**Politics - Stories & Illustrations**

**Alien Invasion: When Americans across the country go to the polls in November, most will be registered as Democrats or Republicans. But in Pennsylvania, a registration processing error means that almost 300 people have been registered as members of the Adarian Party -- named after a fictional race of space aliens. "I don't know how that happened," said one registered Adarian voter. "I looked it up online and started reading about Star Wars." *(AARP Bulletin / Real Possibilities, November, 2015)***

**Thomas Nast, one of America’s great political cartoonists (for Harper’s Weekly) gave us the donkey as the Democratic Party symbol and the elephant for the Republicans. He also gave us the tiger to typify Tammany Hall, which he hated. Nast died in May 1902, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, where he was serving as U.S. Consul General. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 51)***

**Are political choices hardwired? We may think we vote in line with our economic interests and social values, but our politics may be driven largely by our biological makeup. University of Nebraska researchers measured how aroused the nervous systems of highly conservative and liberal voters became while they viewed positive images, such as pictures of babies or cute animals, and negative scenes featuring car wrecks or fearsome insects. The conservatives showed greater interest in negative images, while liberals responded more strongly to positive ones. When researchers showed both groups collages that intermingled positive and negative images while tracking their eye movements, they found that conservatives focused on the more alarming material. Even on a physiological level, conservatives appear to spend more energy “monitoring things that make them feel uncomfortable,” psychologist Mike Dodd tells LiveScience.com. That may make them more receptive to campaigns that stress their fears, while liberals are more drawn to hopeful plans for the future. “It’s amazing the extent to which they perceive the world differently,” said political scientist John Hibbing, who helped design the study. *(The Week magazine, February 24, 2012)***

**Political donations from wealthy individuals working in the financial-services sector jumped 700 percent over the past two decades. In 2010, those donors contributed $178.2 million, up from $15.4 million in 1990. *(WSJ.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 10, 2012)***

**And that is how that kind of faith interacts with politics. If we cannot know for sure at all times how to govern our own lives, what right or business do we have telling others how to live theirs? From a humble faith comes toleration of other faiths. And from that toleration comes the oxygen that liberal democracy desperately needs to survive. That applies to all faiths, from Islam to Christianity. In global politics, it translates into a willingness to recognize empirical reality, even when it disturbs our ideology and interests. From moderate religion comes pragmatic politics. From a deep understanding of human fallibility comes the political tradition we used to call conservatism. *(Andrew Sullivan, in The Conservative Soul)***

**What makes someone a liberal or a conservative? Parental influence plays a role, as does life experience. But a new study says our political views may be largely the result of an inborn, visceral predisposition. In a survey of more than 8,000 sets of identical and maternal twins, scientists charted their views on each “gut” political issues as school prayer, property taxes, the draft, and labor unions. Not surprisingly, most people had strong, emotional views. But the identical twins, who had the same genes, were significantly more likely to hold the same opinions of these issues than were the fraternal twins, whose genes were not identical. The researchers’ close analysis of the twins’ opinions suggested that some people are born with a predisposition to be conservative, others have a liberal bias at birth. “When people talk about the political debate becoming increasingly nasty, they often blame talk radio or the people doing the debating,” researcher Dr. John Alford of Rice University tells The New York Times. “But they’ve got it backward. These generically predisposed ideologies are polarized, and that’s what makes the debate so nasty.” The findings don’t offer much hope for resolving the country’s bitter political divide. Because men and women seek mates with similar ideologies, Alford says, the conservative and progressive gene pools are becoming more concentrated, not less. *(The Week magazine, July 15, 2005)***

**How sports affects politics: Politicians have good reason to root for their local sports teams. A Stanford University study has found that when the local team wins, it boosts the mood of voters so much that incumbents benefit on Election Day. The study looked at federal and state elections between 1964 and 2008, along with the records of 62 college football teams. Researchers found that game victories in the two weeks before elections increased the incumbents’ share of voters in the counties where the schools were located by about 1.5 percent – enough to make a difference in close races. Victories put voters in a better mood generally, researcher Neil Malhotra tells the Associated Press, and that translates into more support for sitting politicians. “Events that government had nothing to do with but that affect voters’ sense of well-being can affect the decisions they make on Election Day,” Malhotra says. *(The Week magazine, July 23, 2010)***

**The amount of time a sample of local TV newscasts devoted to stories about government and politics fell to 3 percent last year, down from 7 percent in 2005, a new Pew Research study found. With reporting staffs shrinking, 40 percent of the average newscast was taken up by segments about weather, sports, and traffic. (The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 29, 2013)**

**Wax sculptors at Tussaud’s museum in London made a statue of Michael Dukakis. As soon as the returns settled the election, they melted it down. That’s politics. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**William Donaldson, who was city manager of Cincinnati from 1975 to 1979, went off to Philadelphia to become manager of the Philadelphia Zoo, the oldest in the nation. When asked what upsets him most in his new post, Donaldson answered, “People calling the legislature a zoo. How can people compare a zoo with a roomful of politicians?” *(New York Daily News)***

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