

# Another Idaho hit from your Republican Party

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

Idaho Republicans are not content to rest on their laurels.

Leaving hundreds of thousands of Americans slack-jawed over the Great GOP Gubernatorial Debate Debacle of May 2014 wasn't enough.

Eventually people got bored with watching nuisance candidates Harley ("I'm about as politically correct as your proverbial turd in a punchbowl") Brown and Walt ("I honestly think half of the Republican Party is Democrats, and half of the Democratic Party is Communists") Beyes steal time and attention from the legitimate candidates - Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter and Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Meridian.

Time for new material.

And here it is.

Direct from Moscow, ladies and gentlemen, it's the Great GOP Convention Caper of June 2014.

You don't see this in Idaho. You don't see this anywhere. After all, Idaho Republicans and Democrats have been gathering every couple of years for as long as anyone can remember.

Always, it's been boringly predictable. Each hammers out a statement of principles - a platform - that nobody will remember much. Unless, of course, you get a group of libertarians, Ron Paul acolytes and Tea Partiers who insert within the GOP platform planks that would repeal the 20th century - including the direct election of senators under the 17th Amendment and elimination of the Federal Reserve.

Then there's the matter of electing a group of ceremonial leaders to stand at the helm of the party, but not much else. Ever since the purists took over the GOP six years ago, chairmen such as Norm Semanko and Barry Peterson have been responsible for shepherding Idaho's increasingly moribund party apparatus. Meanwhile, the real influence has remained with the corporate contributors of campaign cash and those Republicans who actually win elections.

Such as Otter, who vanquished Fulcher in the primary.

Such as Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, who dispatched Club for Growth-sponsored candidate Bryan Smith.

Such as the establishment candidates who won every major race - with one exception. Tea Party favorite former House Speaker Lawrence (Boss) Denney got the GOP nomination for secretary of state, courtesy of a four-way split that made his 37 percent share just good enough.

Such as the allies of Otter, Simpson and others - dubbed the "normals" - who successfully ousted Tea Party precinct captains. They were closing in on the apparatchiks who have been running the GOP for six years and have used that clout to close the GOP primary to all but registered members of the Republican Party.

Odds were Peterson might be out of a job and the new party bosses may have reopened the primary to anybody interested in casting a ballot.

So what is a good party chairman to do?

If you're Peterson, you stack the credentials committee in your favor.

Friday, by a 6-to-1 margin, that committee voted to oust the moderate delegations from Ada, Bannock and Power counties.

This nifty stunt disabled about a quarter of the delegates and removed all doubt about who was running the GOP convention.

What unfolded Saturday was worthy of Gore Vidal - although even Vidal could not have created a credible piece of political fiction based on the bizarre protests, snubs, catcalls and procedural challenges that followed.

In the end, they ran out the clock and the delegates shut down the whole affair.

No platform.

No resolutions.

No election of new officers.

No bridging the right and center-right toward the greater goal of defeating Democrats in November. There's no need. As long as Idaho Democrats remain an endangered species, Idaho Republicans are free to engage in their greatest joy - cannibalizing each other.

And it's only June, folks.

Any idea what they have in store for July? - M.T.