

By ANNE DONNELL

I have a good election question for you. Where did “yellow dog democrat” come from? I’ve heard it all my life (I’m from the South) so is it Southern? -Always a Voter

I love that you’re always a voter. Statistics tell us a woeful story; the privilege of voting, hard won with no guarantee of permanence (check out world history), is a privilege scorned by many voters. Election after election yields participation of less than 50 percent. Presidential elections do better. The last two (2004, 2008) had percentile voter turnouts in the 60s. A little rain, a little shopping, a little headache, keep voters away from the polls. Even the ease of early voting doesn’t woo.

Shameful is too mild a word to affix to this.

Here we are once again celebrating our birth, joyous in the patriotism that threads its way throughout our great nation, from barbeque grills to picnic tables, from brass bands to fast pitch softball. Hurrah, indeed, for the red, white, and blue, Old Glory, waving to proclaim that the world’s longest lived democracy still lives.

The vigilance essential, the lifeblood of continued national existence, includes a citizenry who exercise the privilege of voting.

With matters of both politics and language almost always accompanied by confusion or mystery, not surprisingly there is disagreement about the origin of yellow dog democrat. Some, including QPB Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins, think the phrase dates to reconstruction days after the Civil War. Other explanations say it originates in the early 20th century, in the South, perhaps in Kentucky over the 1900 gubernatorial election, perhaps in Alabama over the 1928 national election. Of course the expression is hyperbole, but it is still in use, describing a Democrat of unwavering loyalty, who would happily vote for a yellow dog running as a Democrat. I found nothing reliable on who said or wrote it first. Blue dog Democrat is a reference to late 20

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century politics and the Democrats who considered themselves fiscally conservative.

Now I like dogs. I love dogs. In fact it recently occurred to me while petting Franklin, a marvel who joined us a few years ago, that one doesn't require patience in living with a dog; it's the dog who must be patient.

As to the yellow dog candidate, I suppose it needs to be male, avoiding the obvious term for a female dog that supporters of the Republican opponent would be tempted-to-the-breaking-point to use.

ONLINE DEPARTMENT "Why Do Most People in Tennessee Go Barefoot?" (Thanks, A.A.) *A man in Topeka, Kansas decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco and working east from there. Going to a very large church, he spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign, "Calls: \$10,000 a minute." Seeking out the pastor he asked about the phone and the sign and discovered this golden phone was, in fact, a direct line to Heaven, and if someone paid the price he could talk directly to GOD. The man thanked the pastor and continued on his way, visiting churches in Seattle, Houston, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and many cities and towns all around the United State. He found more golden phones with the same sign and the same answer from each pastor. Finally, he arrived in Sevierville in the beautiful state of Tennessee. Upon entering a church, he saw the golden telephone, but THIS time, the sign read "Calls: 35 cents." Fascinated, he told the pastor, "Brother, I have been in cities all across the country, and in each church I have found this golden telephone. I have been told it is a direct line to Heaven, and that I could talk to GOD. In the other churches the cost was \$10,000 a minute. Your sign reads only 35 cents a call. Why?" The pastor, smiling broadly, replied, "Son, you're in Tennessee now - you're in God's Country. It's a local call." And why do Tennesseans go barefoot? BECAUSE, when you're in Tennessee, you're on Holy Ground!*

"Green Thing and Growing Old" (Thanks, A. W.) *Checking out at the store, the young cashier suggested to the older woman, that she should bring her own grocery bags because plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologized and explained, "We didn't have this green thing back in my day." The clerk responded, "That's our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations." She was right -- our generation didn't have the green thing. Back then, we returned milk bottles, soda bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. Grocery stores bagged our groceries in brown paper bags, that we reused for numerous things, most memorable besides household garbage bags, was the use of brown paper bags as book*

covers for our school books. □ We walked up stairs, because we didn't have an escalator in every store and office building. We walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks. □ Back then, we washed the baby's diapers because we didn't have the throw-away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up 220 volts -- wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back in our early days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. □ Back then, we had one TV, or radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of the state of Montana . In the kitchen, we blended and stirred by hand because we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the mail, we used wadded up old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. □ We drank from a fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. □ Back then, people took the streetcar or a bus and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their moms into a 24-hour taxi service. We had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest burger joint.