

Given our past, accept immigration reform

By TIM O'TOOLE, Commentary - Published Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Those were simpler times, when we knew what each party stood for. The rich and college-educated would-be rich voted Republican. The poor, downtrodden offspring of slaves and non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants voted Democrat.

Sure, we had to worry about Russian ICBMs and global annihilation, but gasoline was 29 cents per gallon. We remained exultant over our victory in World War II. Panty raids predominated over bra- and draft-card burnings.

Back then, the GOP was all about wealth creation; the Democrats about wealth distribution. The buzzword *entitlements* had not yet been coined. Social Security was a political reality, in which we set aside taxed income for our retirement. The welfare state was for "those people" — you know the ones.

Times have changed. Now we worry about terrorists. Global warming promises to cleanse the planet of its surplus population, unless Third World nuclear saberrattlers beat Mother Nature to the punch. America's military is in retreat, after the debacle in Vietnam, the misguided, bloody extravagance of Iraq, and the frustrating morass in Afghanistan. I won't even mention the price of gas.

Despite America's economic woes, Barack Obama earned another four years in the White House, though Southern voters hedged their bets (with just a tinge of post-Civil War racism), maintaining the GOP's obstreperous hold in the House of Representatives.

The Republican Party has decided that it is a perfect time to confuse the voters by backing immigration reform. They are clearly going down a new road — one not on Crossroads GPS' map, which hasn't even been paved, much less striped. Their thinking is that millions of Hispanic voters will rejoice when their cousins and nieces and nephews are welcomed into full participation in our democracy. Never mind the possibility that they would all vote Democratic.

Back in the day, before pocket calculators (when we learned that Pi was 3.1415926 etc.) a kinder school system let us rely on 22/7 as an acceptable substitute. That works out to 3.142857143 and change — but we weren't worried about moon or Mars landings back then.

Since immigration reform should not be rocket science, I offer the following easy-to-implement proposal to our Honorable Bodies: Call it the 22/7th Plan. Any illegal alien — make that "undocumented worker" who was brought to America before their eighth birthday, can apply for automatic citizenship when they reach 22.

The savvy Scot Andrew Carnegie, never studied for his citizenship papers. He was too busy building a railroad and steel empire. Albert Einstein (Germany), patently need not know the relative difference between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Joseph Pulitzer (Hungary) kept his eyes on the Prize.

Madeleine Korbilova Albright (Czechoslovakia) brought a unique perspective on foreign policy as secretary of state.

Another Czech, Martina Navratilova loves tennis and America (in that order).

Irving Berlin (Russia) composed the perfect holiday tune compatible with Republican values — "White Christmas."

Mother Cabrini (Italy) was a living saint until the Vatican made it official post-mortem. Mother Jones (the union organizer, not the magazine) rebelled against British rule in Ireland, then rebelled against American economic oppression well into her 99th year.

There must be 1 million Cubans who fled Castro's communist state, moving to America's Theme Park (Florida, not Vermont). They all vote Republican. Sen. Marco Rubio is not convinced that Mexicans, Nicaraguans and Guatemalans would follow suit, hence he has reservations. *Reservations* is a dirty word for Native Americans, but that is another story.

The 22/7th Plan for Immigration Reform. As easy as Pi.

Tim O'Toole is an Albany writer. His email address is www1ceman@earthlink.net.