



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #33 — DEC. 12, 2011**

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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### **America's Healthcare Disaster**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 12, 2011)

As some of you know and some of you may have guessed by noticing three missing Newsletters from last week, I have been ill—with some serious food poisoning. It's the first time this has happened to me in Bolivia in about four years here. The doctor said my system, not being born here, will never be as resistant to the local organisms as if I were local too.

Actually, food poisoning is much more common in the U.S., but who knows if reporting is better or what. I think there's a lot of food poisoning everywhere in the world. It doesn't take much. A simple act of carelessness by a restaurant worker (which I believe was my case—a chicken quesadilla). It's very hard to track, because it can take a few days to develop. Or it can happen almost immediately. It depends on what organism you "consume", how many there are, or if there are so many that a lot of toxins are already present.

In case you don't know it, it is very easy to die from what they call dehydration, but it is actually the electrolyte imbalance that kills you. Hence Gator-Aide and pickle juice for football players.

In 24 hours, totally unable to eat or drink, I lost six pounds of water in my body and I was helpless. Dizzy as hell. Couldn't think straight. Couldn't really get out of bed. Without my wife figuring out what to do (not always easy in medical cases, especially with me, who shuns doctors and heals myself most of the time), I might have been a goner. If this ever happens to you, don't assume your body will take care of itself. Seek medical care!

My wife found an excellent doctor who makes house calls for \$30, outside of our insurance system. Can you imagine? I don't think house calls exist any more in most of the U.S. do they? Maybe at any price. They want you to take the ambulance to the Emergency Room. In other words, the only option for treatment is the most expensive and over-blown (very often) possible.

It's like when my step-son was in an accident in Montana. The cop convinced the four teenagers (who were without injuries) to take an ambulance to the Emergency Room. They didn't know any better, they thought they were just supposed to. The kids had no real complaints, (very fortunately, the car was totaled), but my step-son had to, for some reason, have MRI's etc. totaling over \$10,000. Emergency Rooms! Don't get me started.

And, to me, this all points to how inadequate our American healthcare system has become. I don't know what the solution is. I think Obamacare seems like a step in the right direction, but who really knows? I would think Republicans would like it because it does seem to get people paying into the system who aren't now and need to be. WE NEED EVERY CITIZEN AND LEGAL ALIEN IN THE SYSTEM.

What I don't understand is why we don't hear more in the way of helpful solutions from doctors and the medical community. What we get is expensive lobbying to fight any and all solutions. Where is their solution? Why haven't they implemented it? That's a trick question, actually, because the current system is the one they have implemented themselves. I thought private enterprise was so great? Why isn't it working? The doctors took an oath, essentially to deliver good healthcare to all. I know almost all of them strive mightily, individually, to deliver on that promise. It is not their fault that the system often does not permit their oath to be met. The statistics on American healthcare are dismal, as most of you know. I think we rank 25<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality. Terrible! The way the health insurance companies are allowed to operate is the most reprehensible of all. Yet a few simple laws could mandate their cooperation. That's what it always takes!

The system is broken. If it cannot be fixed privately (Do you really see that happening?), the government must step into the vacuum, as it has tried to do. I believe Obamacare offers fixes for some of the most unfair and unwise insurance company practices: defining groups in weird ways that benefit only them, excluding pre-existing conditions and preventive medicine, and anyone who costs them too much. I don't know if it addresses the malpractice lawsuit issue.

Where are the solutions from the doctors, the hospitals, the insurance companies? What about their Oath? People are suffering and dying needlessly. And the staggering cost of failing, as we are now, is one of the things bankrupting all of us.

Here again is a great example of what private enterprise can achieve (the best of our healthcare system) and what it seems unable to achieve (at least in the healthcare industry)—containing costs in any meaningful way and delivering broad, fair, adequate healthcare to Americans. Doctors and the industry have been given every chance, for many many years, as the situation has continued to worsen. Despite all the lobbying money thrown against it, there is no other option but for government to step in. Something needed to be done before Obamacare and I'm sure more needs to be done still . But this ain't rocket science. Lots of stupid countries have figured this one out. Americans can't?

The Supreme Court is a big worry. More about that in a future issue.

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<a href="#">20111210-02</a>	09:47	Pam	Re: America's Healthcare Disaster (reply to SteveB, above)
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I'm glad you didn't peg out over a chicken quesadilla. Golly. Food poisoning is no joke. Thank goodness your wife knew what to do.

I really like what you say here about health care. Every point you make is valid. I'm sick of all the attacks on Obamacare (not perfect by a long shot, but, as you say, a step in the right direction) and nothing else suggested. If we went about this in a logical, problem-solving way—look at other systems, examine costs and where the most money is wasted, get everyone in the same program (you're so right about that)—maybe we could do something besides all the stupid name-calling. This has been my BIG issue for years, and for years no one so much as mentioned there was a problem. I'm getting pretty fed up with just about everything, I can tell you. And I'm such a sweet person. ;-)

<a href="#">20111206-01</a>	05:57	SteveB	Re: THE CHALLENGE (see FotM Newsletter #31: "Getting to the Truth About Taxes & Public Spending")
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Dear Republicans,

The gauntlet lies on the ground, unacknowledged. Complete, utter, silence. The morning mists are subsiding and a new day is dawning.

I know you guys work and are really busy sometimes, so maybe you just haven't had a chance to respond to my little challenge. Even to say you are planning a response. I believe I met Dale's challenge when I commented on the article he submitted.

But take your time! I imagine it has to be difficult to find real information and facts to support the right-wing positions. I don't envy your assignment, should you choose to accept it.

Specifically, the challenge is to present evidence to contradict the author of the article which appears in FotM Newsletter #31, "Getting to the Truth About Taxes and Public Spending" by Joshua Holland, Altnet (<http://www.altnet.org/story/149265/>)

This article is great for our purposes because the author very clearly lays out both positions on nine issues that we have discussed a lot here in this forum. The author calls the Republicans positions "lies." Can you prove any of them aren't? With facts? Or perhaps present a rationale for why any of the Republican positions might make sense?

20111206-02	10:15	Pam	Re: "The Real Divide in America"
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This essay is really good. Needless to say, I completely agree with it. Individualist vs. Institutional: the author really nailed it.

I'd like to point out one other thing, an irony, actually. The contrast between "Huge-government Moralists and Live-and-let-Livers" isn't what Sirota implies it is. Big-G Moralists are NOT those nasty liberals who want to impose a nanny state for the nation's own good, and Let Livers are NOT freedom-loving pioneer types who just want to be left alone. Liberals, in general, want to be left alone too. My hero John Stuart Mill went so far as to say that so long as a person doesn't harm others, he should be allowed to harm himself, if that's what he wants to do. (\*On Liberty\*) In all honesty, I'm a bit ambivalent on this one. I'm not sure we should permit hardcore drug addicts to persist in their self-destruction without any sort of intervention, but that's a topic for another day. The core of a liberal outlook is an emphasis on individual freedom. Any restriction is for the purpose of protecting others who might be affected by an individual's actions, ie., prohibiting smoking in public places. Let Livers, the Right supposedly, are the ones who want to dictate: who can marry whom, who can vote, who can hold office (Christians only, with a few token Jews, who are suspect because they "control the media."), who counts as a patriot, what a woman can do with her own body. I fear the Right not because I believe they'll let individuals run amok, but because I'm afraid they'll impinge on the way I want to live. It is the Right that wants to make decisions for everyone else. It's the Right that wants to transform corporations into single individuals, thereby hijacking the "liberal" desire to protect individual autonomy. If the Right prevails, what I fear is the loss of my own freedom.

"The Real Divide in America" by David Sirota, *Salon*

Dec. 5, 2011, ([http://www.salon.com/2011/12/05/the\\_real\\_divide\\_in\\_america/singleton](http://www.salon.com/2011/12/05/the_real_divide_in_america/singleton))

20111206-03	11:27	Pam	Martin Scorsese & 3D Media
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I was just listening to the end of an interview with Martin Scorsese on NPR and it got me thinking. The gist of the interview was that Scorsese is an innovator—his new movie *Hugo* is in 3D and he stands ready to go wherever technology leads him. I have a prediction. People say 3D is a fluke, that it won't go mainstream, but I believe 3D is just the beginning of a whole new kind of entertainment/experience. Sooner rather than later, probably, everything will be in 3D, and we'll wonder how we ever got along without it—just as we do today with color TV. I also predict that 3D will be superseded by interactive, holographic movies (maybe they'll have a new name, I don't know) that will allow people not just to watch passively but to actually experience a story. I know I always ask myself how people in the 19th c. kept from being bored. What did they do all day long without TV, radio, (iPads etc.) and their only literature went up through Nathaniel Hawthorne or George Eliot? How did they endure long separations from friends and loved ones and manage with only sporadic letters in the meantime? Of course, I know Victorians felt their lives to be full, even without all our distractions, but I know I'd be bored if I had to live the way they did. I imagine in 25 or 50 years, maybe sooner, our entertainments will seem tame to future audiences. How did we ever stand just having a flat-screen TV? There will probably be political ramifications to these changes, so maybe I am still on topic. I wonder if Jefferson or Lincoln would have been so effective on the radio with their high, squeaky voices. We know TV didn't do Nixon any good during those debates. Romney just may get the nomination because he LOOKS like a President. Our criteria for holding office have changed because of the way we get information. Is that progress, or not? Just what I was thinking about. :-)

20111206-04 11:30 SteveB Re: Martin Scorsese & 3D Media (reply to Pam, above)

I think you are right about 3D, etc., but if civilization continues its technical advances (I'm hopeful only), within 50 years or less we will see your 3D interactive "TV" replaced by computers that input sensory and plot information directly into your brain, so that the "imagined" experience is as real as at least a dream and maybe reality. Probably even your emotions and sensory situations such as orgasm will be available for the computers to manipulate if so desired.

Maybe this is where all civilization has been leading—since we stopped eating dead things, then killed things and picked fruit, then discovered farming, then the industrial revolution, then space and computers, then...

And then where will we be? The end? Why live "out here"? Which would you prefer? The world or the Matrix? And there we are in even worse trouble than now!

Keanu? Help!

20111206-05 11:48 Pam Re: Martin Scorsese & 3D Media (reply to SteveB, above)

I've never seen *Matrix*. My students used to talk about it all the time, and I hear references to it a lot. I'm not too keen on science fiction, but maybe I should watch it just to be able to get the point when people talk about it.

I talked to my son last night. He's reading *Atlas Shrugged*, because he hears references to it all the time. He said he can only read a couple of pages at a time before falling asleep. No kidding. I read that book eons ago, and all I remember is how turgid it was. What is it with the Right-wing and Ayn Rand anyway?

I agree with SteveB. The future will probably be even worse than we can imagine, but people then will probably think they never had it so good. I have another prediction. Within 100 years, most people will be living underground much of the time, at least in the developed world. I saw a thing on TV recently about Antarctica. They have practically a whole town down there, and it's all inside. Gyms, gardens, the works. In Montreal they have whole shopping malls underground. When our climate becomes too hostile, we'll adapt and turn into the mole people. Or else move to that new planet they've discovered where the temperature is always in the 70s—or so they think.

20111206-06 13:16 Pam Video: "An Open Message to American Police & Military"

[Video: "An Open Message to American Police and Military" by Josey Wales, Before It's News](#)

Dec. 6, 2011,

([http://beforeitsnews.com/story/1468/858/An\\_Open\\_Message\\_To\\_American\\_Police\\_And\\_Military.html](http://beforeitsnews.com/story/1468/858/An_Open_Message_To_American_Police_And_Military.html))

20111206-07 13:19 SteveB Re: Video: "An Open Message to American Police & Military" & Ayn Rand (reply to Pam, above)

Well...an interesting looking radical (of some kind?) website. The Prophet of God one sounds pretty wild.

But, you know, some of the things we're been thinking and saying lately sound pretty wild too—and we tend to believe them!

I don't get most video well here. I couldn't get that one about the police to load. For some reason, YouTube video uses some process that works pretty well for me here. Most of the rest don't, my connection is just a little too slow.

I always thought the police didn't have anything to do with the military, except sometimes with military police? Maybe Art would know something?

I read every one of Ayn Rand's books when I was in high school. The reason was because they were some of the thickest books around and I read every thick book I could get my hands on. Why I read the thin one, *Anthem*, I don't know. I can remember seeing many holes in the philosophy, even then. She's such a dogmatist. And society plays no part in anything, except stealing from the talented? The impression I most remember coming away with was that I wanted to have more earth shattering sex like the characters had sometimes. *Fountainhead* makes some sense. *Atlas Shrugged* is based on a premise ridiculous on its face.

Ayn Rand is about as far in one direction as you can go with that Individualist thing, don't you think? And it took her nowhere, really, though now she could get into any Tea Party event—especially the orgies—for free!

<a href="#">20111206-08</a>	13:39	Pam	Re: Video: "An Open Message to American Police & Military" (reply to Pam, above)
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I didn't see the "Prophet of God" video. It does sound pretty wild. I got this on Facebook from an old friend of my husband's from Stanford. This guy, African-American if that matters, was in France with Mark during their study-abroad year. Anyway, Bill is now a cameraman for various news organizations in D.C. So—he's a smart man. But he's always posting this weird, way-out there stuff. I met him a year ago when we were at Mark's Stanford reunion, and he's a super nice guy. He just has some strange ideas. I don't want to get into it with him, but I find his take interesting, to say the least. I did like the military/police video though. Too bad you couldn't get that one. Basically, it says the police and military should be on the side of the people.

<a href="#">20111206-09</a>	15:06	SteveB	"Introducing: A Tea People's History"
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Very funny! This must be part of the hero worship of the individualists, huh, Pam?

"Introducing: A Tea People's History" by Alex Pareene, *Salon*

([http://politics.salon.com/2011/10/07/a\\_tea\\_peoples\\_history/](http://politics.salon.com/2011/10/07/a_tea_peoples_history/))

<a href="#">20111206-10</a>	17:29	Jim	Re: "Setting the Tax Record Straight: Clinton Hikes Slowed Growth, Bush Cuts Promoted Recovery" (reply to Dale & SteveB, FotM Newsletter #31)
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It is interesting that the graph in Dale's post of the "success of Bush tax cuts" stops at 2007, while the Pat Buchanan piece tells what happened the next year (last year of GW) when it all fell apart and we lost more jobs than had been created.

"Setting the Tax Record Straight: Clinton Hikes Slowed Growth, Bush Cuts Promoted Recovery" by Curtis Dubay, The Heritage Foundation

(<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/setting-the-tax-record-straight-clinton-hikes-slowed-growth-bush-cuts-promoted-recovery>)

"Metrics of National Decline" by Patrick J. Buchanan, *Human Events*

February 17, 2009, (<http://buchanan.org/blog/2009/02/pjb-metrics-of-national-decline/>)

(<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=30725>) (see FotM Newsletter #32)

[20111206-11](#) 18:00 SteveB Re: "Setting the Tax Record Straight: Clinton Hikes Slowed Growth, Bush Cuts Promoted Recovery" (reply to Jim, above)

Excellent point, Jim. Consider it raised. I'd love to be able to get a Republican pinned down on anything.

[20111206-12](#) 18:19 SteveG "Governor Eyes Taxpayer Refund after Nearly \$300M Discovered in Account"

Mitch Daniels: stupid is as stupid does...

"Governor Eyes Taxpayer Refund after Nearly \$300M Discovered in Account" by Mary Beth Schneider, *Indianapolis Star*  
(<http://www.indystar.com/article/20111206/NEWS05/112060378/State-finds-300M-account-Democrats-call-investigation?odyssey=tab%7Ctopnews%7Ctext%7CIndyStar.com>)

[20111206-13](#) 19:58 Pam Re: "Governor Eyes Taxpayer Refund after Nearly \$300M Discovered in Account" (reply to SteveG, above)

Jeesh! A paltry tax refund to people who didn't even miss the money or fund education. I wonder what I'd do?

[20111207-01](#) 10:23 Phil Re: "Governor Eyes Taxpayer Refund after Nearly \$300M Discovered in Account" (reply to SteveG, above)

It's a windfall. The Gov says I might get as much as \$50.00. There may be Christmas after all!

[20111207-02](#) 11:39 Bill Re: "Governor Eyes Taxpayer Refund after Nearly \$300M Discovered in Account" (reply to SteveG, above)

I hope the auditor gets some kind of commendation for doing what should generally be part of an audit, substantive testing of transactions and controls. As your subject line indicates, some cynicism may be appropriate for this money having been found just now and well after the worst of the state's pinched revenue.

[20111207-03](#) 12:09 Dale Video: "Government Gone Wild"

I think you are really going to like this informative video on special interests.

Video: "Government Gone Wild" by Blaise Ingoglia

([http://www.youtube.com/watch\\_popup?v=xOAgT8L\\_BqQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=xOAgT8L_BqQ&feature=player_embedded))

[20111207-04](#) 12:48 Pam Re: Video: "Government Gone Wild" (reply to Dale, above)

OK. A couple of things. I'm not sure what the statistics this guy is throwing around really mean. You can get an "average" a lot of ways. I'd rather see salaries plotted out on a graph that would show how many workers earned what. Maybe the "median" would be better. Mathematicians, help!



There are a lot of things government supports that the private sector never would: food stamps, development of sustainable energy, regulation of all kinds, formal relations with other governments (treaties, etc.), and more.

I do think government is getting too big and too powerful in at least one important way though. There's an article in the Dec. 22 *New York Review of Books* called *One Nation Under Surveillance...* by David Cole. I highly recommend it. New technologies (GPS, cell phones, the internet) have made watching people as easy as pressing a button. We see these tools used all the time on TV crime shows, where they're useful in pursuing criminals, but the danger is that all of us could just as easily have our privacy violated without even knowing it. There are no laws to protect us. The Fourth Amendment has been superseded in ways the framers of the Constitution could never have imagined, but new regulation is slow in coming. It's only after something terrible happens that anyone thinks to do anything about it. I've seen videos of TSA employees patting down six-year old girls and old ladies with walkers. I worry that in the hysteria over terrorism, we are handing over substantial freedoms that we might never get back. I'm not worried about government spending on education, health care, or infrastructure (which is where the Republicans want to see cuts) but I am deeply concerned about all the stuff that's going on that we hear nothing about. A lot of money is being spent on that too, but where's the outcry?

[20111210-12](#) 19:47 Art Re: Video: "Government Gone Wild" (reply to Dale, above)

Just back, but this is loaded with false data.

[Art's right. It just doesn't seem like government has "gone wild" lately. At least not since Bush and his cronies took the country to its knees. Can't figure out what this particular paranoia is all about. Just more fear mongering, I guess. Another famous Republican tactic. —SteveB]

[20111207-05](#) 13:16 Dale Videos: Humorous

Since all the "Friends" readers have a sense of humor, I think you'll enjoy these too:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWTbswcCIsq&NR=1&feature=endscreen>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtxqtBq0uVw&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=201pgTaEseQ&feature=related>

Campaigns are tough for everyone, if they don't have their teleprompter:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpGH02DtIws&feature=related>

This one is not so funny, no matter what party you identify with:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UErR7i2onW0&feature=related>

[20111207-06](#) 14:08 Pam Re: Videos: Humorous (reply to Dale, above)

Candidate Obama and President Obama are two different beings, as any candidate is before election. I don't think we're going to get the truth from anyone—except maybe Alan Grayson and Elizabeth Warren. Politicians don't think we can handle the truth—and they have a point.

[20111207-07](#) 16:39 Dennis Re: Videos: Humorous (reply to Pam, above)

Don't forget Bernie Sanders and Ron Paul. You may not agree with all they say, but they say it with honesty.

20111207-08 16:54 Phil Re: Videos: Humorous (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)

Well, maybe not honesty, but at least conviction.

20111207-09 15:17 Phil Fw: Medal of Honor Recipient Ed Freeman

Being an American. Always better than being a Democrat or a Republican.

[http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/military/a/ed\\_freeman.htm](http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/military/a/ed_freeman.htm)

[A true story, Phil, and Mr. Freeman was indeed a hero. I am confused about the unfounded accusations against the media. I had read this great American's story before. It seems like this type of email is always accusing other Americans (Possibly Democrats? Definitely the media!) of not being as patriotic as the author, or as they should be. Why is that? In this case, that part of the email is untrue and even malicious, in my opinion. You know what I mean? —SteveB]

20111207-10 17:06 SteveG Fw: UUSC Action: Urge Your Senators to Support the Water for the Poor Act!

from UUSC:

The Water for the Poor Act ensures that millions of people around the globe have access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Contact your senators today and urge them to make sure that the Water for the Poor Act receives funding for 2012! Urge your senators to allocate \$315 million to implement programs to provide water and sanitation for those most in need!

<https://secure2.convio.net/uusc/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=281>

20111207-11 19:34 SteveG "Marching Off the Cliff"

"Marching Off the Cliff" by Noam Chomsky, NationofChange

Dec. 7, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/marching-cliff-1323280609>)

A task of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, now under way in Durban, South Africa, is to extend earlier policy decisions that were limited in scope and only partially implemented.

These decisions trace back to the U.N. Convention of 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which the U.S. refused to join. The Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ends in 2012. A fairly general pre-conference mood was captured by a *New York Times* headline: "Urgent Issues but Low Expectations."

As the delegates meet in Durban, a report on newly updated digests of polls by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Program on International Policy Attitudes reveals that "publics around the world and in the United States say their government should give global warming a higher priority and strongly support multilateral action to address it."

Most U.S. citizens agree, though PIPA clarifies that the percentage "has been declining over the last few years, so that American concern is significantly lower than the global average – 70 percent as compared to 84 percent."

"Americans do not perceive that there is a scientific consensus on the need for urgent action on climate change" [ A large majority think that they will be personally affected by climate change eventually, but only a minority thinks that they are being affected now, contrary to views in most other countries. Americans tend to underestimate the level of concern among other Americans."

These attitudes aren't accidental. In 2009 the energy industries, backed by business lobbies, launched major campaigns that cast doubt on the near-unanimous consensus of scientists on the severity of the threat of human-induced global warming.

The consensus is only "near-unanimous" because it doesn't include the many experts who feel that climate-change warnings don't go far enough, and the marginal group that deny the threat's validity altogether.

The standard "he says/she says" coverage of the issue keeps to what is called "balance": the overwhelming majority of scientists on one side, the denialists on the other. The scientists who issue the more dire warnings are largely ignored.

One effect is that scarcely one-third of the U.S. population believes that there is a scientific consensus on the threat of global warming – far less than the global average, and radically inconsistent with the facts.

It's no secret that the U.S. government is lagging on climate issues. "Publics around the world in recent years have largely disapproved of how the United States is handling the problem of climate change," according to PIPA. "In general, the United States has been most widely seen as the country having the most negative effect on the world's environment, followed by China. Germany has received the best ratings."

To gain perspective on what's happening in the world, it's sometimes useful to adopt the stance of intelligent extraterrestrial observers viewing the strange doings on Earth. They would be watching in wonder as the richest and most powerful country in world history now leads the lemmings cheerfully off the cliff.

Last month, the International Energy Agency, which was formed on the initiative of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974, issued its latest report on rapidly increasing carbon emissions from fossil fuel use.

The IEA estimated that if the world continues on its present course, the "carbon budget" will be exhausted by 2017. The budget is the quantity of emissions that can keep global warming at the 2 degrees Celsius level considered the limit of safety.

IEA chief economist Fatih Birol said, "The door is closing...if we don't change direction now on how we use energy, we will end up beyond what scientists tell us is the minimum (for safety). The door will be closed forever."

Also last month, the U.S. Department of Energy reported the emissions figures for 2010. Emissions "jumped by the biggest amount on record," The Associated Press reported, meaning that "levels of greenhouse gases are higher than the worst-case scenario" anticipated by the International Panel on Climate Change in 2007.

John Reilly, co-director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's program on climate change, told the AP that scientists have generally found the IPCC predictions to be too conservative – unlike the fringe of denialists who gain public attention. Reilly reported that the IPCC's worst-case scenario was about in the middle of the MIT scientists' estimates of likely outcomes.

As these ominous reports were released, the Financial Times devoted a full page to the optimistic expectations that the U.S. might become energy-independent for a century with new technology for extracting North American fossil fuels.

Though projections are uncertain, the Financial Times reports, the U.S. might "leapfrog Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world's largest producer of liquid hydrocarbons, counting both crude oil and lighter natural gas liquids."

In this happy event, the U.S. could expect to retain its global hegemony. Beyond some remarks about local ecological impact, the Financial Times said nothing about what kind of a world would emerge from these exciting prospects. Energy is to burn; the global environment be damned.

Just about every government is taking at least halting steps to do something about the likely impending catastrophe. The U.S. is leading the way – backward. The Republican-dominated U.S. House of Representatives is now dismantling environmental measures introduced by Richard Nixon, in many respects the last liberal president.

This reactionary behavior is one of many indications of the crisis of U.S. democracy in the past generation. The gap between public opinion and public policy has grown to a chasm on central issues of current policy debate such as the deficit and jobs. However, thanks to the propaganda offensive, the gap is less than what it should be on the most serious issue on the international agenda today – arguably in history.

The hypothetical extraterrestrial observers can be pardoned if they conclude that we seem to be infected by some kind of lethal insanity.

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20111207-12 20:56 Dale Re: "Marching Off the Cliff" (reply to SteveG, above)

"The source of information is always important." I think that's the gist of what I was told once. Read how this publication describes its relationship with George Soros:

<http://www.nationofchange.org/george-soros-1316102151>.

[Note: No response to dense, fact-packed article, above. –SteveB]

20111207-13 20:59 SteveG Re: "Marching Off the Cliff" (reply to Dale, above)

Thanks Dale, appreciate the information.

Koch Industries, Inc. (<http://kochind.com/>)

20111208-02 10:18 Pam Re: "Marching Off the Cliff" (reply to Dale, above)

And your point is...?

20111208-01 06:35 SteveB Re: "Marching Off the Cliff" & THE CHALLENGE (reply to Dale, above)

But, Dale, all you have to do to prove the truth of your side is to take up my challenge. Maybe you'll have some help from our group? I think it's important to get to the truth here.

I'll repeat the challenge:

The gauntlet lies on the ground, unacknowledged. Complete, utter, silence. The morning mists are subsiding and a new day is dawning.

I know you guys work and are really busy sometimes, so maybe you just haven't had a chance to respond to my little challenge, even to say you are planning a response. I believe I met Dale's challenge when I commented on the article he submitted. I haven't heard back from any of that yet.

But take your time! I imagine it has to be difficult to find real information and facts to support the right-wing positions. I don't envy your assignment, should you choose to accept it.

Specifically, the challenge is to present evidence to contradict the author of the article which appears in Newsletter #31, "Getting to the Truth About Taxes and Public Spending" by Joshua Holland, Alternet (<http://www.alternet.org/story/149265/>).

This article is great for our purposes because the author very clearly lays out both positions on nine issues that we have discussed a lot here in this forum. The author calls the Republicans positions "lies." Can you prove any of them aren't? With facts? Or perhaps present a rationale for why any of them might make sense?

<a href="#">20111208-03</a>	10:56	Dale	Video: How Great Leaders Inspire
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This 18 min. clip is totally non-partisan, non-political in nature; however, it may explain why people like Obama, Clinton and Reagan are/were effective communicators. I found it very thought provoking and I hope you enjoy it.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html)

[Dale's right. The TED website is a treasure. —SteveB

<a href="#">20111208-04</a>	11:06	SteveG	Re: Video: How Great Leaders Inspire (reply to Dale, above)
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Did enjoy it, is very thought provoking. Thank you.

When, what, how, and why are the standards used for a news reporter. Good switch on the defining methodology of the four parts.

<a href="#">20111208-10</a>	18:49	Pam	Re: Video: How Great Leaders Inspire (reply to Dale, above)
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What a wonderful speech! So simple, but so true. It's our emotions, not our intellects, that need developing if we're to have a just society. George Eliot (19th c. novelist Marian Evans) wrote much the same thing in her great novels *\*Middlemarch\** and *\*Adam Bede\**. The heroine of *\*Middlemarch\**, Dorothea Brooke, is very intelligent and wants to do something that will matter in the world. She tries various plans and schemes, but finally decides she will devote herself to an older "intellectual" who is working on "the Key to all Mythologies." This is a hopeless task, but Casaubon (the scholar) beavers away at his researches with no end in sight. A scholar is ALL he is. Dorothea marries this dry stick, and of course the marriage is a disaster. Cut to the chase...Casaubon dies, stipulating in his will that Dorothea will lose her inheritance if she marries again. Dorothea is in love with Casaubon's somewhat flaky but handsome nephew Will Ladislaw. They marry; Ladislaw goes into politics and works for liberal causes; and Dorothea, the once ambitious zealot for good works, steps back into domesticity and motherhood, where she is a blessing to all who know her. I love this novel, and I believe it says much the same thing as this speaker. It's why, not just what, you do that matters most. I think that's why we don't trust our politicians—because we don't see any faith in them. And I'm not referring to religion. When Alan Grayson or Elizabeth Warren or Ralph Nader (or even kooky Ron Paul) speak, I sense their conviction. What are Gingrich's beliefs? That he should get \$60,000 a speech and a hotel room with two bathrooms. Of course, sincerity is no argument, but at least it's something I can respect. Unless it's Michelle Bachman or Rick Santorum, who merely want to impose their beliefs on others.

<a href="#">20111208-05</a>	13:16	SteveB	"Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went" (to Dale)
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I have just one simple question. Maybe you have answered this question before, but I can't find it and I don't remember. If that's the case, I'm sorry. I feel your answer will be

You seem like such a Republican to me. You seem to argue all the important Democratic positions. You don't seem to like OWS.

Let me ask you this: Do you feel that more, better, government regulation of the financial industry is needed? To protect investors. To provide a level playing field for big and little and titanic and little. Are you against this? What do you think should be done? Let big money work its magic unfettered?

I mean, look at the results of erroneous regulation. Without proper supervision, these folks have shown the world what they do with a "free marketplace". They use it to destroy people, companies, even countries if it serves their greed.

Yet you seem to me to want less government regulation, even in this crucial area. Do I have that wrong?

"Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went" by Kevin McCoy, USA Today

Dec. 8, 2011, (<http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/brokerage/story/2011-12-08/mf-global-corzine/51732752/1>)

<a href="#">20111209-05</a>	12:28	Dale	Re: "Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went" (reply to SteveB, above)
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I will not have time until this weekend to reply more fully, but I thought I'd put your mind at ease. I have been very involved with the financial industry for the past 18+ years. In fact, I have even been a FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority) Neutral Arbitrator, one of about 6,000 in the U.S., for the past six years. I was also on the National Board of the FPA (Financial Planning Association) when we decided to sue the SEC over a ruling they were applying to the Brokerage industry. Incidentally, we won and it has led to the current legislation hopefully resulting in a uniform fiduciary standard that is to be applied to anyone who sells gives investment financial advice. (I'll explain more this weekend.)

The financial industry is totally screwed up. The SEC is totally screwed up. The laws could use tweaking and specificity, but a bigger problem is the way they are interpreted by the SEC and then (not) enforced. The SEC is supposed to oversee FINRA, but they have a cozy relationship where FINRA people regularly "graduate" to SEC positions, so the lack of oversight is perpetuated. FINRA is impossibly opaque and secretive, but one thing is certain....they do everything they can to protect and advance the interests of the large brokerage firms. They are fighting the fiduciary mandate tooth and nail.

One of the reasons I became a FINRA Arbitrator was to see if I could learn more by working on the inside. Indeed, I have learned, but you'll have to wait for the conclusions.

The whole system is intertwined and rotten. Congress has been writing bad laws (both parties are at fault), the SEC takes their vague direction, interprets it the way they want to, unless they are challenged, then the SEC selectively enforces some areas and some cases as they see fit. the SEC is singularly responsible for the registering of securities - stocks, bonds, mutual funds, commodities, currency derivatives, etc. The oversight of the brokers (who are really salespeople working for the broker/dealer firms) is delegated to FINRA. The oversight of the exchanges is also an SEC responsibility. The oversight of Investment Advisors (financial planners) who give advice and are treated as fiduciaries who must act in the clients best interests is also an SEC responsibility. The SEC has failed in all areas.

IMO, the underlying causes are the usual suspects — greed, self-interest, power, incompetence. There is no level playing field. It's tilted toward the larger firms and then there are also smaller people playing games with the cracks in the rules on a smaller scale.

Does that give you a hint about how I feel?

BTW, the Banks, large and small, are regulated and monitored by a different organization. If they sell securities and most do, they are supposed to have oversight from both the SEC and the OTS (Office of Thrift Supervision).

OWS is really madder at the banks, I think, but they don't differentiate who "Wall Street" is and they are just demonstrating against anything that isn't to their liking.

[20111209-06](#)

13:13

SteveB

Re: "Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went"  
(reply to Dale, above)

This all great info! Looking forward to more if you have a chance. It's hard to get details like this, I'm sure the whole group appreciates this.

So you are obviously for at least better regulation, if not more, though it sounds like more of something might be in order.

And here is my point. If the government has an important part to play here, doesn't it naturally follow that it has an important part to play regulating and "interfering" in a few other areas of life in these United States. Things that are important to all of us:

1. Education
2. Healthcare
3. Energy
4. Security (though I'm sure Republicans have no problem with this one)
5. Farming and Food
6. International Trade
7. Fair and Transparent Elections (paper ballots archived for 100 years, I don't care what it costs!)
8. The Workplace (remember how people would work up high with no safety equipment before OSHA? Evil government?)
9. What am I leaving out?

If this is the case, and I believe it is, then it could alter our entire focus here, my friend. If we can agree that the government has a legitimate role to play in these vital area, we make nonsense of the Republican attempt to return to the 19th Century. They want to go back to the era of Robber Barrons, monopolists, complete laissez faire capitalism, no or incredibly low income taxes, weak and ineffective government, the huddled masses.

For a long, long time, a large majority of Americans from both parties have supported the progress we have made since the late 1800's. There's no sense in pretending that this is not a fact. Most people even want unions, Social Security, Medicare and more, which I am told is socialist, oh my.

So our disagreements are only small ones of degree and means. Not ends. All Americans want America to be the best it can be in all these areas. You and I do too, I believe. I do not think we have any vast or even large philosophical differences. We are all Americans, after all, with very much in common.

I believe it is what we find in common that will same us. Not what we find in opposition.

[20111209-08](#)

14:10

Pam

Re: "Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went"  
(reply to Dale & SteveB, above)

Dale, I can't wait for the next installment. This is riveting!

Well said, SteveB.

[20111209-09](#)

17:07

Art

Re: "Corzine: 'Don't Know' Where MF Global Customers' \$1.2B Went"  
(reply to Dale & Pam, above)

Me too. [I can't wait for the next installment either.] The preliminary backs up what I know. Whole system is rotten, especially the SEC.

[20111208-06](#) 14:33 SteveG "Obama 'Not Giving Up' on Cordray"

"Obama 'Not Giving Up' on Cordray" by David Jackson, *USA Today*

Dec. 8, 2011, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2011/12/obama-to-speak-on-cordray-at-1130-am/1>)

[20111208-07](#) 15:23 Pam Re: "Obama 'Not Giving Up' on Cordray" (reply to SteveG, above)

I can understand how Republicans could keep attacking. Being the aggressor has its own kind of self-propelling energy. What I can't imagine is how Obama (and others like Elizabeth Warren) can continue to fight when they're always on the defensive. It wears me out just to think about it.

[20111208-08](#) 15:44 SteveG Re: "Obama 'Not Giving Up' on Cordray" (reply to Pam, above)

It is the same process that Carl Rove started and used successfully for George Bush. Remember the swift boat ads against Kerry and McClelland from Georgia.

[Jeez, that cr\*p was effective, wasn't it? —SteveB]

[20111208-09](#) 15:50 SteveB A.A.A.A.

I think it seems to many of us that the American right has become against everything in America except for three things:

1. Total Anarchy for Free Enterprise.
2. The Second Amendment.
3. The Almighty Dollar.

**A.A.A.A.** — Anarchy (at least in the marketplace, not the bedroom), Arms Amendment, Almighty. Those four words sum up so much, so poetically.

If all this is true, then hasn't the right actually become against America? Become, you know, as the Right loves to say, "Anti-American?" At least, to the American way of life I know and love.

[20111209-01](#) 10:04 SteveG Fw: Care2 Petition: Support Bernie Sanders' Amendment to Overturn *Citizens United!*

from Care2:

"Bernie Sanders Files Amendment to Overturn Citizens United" by Beth Buczynski, Care2

Dec. 8, 2011, (<http://www.care2.com/causes/bernie-sanders-files-amendment-to-overturn-citizens-united.html#ixzz1g2uw0NSk>)

A Petition to Support the Saving American Democracy Amendment:

<http://sanders.senate.gov/petition/?uid=f1c2660f-54b9-4193-86a4-ec2c39342c6c>.



[20111209-11](#) 17:36 SteveG Fw: Update: Bernie Sanders' Amendment to Overturn *Citizens United!*

from Sen. Bernie Sanders (Bernie Buzz):

Click and take the poll to tell Bernie what you think!! <http://sanders.senate.gov/polls/index.cfm>

Video: <http://sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/media/view/?id=482464ae-ad32-4a45-a4b5-fe12dc976a81>.

Fact Sheet on Proposed Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Citizens United:

<http://sanders.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Constitutional%20Amendment%20FAQs.pdf>.

[20111209-02](#) 10:54 SteveB "The Infantile Style in American Politics"

Be careful! If you read this entire article, and you are on the right, are a Republican, or a Teabagger, this article could change your life. For the rest of us, it sure explains some interesting mysteries. Here's a great quote:

**The reaction of the Tea Party (which for all intents and purposes has become the Republican Party) to the mild and innocuous centrist Barack Obama—a president little different in his governing style, with due allowances being made for changed circumstances, from Dwight D. Eisenhower—is so irrational that it is difficult even to grasp what president it is talking about.**

"The Infantile Style in American Politics" by Gary Kamiya, *Salon*

Dec. 5, 2011, ([http://politics.salon.com/2011/12/05/the\\_infantile\\_style\\_in\\_american\\_politics/](http://politics.salon.com/2011/12/05/the_infantile_style_in_american_politics/))

[20111209-03](#) 11:08 Pam Re: "The Infantile Style in American Politics" (reply to SteveB, above)

Fabulous essay!!!

[20111209-04](#) 11:33 SteveB Re: "The Infantile Style in American Politics" (reply to Pam, above)

Isn't it? I just loved it!

[20111209-07](#) 13:50 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Oppose Internet Censorship!

from CREDO Action:

Petition to stop internet censorship:

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/internet\\_censorship/?r=232214&id=31859-3891339-W2j4W1x](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/internet_censorship/?r=232214&id=31859-3891339-W2j4W1x).

[20111209-10](#) 17:08 Dennis "Made in America—Again!"

Here are some prescient remarks made by my former Michigan governor (and Facebook friend) about American manufacturing at a business roundtable:

"Made in America—Again!" by Harold Meyerson, *The American Prospect*

Dec. 7, 2011, (<http://prospect.org/article/made-america-%E2%80%94again>)

(Five top business and labor leaders discuss returning manufacturing to the U.S. in a *Prospect* roundtable.)

<a href="#">20111210-03</a>	10:00	Pam	Re: "Made in America—Again!" (reply to Dennis, above)
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This is fantastic. Thanks for posting it.

<a href="#">20111210-01</a>	07:00	SteveB	"Why the GOP Field Is So Weak"
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I'm not normally a big fan of Carville, but he can sure be pithy. The Paul Krugman piece is also worthy of reading.

"Why the GOP Field Is So Weak" by James Carville, CNN

Dec. 8, 2011, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/08/opinion/carville-gop-field/index.html>)

And for some hilarity, try this video of Rick Perry's amazingly, incredibly unbelievable candidacy. (He's skipping tonight's Iowa debate, for some strange reason. Can you imagine? And this is the 17-term governor of Texas? No comment.)

Video: Catastrophe strikes again: (<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/12/video-of-the-day-perry-thinks-there-are-8-supreme-court-justices/249794/>)

The only thing that makes sense to me is that they got this idiot into the race to make the other candidates look smarter. Even Sarah Palin looks like a genius compared to this clown who would enslave us with creationism, public prayer, and terrible schools, try to end abortion, and wants to use up the precious oil we have left that we need to save for the bitter future.

Don't they have one of those big vaudeville hooks in the Republican Party to get this guy offstage?

<a href="#">20111210-04</a>	12:56	SteveB	Re: "Why the GOP Field Is So Weak" (UPDATE)
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Now I read that Perry will be there tonight. John Huntsman didn't qualify (he's too darned smart for that particular electorate) and Herman Cain, for some reason, decided not to show his face.

I think I'm actually starting to feel sorry for Rick Perry. Is that a bleeding-heart liberal thing? Which I am not! But I can't help it. I feel the poor guy's pain and I wish he would just go have Herman Cain fix him up with a hot date. That seems to be what the shell-shocked guy needs. A mistress giving him a nice neck massage as she sits in the small of his back completely naked. A politicians' fantasy come true if there ever was one. Maybe Cain and Perry could have John Edwards, Clinton, and Newt come over too. They like that dangerous, illicit sex for money or power game too.

Perry may be stupid as a fricking Texas stump, and he is certainly not presidential or probably even governmental clerk material, and despite that stupid, fake, macho bluster they made him start the campaign with, and despite the fact he may be wrong about every issue under the sun because he wants to impose his religious views on all the rest of us, I doubt if we're really going to find him at the party with the bad boys I just mentioned.

Rick Perry is just a sad, lost, misguided puppet who turned out to be not nearly as good a puppet as someone hoped.

20111210-05 13:19 Pam Re: "Why the GOP Field Is So Weak" (reply to SteveB, above X2)

Don't you just love the way Perry says he doesn't apologize for being a Christian? As if somehow Christians across America were under attack. Hell, they rule the roost. Why does the issue of being apologetic even come up, unless it's to try to cast himself as some sort of victim? I don't apologize for not being a smoker.

[I have to interrupt here to point out what a very clever thing Pam has done. Believe me, folks, the tools of deception are subtle and powerful. Do you honestly think advertising does not make us more acquisitive and materialistic? This tactic of pretending to be under attack, repeating and amplifying the charges over and over, especially from the airwaves, is used by the Right in several areas. They really don't have very much to complain about gun control, really. I know we don't really have sensible policies in many places that might keep guns out of the hands of those who would do harm, or might have a high probability. But it's like Democrats (many of whom are ardent hunters, etc.) want to take every gun in America, depriving the Right of their rights. The pretend attack on Christianity extends to the schools, where trying to protect another of their beloved Constitutional Rights by keeping prayer and school separate, creationism and science separate, are decried as attacks on the baby Jesus Himself. Another important area under pseudo-attack by the Left? Business and free enterprise. Pretending that Democrats, for instance, are commies who want everything done and owned by the state. As if everyone in the country are like the Right-wingers—almost completely ignorant of American history and the simple fact that we all know and love our system. Face it, the world loves our system. We all love Las Vegas and Wall Street. We all hope to hit upon some get-rich idea someday. But, no, business, businessmen, and free enterprise are somehow in danger of being wiped off the planet by Democrats. Ludicrous! I could go on... Thanks, Pam for stating your, I think, brilliant insight in such a strong, direct way! —SteveB]

I love James Carville. He is super creepy, but I love what he says. Have you seen the guy on "Saturday Night Live" who does an imitation of him? Perfection. [No, unfortunately, I have not. Sure love the show, though. —SteveB]

Krugman nailed it when he attributed cynicism or cluelessness to the Republican Scramble for the Presidency. The only one who is remotely qualified is Romney, but he scares me too. He's so rigid. I think he's a pragmatist who backs himself up with the Mormon dogma that the man is in charge. And he's The Man. Still, he probably wouldn't embarrass the U.S. at a conference in Paris, at least if was cool about not drinking their wine. Will they serve iced tea at State Dinners?

I love Paul Krugman. My brother-in-law's girlfriend knows him. She works in banking and says she likes him personally, though she disagrees with him. Yes, she's a Republican. My brother-in-law is a Democrat. How does that work? Sometimes I'm tempted to send them stuff from FotM, but I don't want to cause trouble.

[We would never cause trouble around here! :-) —SteveB]

20111210-13 21:07 Art Re: "Why the GOP Field Is So Weak" (reply to SteveB, above X2)

This is really spot on. Here's a quote I got from somewhere that I think really nails part of this down. I'm not sure all of it is accurate but the part about anything other than hate is.

Second, the *Chicago Tribune's* estimable Steve Chapman captured the essence of Gingrich's appeal to the GOP's propagandized base: "Demonizing adversaries is what he does best. Some on the right don't want a conservative so much as they want a hater. Gingrich is their dream come true. Romney shows no flair for irresponsible hysteria and crude smears—and many count that as a serious flaw.

20111210-14 09:38 SteveG "The Real History of 'Corporate Personhood': Meet the Man to Blame for Corporations Having More Rights Than You"

"The Real History of 'Corporate Personhood': Meet the Man to Blame for Corporations Having More Rights Than You" by Jeffrey Clements, Alternet

Dec. 6, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/153345/>)

<a href="#">20111210-15</a>	09:57	SteveG	Video: "Howard Zinn on Obama: 'If You Want to End Terrorism, You Have to Stop Being Terrorists'"
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Video: "If You Want to End Terrorism, You Have to Stop Being Terrorists"  
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbzkhu1CiVU&feature=share>)

<a href="#">20111210-06</a>	14:05	Jim	Book Recommendation: <i>The Whole Truth</i> by Dan Baldacci
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I know it is a busy season and there are a lot of current gaffes to laugh or cry at along with dire warnings about threats to everything from Bryce Canyon to internet censorship and unpatriotic use of the patriot act or airport scanner.

Still, I would like to recommend for your fiction reading *The Whole Truth* by Dan Baldacci. This book is about a wealthy arms company president's desire to restart the cold war with every country feeling the need to re-arm against some traditional foe so they will buy more weapons. The feature I want to emphasize is the use of fake stuff on the Internet. They create what looks like a smuggled out video of a torture victim who makes some claims that get posted everywhere and can't be verified. They do other internet stuff and then arrange a few real terror attacks to give credence to some of it.

It is a good thriller, but it lets you see behind the curtain how easy it is to manipulate "public opinion" to fall into line with your opinion on very little real evidence or reasoning. We get really close to a lot of wars or armed borders in the story before the skeptical reporter can break the real story.

The author gives an afterword on the history of some disinformation campaigns by our own CIA in other countries.

It has been three or four years since I read it so I can't give more details off the top of my head, but I think you would enjoy the book as a good story and be disturbed by how possible it all seems.

<a href="#">20111210-07</a>	15:23	Pam	Some Interesting Economic Numbers
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From the January, 2012, *Harper's Index*.

1. Amount of money employees of private-equity firm Bain Capital have donated to the campaigns of:
  - Its co-founder, Mitt Romney: \$69,500.
  - President Obama: \$119,900.
2. Republicans who say the current economic order "favors a very small portion of the rich": 62%
3. Workers with only a high school diploma who received employer-based health insurance in 1979: 70%
4. Workers with a bachelor's degree or higher who receive it today: 66%
5. Citizens who struggled to pay for food:

Country	2008	2011
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China	16%	6%
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U.S.A. 9% 19%

[20111210-08](#) 15:30 SteveB Re: Some Interesting Economic Numbers (reply to Pam, above)

Wow! It is simply amazing to me the way the statistics everyone in this group has found pile up so one-sidedly against one side.

Unfortunately, President Obama has done nothing to determine the direction of this country except internationally, where I think he has achieved some stunning successes. His foreign policy should make any Republican happy, except for maybe his Israel policy, and who really knows what to do there—not Glenn Beck or Michelle Bachmann! I guess Trump isn't happy about leaving Iraq without "taking their oil" whatever that means. I think I'm just happy to get out of there in one piece, as long as we keep an eye on Iran, and I trust Obama to do the right thing, more than any of the candidates.

The course we are on, and have been on for a long time, since Nixon, at least, is solidly conservative Republican—deregulation, low taxes, wars, political corruption, and battles against unions, education, and the middle class and poor. During this time, we have seen an incredible decline in the quality of life for the all-important, economy-driving middle class. And, for far too long, a real decline in middle class incomes, while prices rise.

Very difficult for anyone to say otherwise against such massive evidence and be believed. So far, we've seen, I believe, zero real evidence to support any contrary position. If I am wrong, please let me know.

It's time to change direction, America. Unfortunately, the word "change" has been a little over-used and people are very cynical about it. It's a shame when a whole country has such an attitude about something it so badly needs.

[20111210-10](#) 18:06 Pam Re: Some Interesting Economic Numbers (reply to SteveB, above)

I just read another article in the latest *Harper's* that has me reeling. It's about the housing foreclosure crisis and something called MERS, that was started in 1999. MERS was created by business interests to essentially launder mortgages. Here's how I understand it: a bank lends money to a borrower to buy a house. Two documents are produced—a deed of trust and a promissory note—that traditionally (until 10 or so years ago) were kept together by the Clerk of Court in the county where the sale took place. MERS got the idea of splitting the two, leaving the deed with the original lender and selling off the note to be bundled in a mortgage security, which was then sold, then sold again, and on and on, until it was lost. You can't sell a property without that note, but if it couldn't be found, then the mortgage was cancelled. No one could prove who owned the property. This only happened, though, if the homeowner was savvy enough to take the issue to court. This has happened a few times, but once class action suits began to be filed, the courts began to rule against plaintiffs and in favor of MERS. The thing is, if thousands and thousands of properties can't be proved to belong to anybody, then the whole idea of private property goes out the window—along with trust and billions of dollars. You can see why the courts wouldn't want this to happen—we'd fall into an abyss—but it's the trusting, ignorant homeowner who loses. At the end of the payment period (30 yrs. or whatever), he may find it impossible to find the legal holder of the note, with the result that he wouldn't be able to sell the property. He'd have virtually been paying rent the whole time. Read the article for yourselves. This strikes me as a terrible, terrible thing—as bad as anything that's happened in the past three years. We are in such sh\*t.

[20111210-09](#) 16:04 SteveB "Gingrich in Bull's Eye at GOP Showdown"

This is an interesting exchange:

"Gingrich in Bull's Eye at GOP Showdown" by Paul Steinhauser, CNN

Dec. 9, 2011, (<http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/09/politics/gop-debate/index.html>)

"I'm still undecided. I am looking for a candidate that can beat Obama!" said Becky Beach, a GOP strategist and Iowa resident.

What issues is she looking for when it comes to the debate?

**"It would be reducing the federal debt and cutting government spending, so we can create jobs,"** she said.

Do you see how pervasive the lies of the right are? No economist on Earth can prove or even demonstrate that "reducing the federal debt and cutting government spending" has, can, or will ever do anything to create jobs in the situation we are in. If our currently low interest rates and taxes and incentives to business and trade stay the same, and we merely reduce the size and debt of government, how could one additional job be created? What exactly would create it? Jobs would instead be lost, at least in government. This is truly Herman Cain's famous "apples and oranges." They just don't add up, do they, lover boy?

<a href="#">20111210-11</a>	18:37	SteveB	"The Most Important Economic Speech of His [Obama's] Presidency"
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At least we've got President Obama onboard now. I've been a little worried about the big guy. He states the position well, too. A must read!

"The Most Important Economic Speech of His [Obama's] Presidency" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Dec. 8, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/most-important-economic-speech-his-presidency-1323355215>)

The President's speech today in Osawatimie, Kansas — where Teddy Roosevelt gave his "New Nationalism" speech in 1910 — is the most important economic speech of his presidency in terms of connecting the dots, laying out the reasons behind our economic and political crises, and asserting a willingness to take on the powerful and the privileged that have gamed the system to their advantage.

Here are the highlights (and, if you'll pardon me, my annotations):

For most Americans, the basic bargain that made this country great has eroded. Long before the recession hit, hard work stopped paying off for too many people. Fewer and fewer of the folks who contributed to the success of our economy actually benefitted from that success. Those at the very top grew wealthier from their incomes and investments than ever before. But everyone else struggled with costs that were growing and paychecks that weren't - and too many families found themselves racking up more and more debt just to keep up.

He's absolutely right – and it's the first time he or any other president has clearly stated the long-term structural problem that's been widening the gap between the very top and everyone else for thirty years – the breaking of the basic bargain linking pay to productivity gains.

For many years, credit cards and home equity loans papered over the harsh realities of this new economy. But in 2008, the house of cards collapsed.

Exactly. But the first papering over was when large numbers of women went into paid work, starting the in the late 1970s and 1980s, in order to prop up family incomes that were stagnating or dropping because male wages were under siege – from globalization, technological change, and the decline of unions. Only when this coping mechanism was exhausted, and when housing prices started to climb, did Americans shift to credit cards and home equity loans as a means of papering over the new harsh reality of an economy that was working for a minority at the top but not for most of the middle class.

We all know the story by now: Mortgages sold to people who couldn't afford them, or sometimes even understand them. Banks and investors allowed to keep packaging the risk and selling it off. Huge bets - and huge bonuses - made with other people's money on the line. Regulators who were supposed to warn us about the dangers of all this, but looked the other way or didn't have the authority to look at all.

It was wrong. It combined the breathtaking greed of a few with irresponsibility across the system. And it plunged our economy and the world into a crisis from which we are still fighting to recover. It claimed the jobs, homes, and the basic security of millions - innocent, hard-working Americans who had met their responsibilities, but were still left holding the bag.

Precisely – and it's about time he used the term "wrong" to describe Wall Street's antics, and the abject failure of regulators (led by Alan Greenspan and the Fed) to stop what was going on. But these "wrongs" were only the proximate cause of the economic crisis. The underlying cause was, as the President said before, the breaking of the basic bargain linking pay to productivity.

Ever since, there has been a raging debate over the best way to restore growth and prosperity; balance and fairness. Throughout the country, it has sparked protests and political movements - from the Tea Party to the people who have been occupying the streets of New York and other cities. It's left Washington in a near-constant state of gridlock. And it's been the topic of heated and sometimes colorful discussion among the men and women who are running for president.

But this isn't just another political debate. This is the defining issue of our time. This is a make or break moment for the middle class, and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class. At stake is whether this will be a country where working people can earn enough to raise a family, build a modest savings, own a home, and secure their retirement.

Right again. It is the defining issue of our time. But I wish he wouldn't lump the Tea Party in with the Occupiers. The former hates government; the latter focuses blame on Wall Street and corporate greed – just where the President did a moment ago.

Now, in the midst of this debate, there are some who seem to be suffering from a kind of collective amnesia. After all that's happened, after the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, they want to return to the same practices that got us into this mess. In fact, they want to go back to the same policies that have stacked the deck against middle-class Americans for too many years. Their philosophy is simple: we are better off when everyone is left to fend for themselves and play by their own rules.

He might have been a bit stronger here. The "they" who are suffering collective amnesia include many of the privileged and powerful who have gained enormous wealth by using their political muscle to entrench their privilege and power. In other words, it's not simply or even mainly amnesia. It's a clear and concerted strategy.

Well, I'm here to say they are wrong. I'm here to reaffirm my deep conviction that we are greater together than we are on our own. I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, when everyone does their fair share, and when everyone plays by the same rules. Those aren't Democratic or Republican values; 1% values or 99% values. They're American values, and we have to reclaim them.

Amen.

In 1910, Teddy Roosevelt came here, to Osawatimie, and laid out his vision for what he called a New Nationalism. "Our country," he said, "...means nothing unless it means the triumph of a real democracy...of an economic system under which each man shall be guaranteed the opportunity to show the best that there is in him."

Some background: In 1909, Herbert Croly, a young political philosopher and journalist, argued in his best-selling *The Promise of American Life* that the large American corporation should be regulated by the nation and directed toward national goals. "The constructive idea behind a policy of the recognition of the semi-monopolistic

corporation is, of course, the idea that they can be converted into economic agents...for the national economic interest," Croly wrote. Teddy Roosevelt's New Nationalism embraced Croly's idea.

For this, Roosevelt was called a radical, a socialist, even a communist. But today, we are a richer nation and a stronger democracy because of what he fought for in his last campaign: an eight hour work day and a minimum wage for women; insurance for the unemployed, the elderly, and those with disabilities; political reform and a progressive income tax.

Today, over one hundred years later, our economy has gone through another transformation. Over the last few decades, huge advances in technology have allowed businesses to do more with less, and made it easier for them to set up shop and hire workers anywhere in the world. And many of you know firsthand the painful disruptions this has caused for a lot of Americans.

Factories where people thought they would retire suddenly picked up and went overseas, where the workers were cheaper. Steel mills that needed 1,000 employees are now able to do the same work with 100, so that layoffs were too often permanent, not just a temporary part of the business cycle. These changes didn't just affect blue-collar workers. If you were a bank teller or a phone operator or a travel agent, you saw many in your profession replaced by ATMs or the internet. Today, even higher-skilled jobs like accountants and middle management can be outsourced to countries like China and India. And if you're someone whose job can be done cheaper by a computer or someone in another country, you don't have a lot of leverage with your employer when it comes to asking for better wages and benefits - especially since fewer Americans today are part of a union.

Now, just as there was in Teddy Roosevelt's time, there's been a certain crowd in Washington for the last few decades who respond to this economic challenge with the same old tune. "The market will take care of everything," they tell us. If only we cut more regulations and cut more taxes - especially for the wealthy - our economy will grow stronger. Sure, there will be winners and losers. But if the winners do really well, jobs and prosperity will eventually trickle down to everyone else. And even if prosperity doesn't trickle down, they argue, that's the price of liberty.

It's a simple theory - one that speaks to our rugged individualism and healthy skepticism of too much government. It fits well on a bumper sticker. Here's the problem: It doesn't work. It's never worked. It didn't work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It's not what led to the incredible post-war boom of the 50s and 60s. And it didn't work when we tried it during the last decade.

Obama is advocating Croly's proposal that large corporations be regulated for the nation's good. But he's updating Croly. The next paragraphs are important.

Remember that in those years, in 2001 and 2003, Congress passed two of the most expensive tax cuts for the wealthy in history, and what did they get us? The slowest job growth in half a century. Massive deficits that have made it much harder to pay for the investments that built this country and provided the basic security that helped millions of Americans reach and stay in the middle class - things like education and infrastructure; science and technology; Medicare and Social Security.

Remember that in those years, thanks to some of the same folks who are running Congress now, we had weak regulation and little oversight, and what did that get us? Insurance companies that jacked up people's premiums with impunity, and denied care to the patients who were sick. Mortgage lenders that tricked families into buying homes they couldn't afford. A financial sector where irresponsibility and lack of basic oversight nearly destroyed our entire economy.

We simply cannot return to this brand of your-on-your-own economics if we're serious about rebuilding the middle class in this country. We know that it doesn't result in a strong economy. It results in an economy that invests too little in its people and its future. It doesn't result in a prosperity that trickles down. It results in a prosperity that's enjoyed by fewer and fewer of our citizens.



Look at the statistics. In the last few decades, the average income of the top one percent has gone up by more than 250%, to \$1.2 million per year. For the top one hundredth of one percent, the average income is now \$27 million per year. The typical CEO who used to earn about 30 times more than his or her workers now earns 110 times more. And yet, over the last decade, the incomes of most Americans have actually fallen by about six percent.

This is the first time the President — and president — has emphasized this grotesque trend. Now listen for how he connects this with the deterioration of our economy and democracy:

This kind of inequality - a level we haven't seen since the Great Depression - hurts us all. When middle-class families can no longer afford to buy the goods and services that businesses are selling, it drags down the entire economy, from top to bottom. America was built on the idea of broad-based prosperity - that's why a CEO like Henry Ford made it his mission to pay his workers enough so that they could buy the cars they made. It's also why a recent study showed that countries with less inequality tend to have stronger and steadier economic growth over the long run.

Inequality also distorts our democracy. It gives an outsized voice to the few who can afford high-priced lobbyists and unlimited campaign contributions, and runs the risk of selling out our democracy to the highest bidder. And it leaves everyone else rightly suspicious that the system in Washington is rigged against them - that our elected representatives aren't looking out for the interests of most Americans.

More fundamentally, this kind of gaping inequality gives lie to the promise at the very heart of America: that this is the place where you can make it if you try. We tell people that in this country, even if you're born with nothing, hard work can get you into the middle class; and that your children will have the chance to do even better than you. That's why immigrants from around the world flocked to our shores.

And what it's done to equal opportunity, and how it's eroded upward mobility:

And yet, over the last few decades, the rungs on the ladder of opportunity have grown farther and farther apart, and the middle class has shrunk. A few years after World War II, a child who was born into poverty had a slightly better than 50-50 chance of becoming middle class as an adult. By 1980, that chance fell to around 40%. And if the trend of rising inequality over the last few decades continues, it's estimated that a child born today will only have a 1 in 3 chance of making it to the middle class.

It's heartbreaking enough that there are millions of working families in this country who are now forced to take their children to food banks for a decent meal. But the idea that those children might not have a chance to climb out of that situation and back into the middle class, no matter how hard they work? That's inexcusable. It's wrong. It flies in the face of everything we stand for.

What should we do about this? Not turn to protectionism or become neo-Luddites. Nor turn to some version of government planning.

Fortunately, that's not a future we have to accept. Because there's another view about how we build a strong middle class in this country - a view that's truer to our history; a vision that's been embraced by people of both parties for more than two hundred years.

It's not a view that we should somehow turn back technology or put up walls around America. It's not a view that says we should punish profit or success or pretend that government knows how to fix all society's problems. It's a view that says in America, we are greater together - when everyone engages in fair play, everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share.

So what does that mean for restoring middle-class security in today's economy?

It starts by making sure that everyone in America gets a fair shot at success. The truth is, we'll never be able to compete with other countries when it comes to who's best at letting their businesses pay the lowest

wages or pollute as much as they want. That's a race to the bottom that we can't win - and shouldn't want to win. Those countries don't have a strong middle-class. They don't have our standard of living.

In 1910, Teddy Roosevelt came here, to Osawatomie, and laid out his vision for what he called a New Nationalism.

The fact is, this crisis has left a deficit of trust between Main Street and Wall Street. And major banks that were rescued by the taxpayers have an obligation to go the extra mile in helping to close that deficit. At minimum, they should be remedying past mortgage abuses that led to the financial crisis, and working to keep responsible homeowners in their home. We're going to keep pushing them to provide more time for unemployed homeowners to look for work without having to worry about immediately losing their house.

I wish the Obama administration had made this a condition for the banks receiving bailouts.

But there's far more to the speech. Read it in full. It lays out the basis for what could be the platform Obama will run on in 2012 — increasing taxes on the rich, investing in the rest us, requiring corporations and Wall Street banks that reap benefits from being in America create good jobs for Americans, and protecting our democracy from being corrupted by money — a new New Nationalism.

Here, finally, is the Barack Obama many of us thought we had elected in 2008. Since then we've had a president who has only reluctantly stood up to the moneyed interests Teddy Roosevelt and his cousin Franklin stood up to.

Hopefully Obama will carry this message through 2012, and gain a mandate to use his second term to take on the growing inequities and game-rigging practices that have been undermining the American economy and American democracy for years.

<a href="#">20111211-01</a>	10:25	Pam	Re: "The Most Important Economic Speech of His [Obama's] Presidency" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Well, it's about time. Give 'em hell, Barry.

<a href="#">20111211-02</a>	11:49	SteveB	"GOP Shows It Doesn't Care About U.S. Consumers"
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And they are very loyal boot lickers for their Masters, aren't they? No tax increases for the rich, payroll tax increases for the middle class. No money for jobs, plenty of money for lobbying and campaigns.

And, of course, Republican politicians have no interest in regulating or even monitoring the behavior of their Lords and Masters who control the almighty dollars and power in our nation.

This is American democracy in 2011. As Roland says, "Despicable."

"GOP Shows It Doesn't Care About U.S. Consumers" by Roland Martin, CNN

Dec. 10, 2011, (<http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/10/opinion/martin-gop-block/index.html>)

Republicans, led by Richard Shelby, of Alabama, blocked confirmation of Obama's pick for consumer financial protection chief.

<a href="#">20111211-04</a>	13:45	Pam	Re: "GOP Shows It Doesn't Care About U.S. Consumers" (reply to SteveB, above)
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It is hard for me to believe that so many people (Republicans and their sympathizers) could be so intent on ruination. Why? I keep asking myself. Are they evil or ignorant? They must be one or the other. Is it the blindness of myopia or complete indifference to the harm they do?

The Right justifies itself by alluding to "American values," by which they mean, Christianity, extreme individualism, fear and loathing of anything communal, opposition to others' ideas about sex and religion when they don't conform to their narrow definition of what is "normal," and the free market. They are floating in a cloud of abstraction, dogma, and belief—all intangibles. Democrats (at least traditional ones, not necessarily the go-along to get-along types we have these days), on the other hand, see problems in the real world: hunger, disease, poor housing, lack of transportation, shortage of vital medicines, etc. All of these are tangible, measurable, and potentially solvable, without reliance on any belief system whatsoever. We have a conflict between magical thinking and rational pragmatism, and I see little chance of meaningful communication between the two. This, at least, is my take on the rank-and-file Republicans, who see the world in simple terms and want a return to what they think they remember of the 1950s. These are the ignorant.

The leadership, if you can call it that, of the GOP has a different agenda, and it's about money, first, last, and always. I love that video that Steve G. posted about how we find meaning in life by giving. I never hear Republicans discuss in any meaningful way what can be done to help the unemployed (cut off their benefits), the poor (failure is the loser's fault), the sick (don't allow Medicare to bargain for cheaper medications), the disenfranchised (you gotta have a particular kind of picture ID), the homeless (cut funds to local governments), the debt-ridden (foreclose, and don't let the door hit you on the way out). These are the evil ones. For the life of me, I don't understand their motivation. It seems pathological.

Every day I become more convinced that our whole system—government AND business—is rotten at the core. We have nothing to lose by taking to the streets, the airwaves, the steps of Congress to show those in power that we know what they are doing, and we intend to stop them doing it. Obama has NOTHING to lose by coming out swinging. The speech he gave that is quoted in Robert Reich's blog is great, but why didn't he give it years ago? Why don't we see his anger and frustration? Is he really as cool, calm, and collected as he appears to be? His graying hair belies that. I want to see intelligence in our President, but we need to see the flash of fire too. To quote another infinitely quotable President, "Bring it on!"

20111211-03	12:53	SteveB	Conservative? P-u-leeze!
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The Right talks about being "Conservatives." It seems like the rest of us are automatically socialist, communist, terrorist, Christian-haters, or gay. OK.

What do they mean by these terms?

How "conservative" was it to dismantle the banking and financial laws that protected all of us between the Depression and the 1990's? This radical experiment was "conservative"? How is that, exactly?

How "conservative" were the deficit-busting, unprecedented rounds of tax cut experiments, made during good times, and based on some radical theory that has never born fruit and probably never will.

In the creation of the Bush Financial Meltdown, how "conservative" were the predatory lending practices and the laws that allowed them? How "conservative" were the regulators? How "conservative" have the Republican trade, jobs, and manufacturing policies been? They certainly created change! Not the stability and uniformity usually associated with conservatism.

This glorious deregulation was all a key part of the Republican plan for America. And where did this conservatism lead? Nowhere except back full circle to malaise or worse.

I thought conservatism was sticking to what you know works? Changing only if absolutely necessary? What we all knew worked in this case. Not throwing it out the widow and trying radical experiments with unknown ramifications. Especially with something like a great and prosperous nation and people.

These "conservatives" twist the truth to every angle.

[20111211-05](#) 13:50 Pam Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to SteveB, above)

I remember when we first began corresponding, you called yourself a conservative. It sounds to me like you and today's "conservatives" are parting company. What's in a name anyway? Well-intentioned, intelligent people tend to share the same values and ideas no matter what they call themselves. Hiding behind a label is just a way of avoiding specifics. I bet you and I could even find some common ground on immigration if we looked hard enough. :-)

[20111211-06](#) 14:04 SteveB Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to Pam, above)

I know I sure do not want to be to the right of Newt on any issue, even immigration.:-)

I still think of myself as a true conservative. The kind I am saying the Republicans are not, I guess. Maybe like Art still considers himself sort of a Republican.

But we need so many fixes now, that there may truly be no place for genuine conservatism at this time in our history. We sure don't want more of the same radical experiments.

The lies we are assailed with are incredible, are they not? *1984* and *Brave New World* have been perhaps surpassed, and in so little time too.

[20111211-08](#) 15:39 Pam Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to SteveB, above)

**From Pam (Dec. 11, 2011, 3:39 pm)—reply to SteveB, above, ref: Politics**

Yes. *1984* and *Brave New World* were indeed prophetic. That article I read in *Harper's* made me realize just how dysfunctional our system really is. I'm reading a book now that talks about what this country was like in the 50s and 60s and how a conformist mindset got entrenched. Maybe some lingering effects of that time are with us more than we realize. There is such a reluctance to challenge what was once the source of our prosperity. Remember, what's good for GE is good for America? The people wanted to be believers, and the smartypants at the top believed they could do anything. I am becoming such a cynic.

[20111211-07](#) 14:05 SteveB Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to Pam, above)

Mmmm...a "coformist mindset." I think they're onto something there.

It turns out to be like Plato knew. The education of a nation's leaders is of the utmost importance. The education of its citizens isn't far behind. Now people don't even see the way the truth is twisted.

I would think a democracy, especially a great one, would have spent a lot more resources than America ever did, studying and discussing what an important part of the political process this education is for a democracy. Trying to find ways to do it better and better, if that's possible. Trying to perfect democracy.

If democracy is not seen as precious, it seems like it has a way of disappearing.

To truly challenge this system...well, that is why Alan Grayson ends all his communications and speeches with one very significant and portentous word, "Courage!"

20111211-09 16:22 Pam Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to SteveB, above)

Yes, yes, yes. You're so right. Education is everything. You can't have a democracy without it. There's a reason why Afghanistan is such a god-forsaken country; most of the population can't even read. Critical thinking? Forget it. I don't know where it came from, but I've always been a person to want to go the opposite way everyone else is going. My parents were of that conformist 50's generation and they didn't understand that at all. My mother once said to me, You don't fly in the face of convention. Well, I did. When I was young, I thought at some level that she was probably right and I'd grow out of my contrariness, but no. I challenge everything, even myself. That's why I'm so eager to hear from the other side. If they have any good arguments, I want to hear them. I'll change my mind if it seems reasonable. I think most people are terrified of changing their mind or admitting they've been wrong about something. I used to be totally against legalizing drugs. Totally. But I've come to see the terrible price we're paying for the war on drugs. Legalizing marijuana and taxing it for the good of all would be the smart thing to do, only we can never admit that, because that would mean we'd been wrong all along. Just like the Catholic Church. If they do an about-face on birth control today, what does that say to all the people who were denied it in the past? Better just to keep on as we are. Only it's not better; we just go deeper and deeper into whatever hole we've been digging.

One reason I love FotM is because I'm learning so much and thinking a lot too. It's taken the place of teaching for me. I learned more from teaching than I ever did from taking classes. No way was I going to get up in front of a class of 150 and talk about the Roman Republic without studying the hell out of it first. When you study under that pressure, things tend to stick. I taught Western Civilization, among other things, and I learned SO much. With FotM I have a new reason to read and think hard. It's a real motivation to me.

20111211-10 17:05 SteveB Re: Conservative? P-u-leeze! (reply to Pam, above)

I'm going to work on the website next, since the Archive is so far along now. That and a little SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and we should really start growing. I'll try to keep it controlled, but I think we do need more of everything, just not too much more, except maybe readers. How many readers would ever be too many?

Voices from the Right are always welcome, though a little rare.

I too am learning a lot. You and I are even learning things about email!

And, as you say, there is nothing like teaching to learn a subject. In my student and teaching years, I got to do quite a bit of private tutoring for some pretty brilliant students. I taught all the subjects and loved it, because I had to learn too and stay ahead. In college and graduate school, I studied and partially understood (you know how that is) a lot of incredible literature. All of Shakespeare. Proust. Woolf. All the Americans. Like I told you about reading *Atlas Shrugged* in high school, I loved the thick books in college too—the Russians especially. But when you have to teach, it is very very motivating. Plus, if you simply treat students of any age as real people, you will be blessed by what they can discover that, perhaps, you never would.

That is also what happens in this group.

P.S. We had great schools in Greencastle in our day! They graduated a lot of rebels and free spirits, from everything I can tell. That tells you they must have been doing something right. And so cheaply. The best bargain in our society! Maybe in any society.

20111211-11 22:21 SteveG Fw: Care2 Petition: Help Imprisoned Afghan Women Claim Their Rights!

From Care2:

Imprisoned Afghan Women Deserve Due Process.

In 2009, the Afghan Congress ratified the Elimination of Violence Against Women Act (EVAW), which criminalized the traditions of forced marriage, enslavement and abuse of women.

Unfortunately, Afghan women are still being put in prison for resisting these cultural practices.

Tell Presidents Barack Obama and Hamid Karzai that the legal rights of Afghan women deserve to be respected:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/9/tell-president-obama-imprisoned-afghan-women-deserve-due-process-according-to-international-rule-of/>.

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—Friends of the Middle,  
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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