

Keillor chides GOP, stumps for Soglin

By Matt Pommer

The Capital Times

Radio star Garrison Keillor poked fun at Republicans Thursday and urged Democrats to unite for the November elections.

School prayer, as "peddled" by the Christian Coalition, "surely is the most ridiculous idea to come over the threshold since Prohibition," he said.

"The lives of parents is nothing but endless prayer for these children. These children have been prayed over unceasingly.

"The thought that 50 words a

day read by some teacher off a slip of paper is going to move the Creator to do something for those children is very strange.

"Congress has been prayed over every day it has been in session for 100 years. I don't see the effect of it," he concluded to loud laughter.

These and other wry observations entertained more than 300 people who jammed a fund-raiser for Democratic congressional hopeful Paul Soglin at the Sheraton Hotel. Keillor was in Madison to appear at the state teachers union convention.

Keillor, star of public radio's "A Prairie Home Companion," introduced Soglin as the "man who introduced black and yellow" to campaign stickers. Soglin said the "real culprit" of the color scheme was his wife Sara, who wanted the colors of a school bus.

Keillor said he became a Democrat while in college.

"I thought it would throw me in with a more eloquent group of people than the ones I grew up with in Lake Wobegon," he said, drawing a roar of laughter.

"Then I wound up with a bunch of beer drinkers. I gradually got used to it over time.

"Being a Democrat, loyalty is somewhat new to me. Democrats tend to be dissenters by nature, and wherever you find two Democrats in a room, you probably find three points of view," he continued to even more laughter.

"But there are times when it's good for us to pull together — if only for the novelty of the experience, and this is one of those times."

Keillor said two years ago, when Republicans won Congress, the nation went into the "twilight zone of the Republican Revolution." "It was a revolution sort of like the

colonists had thrown out the British and brought in the Spanish," he said.

It seemed to bring back the "Gilded Age. It was the age of William McKinley," which he described as a time "when portly men believed great wealth was the surest sign of divine grace and people were elected to office simply by beating on the poor and the federal government."

The Republican insurgency brought out the "usual band of suspects," he quipped, "cheese merchants, cat stranglers, geezers in golf pants, corporate shills and amateur policemen."

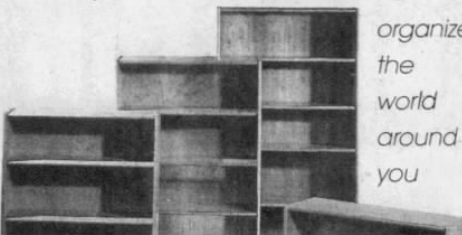
"The American people have seen the Revolution and they don't want any part of it," he added.

Keillor sings baritone in the Hopeful Gospel Quartet, a regular feature on the "Prairie Home Companion" show.

At the fund-raiser, he led the crowd in singing "Hard Times Come Again No More," "Home on the Range," and "God Bless America."

"You Lutherans, we're looking to you for harmony," he said to laughter, apparently from those familiar with the church's three warring factions.

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