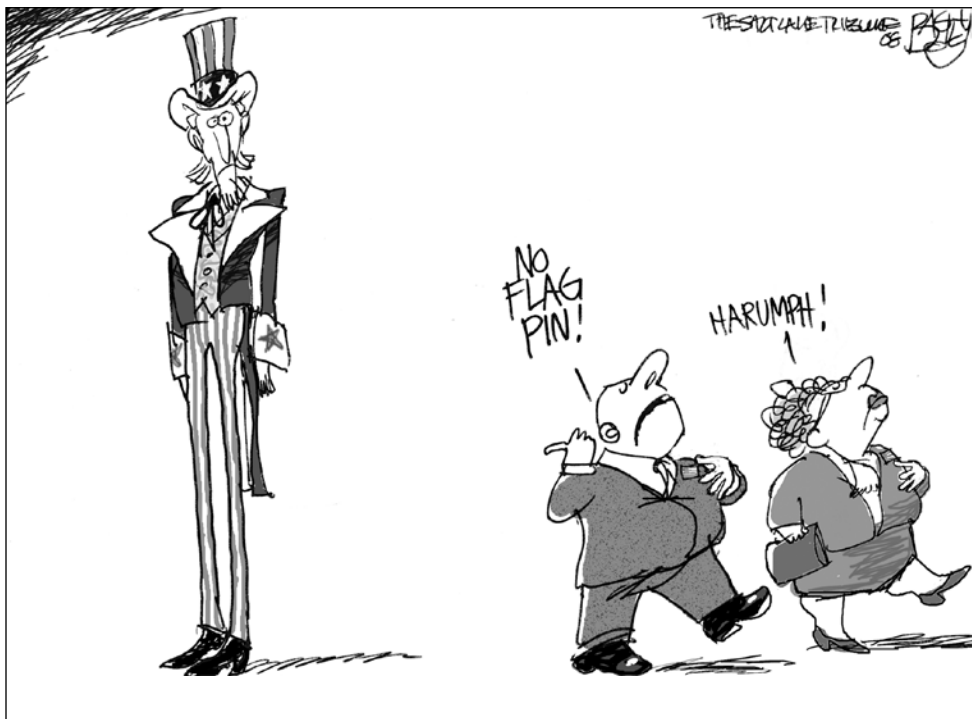


EDITORIAL CARTOON PAT BAGLEY, SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



OTHER CAMPUSES MIKE WILSON, THE DAILY LOBO, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Obama safe from 'flip-flop' critics

Editorial boards across the nation have come together in condemnation of Sen. Barack Obama's "flip-flop" decision to abide by public financing for his presidential campaign. Though he did not unequivocally vow to follow it, the presumed Democratic nominee repeatedly proffered strong support for public financing, promised to "aggressively pursue an agreement with the Republican nominee to preserve a publicly financed general election" and later declared he would "sit down with Sen. John McCain and make sure that we have a system that works for everybody" in a meeting that never occurred.

On June 19, in a video to his supporters, Obama explained that he made this decision in order to combat the anticipated 527 Republican attack ads and move past the current "broken" system, since a large amount of small donors could achieve success while removing his campaign from the influence of special interests. But could this flop possibly damage Obama in the same way that John Kerry suffered from flip-flopitis in 2004? Fortunately for Democrats -- and unfortunately for Republicans -- it won't.

The public financing system matters little to the average voter. Unless there are salacious details related to cigar or golf club transactions in return for business investments, mention of public financing tends to fall on deaf ears. For most Democrats, having the money advantage for once just feels too good to merit a public denunciation. And Republicans can't clamor too loudly because they're just as eager to get rid of campaign finance reform.

Further, the tag of being a flip-flopper just

won't have the same connotation or effect it did in 2004. McCain recently flip-flopped on the policy of the opening of unleased public lands to oil drilling after changing his mind on the Bush tax cuts. Furthermore, throughout this campaign, the public hasn't really paid attention to Obama's shifts, such as his support for the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act bill, even though it carries a provision he promised to filibuster, or his retreat from a protectionist stance on NAFTA. With his vote against the Iraq War and the political success of his refusal to support McCain and Hillary Clinton's "gas tax holiday," Obama has earned enough "strong leadership" currency to last quite a while.

Criticism from editorialists and the Republican camp argue that Obama's switches betray his rhetoric of change. No matter. As many have said, the change candidate in a change election will win. McCain, for his maverick past, is too firmly ensconced within the policies of the last eight years to be the change candidate.

The American response to the ever-changing minds of politicians doesn't exist with the same vitriol it did in 2004, when being seen as a flip-flopper was tantamount to being a slimy wuss without a backbone. After dealing with Bush's hard-headed stubbornness for the last eight years, the ability to change one's mind is no longer such an immediate cause for disapproval. After all, there's a reason the Ralph Naders and Ron Pauls of the world will never be president. Politics isn't about sticking to your guns on each vote and each position. It's about trading your vote on lesser issues to fight for the ones you think really matter.

'Iron Man': profit and politics II

CAVEAT LECTOR: A modern film is subjected to a different sociopolitical culture and thus has different ideological drivers crafting its message; thus this analysis does not consider the Iron Man comic book series.

As discussed last week, Iron Man acts as an allegory for the modern American industrial identity crisis. In the same breath, Wall Street demands ever-higher profits from companies while off-Broadway wants social responsibility. The film depicts Tony Stark not as a tree-hugging liberal hero, as the analogy might suggest, but rather as the conflicted America that ultimately resolves its cognitive dissonance and sides with morality over profit.

Stark's evolution parallels the United States' since the 1860s. After the Civil War, the U.S. quickly and rapidly industrialized. Robber barons and captains of industry (depending on the point of view) turned small companies into incredible fortunes much as Stark develops his father's weapons company. The U.S., though, struggles with the dichotomy of pure capitalism and liberalization, despite the apparent triumphs of the New Deal. When conservatives and liberals debate about tax rates and budget issues, the fundamental issue is one of degree: how purely capitalist should our country be? To what extent should corporations have free reign over the American consumer?

Iron Man does not argue in favor of one extreme or the other, but rather endorses the American solution: the third option of innovation. Stark's resolution, upon reflecting on the horror of the war that his weapons perpetuate, is to redirect his company's resources towards other technical challenges. This philosophy, to select neither A nor B but rather the unspoken option, is where all American greatness has started.

In our twenty-first century, there are many situations where a third path would



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benefit us. Environmental advocates lock horns with big business over government regulation of carbon emissions and energy taxes when the optimal solution is to use energy efficiency as an impetus for a new industry. Yes, energy taxes will hurt business, but redirecting that money to tax breaks for those corporations that either work to develop efficient technologies or that make themselves more efficient creates an opportunity. Similarly, the media frequently portrays the argument between Democrats and Republicans on almost everything, from Iraq to gay marriage, as an either/or situation. Instead, the two sides (and this is pure fantasy) should find a third solution. Compromise is a buzzword that means watering down legislations such that it does not accomplish very much, but if the two sides broadened their scope they could rewrite the rules and find an optimal solution.

While Stark certainly engages in the epic battle with Obadiah Stane, the resolution of the fundamental ideological issue of the film (the morality of making increasingly deadly weapons) is resolved by redirecting Stark Industries' talent towards other goals. In this manner, Iron Man demonstrates that corporations need not be either greedy and amoral or altruistic and profitless. There is a third, American solution to every problem.

Lee is a recent graduate who makes no claim to know anything about comic books.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

No need for fireworks soundtrack

As a recent transplant to the area (moved to Mahomet from Florida in May) I was looking forward to experiencing Champaign's Fourth of July fireworks celebration. That is, until I came across an article telling of the background music playlist for the fireworks. The list contains 15 good ol' patriotic songs suitable for a theme park, or possibly a NASCAR event.

I have to ask, when did it become mandatory for civic fireworks displays to include an obnoxious, blaring soundtrack? One would think that the glorious booming display of professional pyrotechnics would suffice on their own. Do we really need musical accompaniment playing continually during the fireworks? Whatever happened to simply letting the fireworks be the show, and nothing but hushed 'oohs and aahhs' between the explosions? Has our society become so obsessed and addicted to constant media stimulus that

we cannot even enjoy a half hour fireworks show without the obligatory soundtrack?

Moreover, I had always thought that the original intent of Independence Day fireworks was to symbolize the sights and sounds of the battlefield. I highly doubt that our grandfathers and great-grandfathers who bravely served and fought in the World Wars had, needed, nor wanted media entertainment to enhance their war time experience. I hardly think that cheesy songs by Lee Greenwood and Neil Diamond honor those vets.

That being said, I will avoid the official observation areas where I will be assailed with a barrage of constant amplified media entertainment. Instead, I will find a place off the beaten path where I can observe the show, without being subject to the media assault.

KURT KELLY
Mahomet