



Premature politics

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Some of us had just gotten used to the fact that it is now 2007, when all sorts of people started acting as if it is 2008.

Polls keep coming out showing who is the front-runner among the many Democratic and Republican candidates for their respective parties' presidential nomination. Why all this hype, this early, about front-runners? Has everyone forgotten the old saying, "In politics, overnight is a lifetime"?

Some of us are old enough to remember "front-runner Ed Muskie" and "front-runner Gary Hart," not to mention "President Dewey."

However inaccurate today's poll numbers may be as a guide to who is going to be nominated to run for president more than a year from

now, the ugly sniping that has already started may be all too indicative of what to expect when the nomination races come down the home stretch and then the presidential campaigns get under way.

A new low has already been struck with an exploitation of the religious issue with claims that some of Governor Mitt Romney's Mormon ancestors had multiple wives.

Are Governor Romney's ancestors going to be on the ballot? The fields are so crowded that I hadn't noticed. The irony in all this, as someone has pointed out, is that Governor Romney seems to be one of the few politicians these days who has had only one wife.

The religious issue was supposed to have been put to rest back in 1960

when John F. Kennedy was elected as the first Catholic president. Actually, it wasn't that big an issue in 1960, and some cynics said that the only one talking about it was JFK himself.

It is painfully obvious that we have all we can do to get along among ourselves, without trying to deal with what people did in past generations. Whole nations have been torn apart over whose ancestors did what to whom and who was the rightful owner of what territory in times past.

The raising of the religious issue was not an aberration but one of the signs of an ugly retrogression in our times. During the confirmation hearings on the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito for the Supreme Court, Senator Dianne Feinstein asked him if being a Catholic would interfere with carrying out his duties as a justice.

Did she think that being Jewish interfered with carrying out her duties as a Senator? Had she forgotten that it was less than a century ago – not long as history is measured – when people objected to Louis Brandeis becoming a Supreme Court justice because he was Jewish?

Every nation has parts of its past that are best buried and never resurrected.

While a resurgence of religious bigotry does not seem likely, what has aptly been called "the politics of personal destruction" – by one of its practitioners, Bill Clinton – has be-

come a growing cancer on the body politic.

The significance of character assassination goes beyond a cynical ploy by politicians.

Such ploys are effective only because they appeal to many people who cannot conceive of anyone opposing their political agenda without those political opponents being stupid, evil or corrupt.

In other words, many no longer consider it necessary to meet arguments with counter-arguments, evidence with counter-evidence or logical analysis with logical analysis to the contrary.

Not even in our education system are logic and evidence the touchstones. Not since the days of the Hitler Youth have young people been subjected to more propaganda on more politically correct issues.

At one time, educators boasted that their role was not to teach students what to think but how to think. Today, their role is far too often to teach students what to think on everything from immigration to global warming to the new sacred trinity of "race, class and gender."

On even our most prestigious college campuses – indeed, perhaps especially on such campuses – speech codes stifle those students who disagree with the indoctrination, and outside speakers who are out of step with political correctness get shouted down.

We have all we can do to take care of the problems of our own generation without worrying about our

ancestors or other people's ancestors.

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