

POLITICAL DEFEAT BETTER THAN DEAD

by Bill Hall

Tell me something: Why is it that members of the military repeatedly risk their lives for their country but most members of Congress won't even risk losing an election?

Why is it that policemen routinely go out there in the night along lonely highways and down dark alleys daring death, but members of the House and Senate tremble in their boots at the thought of defying moneyed lobbyists and ignorant voters on matters of principle?

Why is it that members of the fire department dare run into a fire to save a child, but most members of Congress don't dare tell a menacing lobbyist with a pot full of cash to put it where the sun don't shine?

Most members of Congress would rather become puppets of pressure groups than die a mere political death at the polls.

What is it that they fear?

They fear leaving Congress – Their love, their joy, their ego drug.

They don't fear for their lives or least of all for their honor. By comparison with selfless military death, what they fear is a pitiful little setback like losing their current jobs.

They fear something that is wonderful by comparison with dying in a war. They fear anonymity. They fear going home and retiring among their grandchildren.

Most of all, they fear us. And in one sense, they should. We voters today are a nasty, largely ill informed and totally selfish bunch. We behave like rabid badgers, snarling at members of Congress, threatening to bring them home and back down to earth. But that means that the worst we can do is to remove them from office, a fate worse than next to nothing.

In many cases, we would be doing them a favor by voting them out of office. We would be rescuing them from the ignominious life of rolling over on their backs like submissive dogs as they encounter each alpha lobbyist with its fangs full of cash.

But all the Tea Parties, union kingpins, senior citizen activist, rabid environmentalist, overpaid corporate big shots, pharmaceutical lobbyist and other welchers too cheap to pay their full national dues can't really hurt members of Congress that much..

Part of the problem is that voters today don't consume much uncolored news. Many among us watch the most heavily slanted cable channels and read narrow-minded

Internet drivel that fees us “facts” invented by people who are as ignorant and pig-headed as we are.

A generation ago, there were only three national television channels and stacks of newspapers that provided a ton of news and only a little opinion. If the president was giving a speech or a political party was having a nominating convention, those events were on all three channels. If you watched television at all on those nights, that was what you got. It was much harder then to avoid the straight news while wallowing in propaganda.

Today, we are at the mercy of our own avoidance of accurate information. We are hopelessly susceptible to the fantasies we want to hear. And we refuse to believe most of what we need to hear.

Thus we find ourselves with chronically terrified members of Congress who, if they speak their true minds and their honest convictions. Fear they will lose the holy grail of victory in the next election.

But is an honorable defeat for too much truthfulness such as awful thing for an ethical person? Is winning an election that important? It's not like members of Congress didn't have the golden parachute of lucrative pensions and better health insurance than what they have ever been willing to provide for the rest of us.

Losing your life in the military or as a first responder is a tragedy. By contrast, losing a congressional seat is a disappointment. It's the difference between coming home to your family slightly embarrassed and coming home in a box.

But you should be embarrassed most of all these recent years that you lost the people's legislative branch to the moneyed force of greed who now own it.

It's not like the military. When we voters defeat you, at least we bring you back alive. We give you back your old friends and your sweet grandchildren to keep you warm until you die of old age and join our nation's real heroes in the cold, cold ground.

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