

Viewpoint

DNC DEBATE

A swing state - and voters

Picking Charlotte for the DNC was a good choice – for the city and for Democrats.

BY GARY PEARCE
Special to the Observer

Over the past few weeks, a stream of state and national reporters asked essentially the same question: Was it a mistake for Democrats to come to Charlotte?

The reporters always raise the same problems: unions are unhappy, North Carolina is a tough state for Obama, Republicans are on the rise, the state Democratic party is a mess.

All true. But it's still a good idea to come to Charlotte.

Not so many years ago, no one in North Carolina imagined that the convention would re-nominate a president who is African-American.

For Democrats, a Charlotte convention plants a flag in what used to be safe Republican territory.

Even more, North Carolinians of all political persuasions should like what a Charlotte convention means in the long run: Our votes for president count.

Each year, America's presi-

dential election is decided in no more than a dozen states. The other 38 get ignored.

We got ignored too, until President Obama put us in play in 2008. That's why the convention is here. That's why candidates and surrogates parade through continuously.

It's nice to matter. It's good to have a voice. Let's hope it stays that way.

Here's some advice for purist Democrats who object to Charlotte because North Carolina has a low level of unionization, or because the state banned gay marriages and civil unions, or whatever perception pains them: Get over it.

If Democrats can expand the presidential playing field by competing in North Carolina, that's a good thing for this year – and years to come.

Welcome, indeed, to Charlotte.

Gary Pearce is a longtime Democratic adviser, including for former Gov. Jim Hunt. Read more of his work at www.talkingaboutpolitics.com.



Gary Pearce



Carter Wrenn

Gary Pearce and Carter Wrenn are N.C. political strategists from opposite sides of the aisle. Game on.

Meet the new swing voter. She knows what she wants and both parties want her.

BY CARTER WRENN
Special to the Observer

In case you missed it there were two new polls this week, but nothing has changed. Republicans are still voting rock-like for Romney, Democrats rock-like for Obama.

If you want a portrait of a swing voter, she's a mother with young children living in the suburbs in a nice, but not too nice, home. She's not from the South. She probably moved here because of a job.

But now the earth has shifted beneath her feet so she's got definite ideas about her goals this election:

She wants the recession over. She figures Obama's proved he can't get the job done, but she's not certain Romney can either so it looks like when she walks into the voting booth she may have to gamble. As a female with children that's the last thing she wants to do.

She abhors debt, not only her own but government debt. She's against cuts in Medicare and Social Security and

supports cheaper student loans and government mortgage subsidies to families about to lose their homes.

She's pro-choice to her fingertips, yet she's worried about the decline in religious values.

She's an Independent with no loyalty at all to either party. Wooing and winning her is the fixation of both conventions.

She's why Ann Romney gave the first speech in Tampa; why Michelle Obama led off the DNC. It's a safe bet before the Democrats pack up their tent and leave Charlotte she's going to get courted a lot more.

But she's nobody's fool. She hasn't been swayed by gossip about tax returns and doesn't give a toot about Obama's birth certificate. She just wants the hard times behind her and she means to pick the suitor who'll get the job done.

Republican Carter Wrenn was a political adviser to the late Sen. Jesse Helms and others. Read more of his work at www.talkingaboutpolitics.com.

Stirring partisan passions

LEFT TURN
BESS KERCHER



At the National Democratic Institute's panel discussion Tuesday, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said she was once asked how she knew she would agree with her party's platform. Her response: I know, because I'm going to help write it.

Many Charlotteans are contributing to the convention. We're helping write this chapter of history. The text is rich: The audience at this event included students, city residents, journalists and democratic leaders from across the globe.

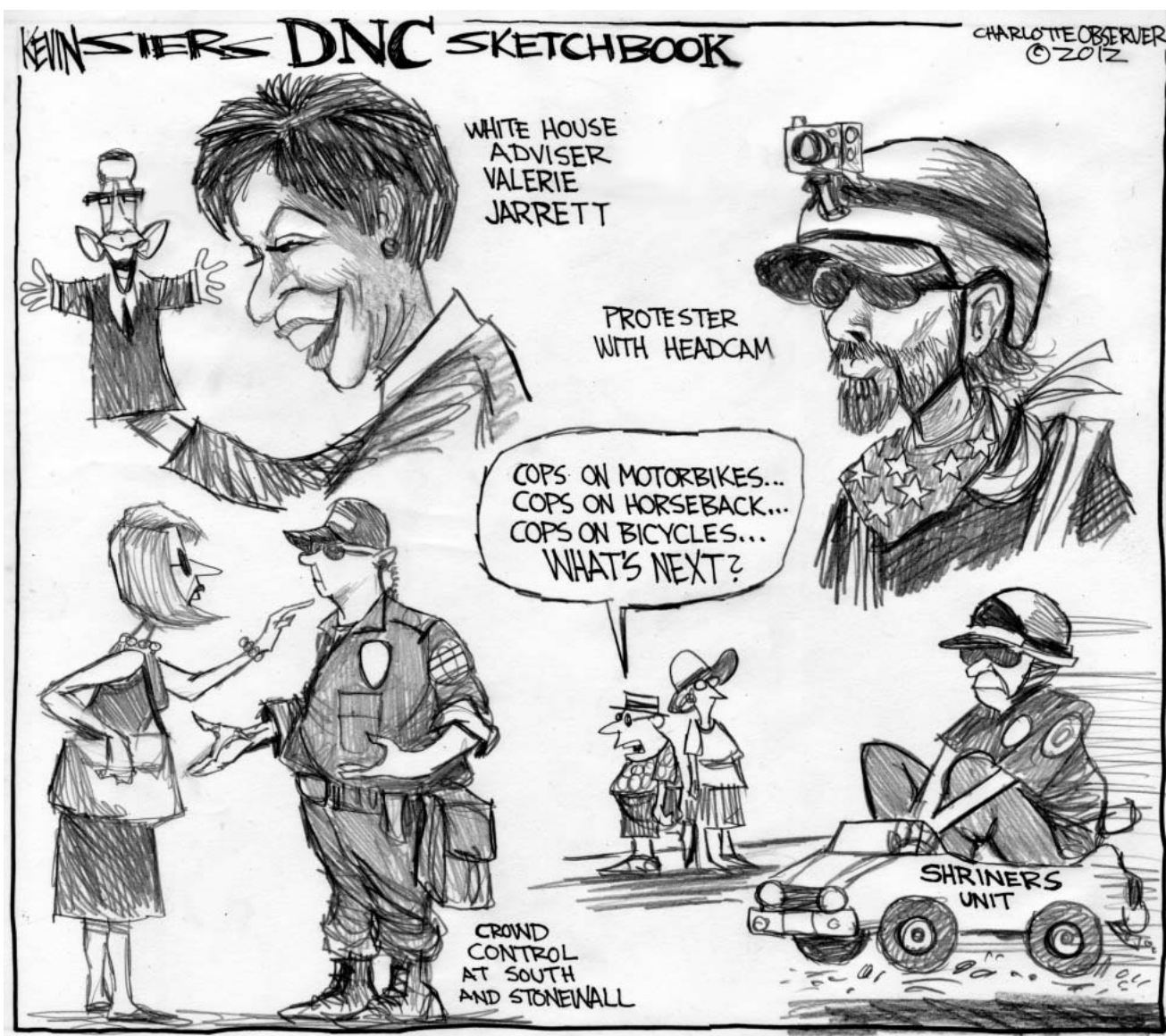
There is a celebratory feel across the city, and it makes sense. As panelist Paul Kirk noted, conventions are manifestations of the democratic process.

As speeches get underway in the arena, partisan passions will surely be stirred. Mayor Anthony Foxx, San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro, Michelle Obama and others began to make the arguments in earnest for President Obama's re-election.

Even in this close race, in this hotly contested state, I hope that if you are motivated on the other side, you'll do something about it.

Because, as Madeleine Albright also noted Tuesday, ultimately we have the political system we deserve. And we don't deserve much if we refuse to participate in the peaceful transition of power that we enjoy every four years.

Bess Kercher, a longtime Charlotte resident, is a liberal political junkie, writer and stay-at-home mom.



A scene not to be missed

RIGHT TURN
JACK COBB



I spent part of Tuesday walking the length of downtown and was left with a few impressions.

First, the large sand sculpture of President Obama outside the EpiCentre is both impressive and weirdly off. One guy stuck his finger in it and remarked, "Oh, that's real sand." Yes, buddy, just like the big sign said that you reached around to jab it.

Second, Charlotte will never again see this density of politicians and pundits. Within three blocks, I passed Mark Shields, Chris Matthews and Jeff Greenfield, as well as Senators Christopher Dodd and Dick Durbin.

Third, the souvenir vendors are outnumbered only by the demonstrators on College Street. In a span of 10 minutes, I was solicited by the Human Rights Campaign (LGBT), Planned Parenthood and anti-abortion activists who announced in a surprisingly upbeat tone that "We as a people are an abomination." I saw only one group not directed at so-called social issues: FixtheDebt. I gladly accepted their rubber bracelet, but they had nowhere near the draw of the other demonstrators.

My strongest impression: Where are you, Charlotte? Come brave the modest inconvenience and check out this fascinating scene. Whether you favor Maddow or Hannity, like or dislike the administration, you need to be here.

Jack Cobb is a lawyer and conservative political junkie who worked on Capitol Hill before moving to Charlotte.

The Buzz

Anonymous comments from our readers on the issues of the day

Romney had a big decision to make over the weekend: which of his 15 houses to visit for Labor Day.

If you're using the new temporary Transit Center, remember – you didn't build that.

It wasn't the Bush recession. It was the Barney Frank recession.

Michelle, ma belle!

If you want to buy a souvenir DNC mug at the arena you have to show a photo ID, but not to vote in N.C.

Bin Laden was unarmed? So were over 3,000 people in the towers.

Think we might have overdone the DNC security a little.

Better off than you'd have been under McCain/Palin? You betcha.

Not as walkable as San Fran? Has that guy seen the hills in San Francisco?

Received my DNC flyer today with a Charlotte Observer banner on it.

Save your caterwauling about "Carter 2." There's no way I'm voting for "Bush 3."

Free UNC-CH diploma. Limited class attendance may be required.

Is America better off than four years ago? Only if you go by the facts!

America needs to be run more like Bain, less like kindergarten.

JOIN THE BUZZ

To add your voice to The Buzz, e-mail buzz@charlotteobserver.com.

What grade do you give Obama on the economy?

Our six panelists representing a broad cross section of Charlotte will offer insights each day of the DNC

"There is still a long way to go to recuperate our economy. The business community in general, especially Latinos and minority-owned businesses, need to be at the top of the agenda of whomever takes office."



JULIO COLMENARES
CHAIRMAN, LATIN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND PARTNER AT CGR CREATIVE

"It takes both the president and Congress to 'fix' the economy. I give House Republicans an 'F' for putting partisanship before progress. I give President Obama a 'C' for results. Why didn't he embrace the Simpson-Bowles plan?"



JILL FLYNN
FORMER WACHOVIA EXEC, NOW PARTNER AT FLYNN HEATH HOLT LEADERSHIP, A CONSULTING FIRM

"I give him a B-. He inherited a recession that has to be acknowledged. But no recession is alike, making it hard to give a contextual grade. As the president he inherits everything that comes with the job. What we don't know is what his decisions saved us from. Indicators suggest we have stability, but we need movement."



MICHAEL A. DEVAUL
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, YMCA OF GREATER CHARLOTTE

"With 29 consecutive months of private sector job growth, President Obama's leadership on the economy is sound and effective. Because the unemployment rate is still above 8 percent, I cannot give him an excellent mark. The grade I'd give him for fixing the economy is a B+."



PAM SANCHEZ
COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER AT NORSAN MEDIA

"We have an underemployment rate of 15 percent. The poverty rate is the highest in 50 years. Last year was the worst for new home sales in 50 years. I'm concerned we're headed toward Great Recession Part II. I'd give the president a D with sincere hope for improvement."



MARK ERWIN
CHARLOTTE BUSINESSMAN AND FORMER AMBASSADOR IN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

"He gets a D-. Obama's policies have failed. He does not have a proven plan to control the debt. The job creation has not kept up with population growth. He does not have the answers, and does not seem willing to adjust his policies based on the results."



SARAH REYNOLDS
PHYSICIAN AND MOTHER OF THREE