

Where Have All the Statesmen Gone?

Ed Bellow of Frisco, Texas, asks that haunting question in a letter to the editor published in the August 29th, 2002 issue of The Dallas Morning News. Mr. Bellow make the following point, "To me, the gumption to vote one's mind on issues takes precedence over any stated position they may make because a position taken by those who only vote along party lines is only good as long as the party agrees". He goes on to say, "But I continue to be disappointed in the many party-line votes in Washington. It does not seem possible that a group that large of well-educated, and supposedly independent-thinking people can continually vote like that. Many in Washington make the good of their party more important than the good of the country This is inappropriate and I do not want that type of person representing me."

Representative Vic Snyder (D-Ark) was making a presentation before the Arkansas Interfaith Conference a year or so ago. I asked him why every politician in Washington always tried to get their "sound bite" of opposition on the evening news. It did not seem to matter what the issue was - - it was who could get the best evening news sound bite. I told Representative Snyder that we, the people, grew very weary of that kind of governance. I asked him the question "Are their no statesmen anymore in Washington?" His response was, in essence, that it had always been that way and that is the way things work inside the beltway.

Well we in Arkansas found out what it was like to not follow the "party line". Former Representative Jay Dickey, a Republican, was defeated in the last congressional election for his district. He had lined up several worthwhile projects for his district prior to the election (others would call it "pork barrel") that immediately disappeared when he was defeated. He is now running for re-election saying that if you want those projects in Arkansas, during a Republican administration, that you must have a Republican in Congress. Representative Dickey could usually be counted on to vote the "party line" - - when he did not on one occasion he got snubbed by the house leadership.

When I took 7th grade typing in school many years ago one of the sentences we were taught to repeatedly type was "Now is the time for all good people to come to the aid of their country." We typed that sentence several times to warm up our fingers each day.

My suggested is this - - each day as each congress man or woman comes to their desk they are turn to their computer and type this sentence several times (until they get it!) - -

"Now is the time for all good people to come to the aid of their country."