the outset. Instead, the White House and congressional leadership acted as if Manchin could be cajoled or bullied out of his oft-repeated qualms.

Perhaps Democrats will reunite with the senator on a scaled-back spending bill in the new year, but the era of FDR fantasies is definitely over. Democrats should ask themselves, if they had a mandate to remake the country, why the entire project depended on the approval of a single conservative Democrat from West Virginia?

Now, Democrats are looking down the barrel of a mid-term election wipe-out that could give the GOP a durable House majority that will put paid to any thought of BBB-style legislation for years.

If Manchin said "enough" to big-spending federal aggrandizement, London Breed said it to the soft-on-crime consensus in blue cities that has led to spiraling disorder. The Bay Area, home to the smash-and-grab robbery and other routine offenses against basic human decency, has been Exhibit A.

Concluding that even the tolerant people of perhaps the country's most tolerant city wouldn't put up with it much longer, Breed had her Howard Beale moment. In a speech clearly meant to set down a political and rhetorical marker, she called for an end to "the reign of criminals who are destroying our city."

The Breed turnabout, from police-defunder a year ago to would-be Rudy Giuliani now, marks an end to the period after George Floyd's death when anti-police sentiment was ascendant.

There are other signs that the progressive momentum is beginning to give way. A rightward shift among Latinos shows the limits of paint-by-the-numbers identity politics. That the left's response to the grassroots movement against critical race theory in schools has been to deny

there is any critical race theory in schools speaks to a telling defensiveness. Next year, the Supreme Court may well knock out Roe and Casey, cornerstones of the progressive social agenda.

Of course, the political and cultural war will continue apace. Still, December 2021 looks like an inflection point when, as Breed put it in her speech, "the bull***t" finally got a reality check.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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