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YOUR NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE

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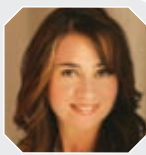
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OPINION

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— Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle is off this week getting ready for the Democratic political convention. Her column will return next week.

EDITORIAL

John McCain — Candidate of Change?

BY RICH LOWRY

If there's just one candidate of change this fall, John McCain will be the Horatio Seymour or James Cox of 2008 -- a presidential also-ran all but forgotten to history.

The only way McCain can hold the White House for the Republicans is if he trumps his opponent on values and national security, and sells the public on a domestic reform agenda that keeps Democrats from sole ownership of the theme of change. Otherwise, Barack Obama will out-inspire him, or Hillary Clinton out-policy him, in a classic out-with-the-old election.

McCain would seem a natural candidate of reform, given how often he has used the word during the past decade. With his hair-trigger sense of honor, McCain's reformism has been driven by what offends him -- large, unregulated campaign contributions and wasteful earmarks. But with the cost of health care increasing and the value of homes declining, the public is going to wonder about McCain's politics of honor: What's in it for them?

The McCain campaign is shrewd enough to realize all of this, which is why he's beginning to piece together a

forward-looking domestic agenda. The task isn't easy, given that the candidate isn't animated by domestic issues and leads a party that is only haltingly realizing it needs a policy renovation as it hits bottom at the end of the Bush years.

On his just-completed health-care tour, McCain appropriately triangulated between the status quo and overreaching Democratic proposals. It doesn't take Michael Moore to realize that our health-care system is expensive and inefficient, and leaves too many people out. The root of the problem is the tax break for employer-provided coverage -- dating from World War II -- that leads most people to get insurance through their employer.

Since they don't pay directly for the insurance themselves, people don't know the cost of their plans, and since their insurance pays for their medical procedures, they don't know the cost of them either. This creates the predicate for runaway medical inflation.

The answer isn't government-sponsored universal coverage. McCain correctly says it would "replace the inefficiency, irrationality and uncontrolled costs of the current system with the inefficiency, irrationality and uncontrolled

costs of a government monopoly."

McCain wants to give people a tax credit -- \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families -- to buy their own insurance. They can keep their insurance through their employer if they like, but the credit would make it easier for individuals to buy -- and keep -- insurance on their own. "The key to real reform," McCain said, "is to restore control over our health-care system to the patients themselves."

If individuals are shopping for health care, insurance companies would have an incentive to provide better plans at lower cost. If they purchase their own plans, their insurance wouldn't be dependent on their jobs. This change therefore mitigates two of the besetting problems of the current system -- affordability and access.

McCain's proposal is just the start of what has to be a broader conservative reformation. The sole Republican response to the public's economic anxieties can't be trying to talk the public out of them. If it is, the GOP will have a long time out of power to think more creatively. ■

— Rich Lowry is editor of the *National Review*.

LETTER to the EDITOR

Editor:

Once again the residents of Lee County have come through for the community donating a record total of 371,000 pounds of non-perishable food items for the Letter Carrier Food Drive this past Saturday. All donated food stays in our community to

feed the hungry. Even with the price of gasoline at an all time high, 66 local residents volunteered to help collect food to assist the rural letter carriers who use their private vehicles on their mail routes. In addition, hundreds of community volunteers worked at Post Offices sorting food

for local food banks. Many thanks to all the wonderful volunteers and postal employees who helped with this effort! ■

Anne Murray,
Postmaster Fort Myers / Cape Coral

Chris Johnson,
NALC Branch 2072 Food Drive Coordinator

MOMENTS IN TIME

• On **May 21, 1955**, Chuck Berry records his hit song "Maybellene." The song rose to No. 5 on the pop charts, one of the first rock 'n' roll songs by a black musician to hit the charts. Berry scored a string of hits throughout the 1950s, including "Johnny B. Goode" in 1958.

• On **May 22, 1859**, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of master sleuth Sherlock Holmes, is born. Doyle grew weary of writing Holmes, and in "The Final Problem" he killed off Holmes, only to resuscitate him later due to popular demand.

• On **May 23, 1934**, notorious criminals Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow are shot to death by Texas and Louisiana state police while driving a stolen car near Sailes, La.

The Barrow Gang was believed responsible for the deaths of 13 people, including nine police officers.

• On **May 24, 1883**, after 14 years and 27 deaths during construction, the Brooklyn Bridge opens. The granite foundations of the bridge were built underwater in pressurized chambers. More than a hundred workers suffered from cases of compression sickness, also called the "bends."

• On **May 25, 1977**, a new sign of political liberalization appears in China when the communist government lifts its decade-old ban on the writings of William Shakespeare, evidence that the Cultural Revolution was over. What the revolution had meant in practice was the banning of any cultural work

-- music, literature, film or theater -- that did not have the required ideological content.

• On **May 26, 1897**, the first copies of the classic vampire novel "Dracula," by Irish writer Bram Stoker, appear in London bookshops. Dracula is the story of a vampire who makes his way from Transylvania to England, and preys on innocents there to get the blood he needs to live.

• On **May 27, 1941**, the German battleship Bismarck sinks in the North Atlantic near France. Three days earlier the British navy engaged the Bismarck in a ferocious battle. The Bismarck sank the battle cruiser Hood and escaped, but was leaking fuel and crippled when British warships finished her off. ■