

White supremacist wins Republican nomination for Tennessee congressional seat

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In a development that reveals more about the nature of the US Republican Party than countless media handouts from the Bush reelection campaign, a virulent racist and white supremacist has won the party's nomination as its candidate in the 8th Congressional District of Tennessee.

James L. Hart, a proponent of eugenics who calls for the elimination of racial minorities and the poor through a "war on poverty genes," won the Republican primary August 6, and will be the party's candidate in the November election against eight-term incumbent Democrat John Tanner.

The 8th District encompasses the largely rural northwestern corner of the state, bordering on Arkansas, Missouri and Kentucky. It stretches from the suburbs of Memphis to the suburbs of Nashville. Its largest population centers are small cities like Jackson and Union City.

Congressman Tanner is a co-founder of the conservative Democratic "Blue Dog" caucus, which has worked closely with the Bush administration. He is one of the congressmen approached by Michael Moore in his film *Fahrenheit 9/11* and asked to sign up his children for the war in Iraq.

His newly chosen Republican opponent has a personal web site that elaborates his bizarre racial theories, explaining every phenomenon, from the rebuilding of Hiroshima after the atomic bombing to the current social and political disintegration of much of Africa, from the standpoint of allegedly superior or inferior genes.

Denouncing racially mixed marriages, Hart claims, "If we had integrated with 'less favored races' centuries ago, there would have never been an electric light. There would never have been an airplane. Unless we stop dysgenic welfare and immigration policies, the

US will look like one big Detroit."

Racism and hatred of socialism are inextricably linked in Hart's conception—as they were in Adolf Hitler's. He denounces the "myth that the races and classes are equal" and declares, "The proletariat is composed of less 'favored races' and less favored socio-biological classes. These worthless bums from the slum could not tie their own shoes, let alone run the government."

Some of his prejudices are shared by the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy. He calls for repealing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), declaring: "Free trade will send your job to Mexico. Do you realize that without unions and tariffs to protect us American workers would still be working for 11 cents a day like a Chinese coolie?"

How did such an individual become the candidate of one of the two major bourgeois parties in America? The Republican Party leadership initially decided not to challenge Tanner, one of the most conservative Democrats in the House, and Hart was the only candidate to file for the party nomination. He had previously contested the seat in 2002 as an independent, winning 3 percent of the vote, compared to 70 percent for Tanner and 27 percent for Republican Mat McClain.

After the filing deadline, Dennis Bertrand entered the race as a write-in candidate, with the backing of the Shelby County (Memphis) Republican Party steering committee. But Republican primary voters, those most closely tied to the party, largely ignored the write-in effort, giving 7,671 votes to Hart and only 1,554 to Bertrand, a margin of 83 percent.

Republican Party officials protested loudly that Hart did not represent the party and that they were not responsible for his racist views. "We denounce all who

practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice and religious intolerance,” said Shelby County Party Chairman Kemp Conrad, citing the Republican Party platform.

But if Hart’s overtly racist ideology is too much for the Republican leadership to stomach, his social attitudes are virtually identical to those of the nativist wing of the party, espoused by figures such as former Nixon speechwriter and presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan. Hart combines his bizarre theories about genetics with hostility to welfare programs, immigration, NAFTA, communism and New York-based financial interests (i.e., Jews). On the campaign trail, he wears a protective vest and carries a .40-caliber pistol—symbolically evoking the “right to bear arms” so dear to the National Rifle Association and the Bush administration.

Hart’s racism is embarrassing to the Republicans only because it is overt and crude. He lacks the sophistication of the more conventional bourgeois politicians, trained in the use of code words that convey sympathy, or at least tolerance, for bigotry.

The Republican Party became the majority bourgeois party throughout the Southern states—after being reduced to electoral irrelevance in the region for a century—after the passage of the civil rights reforms of the 1960s. Appealing tacitly, and sometimes openly, to white racist sentiments, the erstwhile “party of Lincoln” became the party most closely identified with race prejudice and the maintenance of the subordinate social and economic position of black Americans, both in the South and throughout the country.

Many of the most prominent Southern white racist political demagogues, like longtime South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, left the Democratic Party, where they had first made their mark, and went over to the Republicans. Their political heirs dominate both the Republican Party machines in all the Southern states and the congressional Republican leadership, which hails largely from the Old Confederacy.

These include figures like Mississippi Senator Trent Lott, who was forced to step down as majority leader in 2002 after a speech in which he praised Thurmond’s 1948 campaign for president as the candidate of the racist States Rights Party, and said the United States would have been better off if Thurmond had been elected.

The fact that the Republican Party has come to be politically dominated by extreme right-wing and fascistic forces is one of the dirty secrets of American politics, which both the media and the Democratic Party work assiduously to conceal from the US public. Ultimately, the entire political establishment and both big business parties are complicit in the promotion of ideological backwardness and reaction, and the social element that finds its expression in the fascistic views of figures like Hart.



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