

Sister Grim: Vote Early - Vote Often

By Sister Grim

Once upon a time it was THAT time — election time—in the city of Chicago, located, as ewesual, in the sorry, scandal-ridden cheapskate state of Ill-A-Noise. To be accurate, it was primary election time, but it was almost as much fun as a real, serious, election.

It was a time when the leadersheep of the CTEwe and the leadersheep of da City wit da big Shoulders got to exchange ideas regarding the fascinating topic of voting. And how to tamper with the results without getting caught.

Pammy Pretty was glued to her giant plasma-TV as the election results began to trickle in. She was not concerned with winners and losers, since she was so in charge of everything at the CTEwe that she couldn't be bothered with such inconsequential individuals as state representatives or gubernatorial candidates.

"Get out of the way!!" she screamed as Teddy, the Obsequious Toady, inadvertently blocked her view for an instant.

"Sorry," he mumbled. "It's only a commercial," he added by way of apology.

"I don't care. Get out of the way anyway," she snapped.

Risking death by soundwaves, Teddy asked "What's so important?"

"Really!!" she exclaimed in exasperation. "I am trying to figure out the advantage of the new voting machines. Maybe we can use them here."

Teddy was confused. "Why would we do that?" he asked innocently. "You said we already had the perfect setup. You know, so we would never lose?"

"Shut up!!"

"Don't you remember? Just the other day —"

“Shut up, Ted. You never know who might be listening in.”

“But you said we should use the retiree delegate election as — as— ‘an example of political perfection’ — that’s exactly what you said.” Teddy fumbled around in his pocket, eventually producing a little notebook. He thumbed through several pages, stopping to read now and then.

Pammy Pretty stood there, arms crossed, expensively shod toes tapping on the antique Oriental carpet of her recently redesigned office. A perceptive person would have noticed her growing impatience. A prudent person would have already gone away.

Teddy was not only obsequious. He was totally clueless as well. Finally, Pammy exploded. “STOP MOVING YOUR LIPS WHEN YOU READ!!! WHAT DO YOU WANT?”

Teddy was shocked. “I just wanted to remind you of the other things you said. I wrote it all down right here in my handy-dandy little notebook.” He paused momentarily. “You said it was an ‘elegant election process with exquisite execution’.”

“There will be an execution for you if you don’t leave right now. I have work to do and you are really annoying me!!” she hissed as she pushed him out.

“Okay, okay. I was just trying to help,” he whined as she slammed the door

And, once upon a time, it was sad but true that the election for retiree delegates was a marvel of malicious manipulation, designed to create the most confusion for the most people while ensuring the election of the chosen Pee-Yu endorsed candidates. Especially all the triple-dipping retiredPee-Yu employees, field drips, and other assorted hangers-on.

Baaallots were ostensibly mailed to all retired CTEwe members. Inside the envelope was a smaller envelope, marked “Sample Ballot”, and a glow-in-the-dark yellow baallot, as well as a return envelope preprinted with the CTEwe address.

The few directions were confusing, and no provision had been made for a return address on the outer envelope, which could have maybe, perhaps, possibly, indicated who, if anyone, had voted.

Like, for example, a real honest-to-goodness CTEwe member, instead of whomever got the baallot in the mail.

Some members voted, but others assumed it was only a sample, for them to keep for future reference. Or to throw away. Some got very upset when another envelope, marked “Secret Ballot”, arrived from the CTEwe a few days later. Several never got the mail at all, because they were at those “other” addresses, where they really lived, like not in the city, so often alluded to by Marilyn Mumbles, selected president of the CTEwe.

Of those who did vote, some voted for more than the maximum 36 delegates; some put check marks, OKs, or smiley faces in the space allotted for an “X”. There were no sequential identification numbers on the baaallots themselves, so that anyone in the vicinity of an Office Max, Office Depot, Kinko’s, Staples, or any other stationery store, could purchase some Screaming Yellow Zonker-colored paper and print their own additional ballots.

“Screaming Yellow Zonkers!!” exclaimed Pammy Pretty. “That was Astrobright Solar Yellow. It’s expensive paper. Retired teachers can’t afford to even look at expensive paper, with their measly little pensions,” she chortled.

Since everything that arrived at the opulent riverfront offices of the CTEwe was just dumped into big boxes, there was no way to maintain even a hint of validity in the voting process. Just like the previous retiree election, when it was discovered that someone had indeed created a few hundred extra baallots. Of course, once upon a time, there were other officers in leadersheep positions, and that election was repeated. That being then and this being now, however, with the Pee-Yu caucus back at the helm, no questions were asked, and the results were accepted immediately.

Pammy clapped her hands with glee. "It was perfect," she reminisced. "And those dopey old retirees didn't even question it. Maybe a mail baallot will work for the contraaact referendum after all," she mused as she switched to the Home Shopping Network.

Meanwhile, throughout the sorry, scandal-ridden cheapskate state of Ill-A-Noise, there was confusion and consternation as candidates traded insults and accusations of vote fraud and ballot tampering. Old news in Chicago, of course.

Back at CTEwe headquarters, several of the CTEwe leadersheep were enjoying a lovely catered dinner, along with selected members of the IFT elite (the Ill-A-Noise Federation of Teachers). The television was murmuring quietly in the background when Pammy suddenly started paying close attention.

And there, on the screen, was an aldermanic candidate demanding that the river be dragged for missing ballots.

"Who is that idiot?" screamed Pammy, dropping her foie gras in her haste to turn up the volume.

"No one important. He's just a little pip-squeak who's not going to win," said Nasty Nicky, head of the field drips, who always managed to invite himself to dinner. Especially when it was free, or on someone else's excessively generous expense account.

"How do you know that?" asked Mercenary Mary, erstwhile secretary of the CTEwe, who, after two years, still didn't know the difference between meeting minutes and agendas.

Nasty Nicky snickered. "He's a loser, but he is on the right track," he said.

"Shut up," snapped Pammy.

"Don't tell me to shut up," he snapped back.

"What was all that about the river?" asked Mercenary Mary. "It's just a joke, right?"

No one said a word.

"He's kidding, right?"

Everyone returned to their dinners. It was very quiet, except for the continuing coverage of the election news. "This is boring," observed Vain Victor, who dressed well and always made a nice appearance as a CTEwe officer.

“They just keep talking about baallots. Missing baallots, lost baallots, defective baallots, uncounted baallots —”

The angry little aldermanic candidate was on again. It was a different channel. Once again, he questioned the integrity of the election process, what with baallots being stored overnight. Somewhere. Out there. Once again, he mentioned the river as a repository of misplaced votes.

On another channel, reporters were asking Da Mare, li'l Hizzoner, what he thought about the suggestions of sunken baallots. “Dat’s ridiculous,” he laughed in his Mickey Mouse voice. “We don’t have missing baallots in da river. Evvyboddy knows dat.” He giggled all the way to his office.

Whereupon he slammed the door and made a phone call.

“It’s for you,” said Teddy as he handed the phone to Marilyn Mumbles. She listened for a few minutes, holding the phone away from her ear. People seated near her could hear an agitated Mickey Mouse voice on the other end.

She handed the phone over to Pammy Pretty, who was uncharacteristically quiet, and almost polite. “Yes sir,” she said. “Oh, no sir. Certainly not. We don’t want that, either. Aaabsolutely not. We agree. Thank you.”

Everyone was watching her. She calmly handed the phone back to Teddy. It was very creepy. Teddy was getting extremely nervous; Nicky was looking a bit uneasy as well. Mumbles, Vain Victor and Mercenary Mary looked bewildered.

“I told you it was a stupid idea!!” Pammy shrieked. “I told you that landfill was a better way to go, but noooooo!! You just had to go and do the same thing all over again. This could be very embarrassing to us all.”

“Whaaat?”

“Luckily for us, the mayor doesn’t want anyone doing exploration of the river, either. He’s the one who’ll make the announcement. We just have to agree to a few conditions and our secrets are safe.”

“What secrets?” they all asked.

“Nothing you need to know about.”

“What conditions?”

“Nothing we’re not already doing. He just didn’t know it.”

And so, once upon a time, there was a reason for the leadersheep of the CTEwe to roll over and do things that would make any honest ewenion member shudder with disgust. They decided that very night, seated at the expensive, expansive conference table in Pammy’s office suite.

“Firing 1500 teachers?”

“Agreed”

“Supporting charter schools?”

“OK.”

“Closing ‘failing’ schools?”

“Please clarify that.”

Pammy Pretty sighed. “Closing school buildings that are sitting on valuable real estate, so that the land can be re-sold by the city for huge profits. Manifest destiny or something,” she added.

“Eminent domain,” said someone from the IFT.

“Whatever.”

“Dipping into the pension fund?”

“Wait just a minute on that. Is that just the teachers?” asked the leadersheep, “or does that include us?”

“All of us,” mumbled Pammy.

“We’ll have to think about that,” they decided. “That could be important.”

Once upon a time, like most of the membersheep of the CTEwe, Millicent Militant, Ewenice Toonice, Clara Clark, Les Izmores and Scott Skeptic were becoming more and more depressed as they listened to increasingly draconian declarations from the Big Baaad Bored and the Mayor.

“What does it all mean?” they wondered aloud.

Ewenice laughed. “Maybe Arne Duncan is blackmailing the Mayor, and the Mayor is blackmailing the CTEwe.”

“Good one, Ewenice,” they agreed, laughing as well. “how could that ever happen here, in Chicago?”

“Oh,” they said. “I see.”

“O.I.C.”