



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #34 — DEC. 14, 2011

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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The Republican Reality

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 14, 2011)

And so the slow spiral down continues for the GOP. For some reason I can't guess (yet am very afraid to know), the Republicans don't even feel the need to throw the poor or even the middle class a bone any more. It's not only all about 2012 and bringing down, Obama, it's about serving their masters—a very tiny minority in a sea of democracy. There are no other stated goals than to bring down the President.

If this strategy works for the GOP in 2012, all is lost. It seems to me to be the strangest method of winning elections that I can imagine: "America, Go to Hell!"

I know many of you hope for or fear a Republican takeover in 2012. I'm just as worried about the GOP self-destructing either after, or even before, the election. And what I fear more than the Republicans is what might replace them.

"GOP's Horse-Race Politics" by Rep. Rosa DeLauro, Politico

Dec. 13, 2011, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1211/70382.html>)

(There's been brinkmanship and bad faith arguments from the GOP, the author writes.)

Republicans in Congress, despite their affinity for tax cuts, last week blocked a critical extension and expansion of the payroll tax cut in the Senate that would save the average American family roughly \$1,500 a year. They are again showing that they will go to absurd lengths to oppose President Barack Obama and serve the interests of their wealthiest donors. Even if that means hurting middle-class working families.

We have seen no meaningful attempts to create and retain jobs this year. However, we have seen plenty of brinkmanship, budget crises and bad faith arguments from the GOP. This is because, at the bottom of it all, Republicans in Congress are only focused on the 2012 horse race.

They would rather see the president hamstrung in next year's election than have the economy recover. As Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said, **"The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president."**

[Continue reading at Politico...](#)

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"Cato Unbound: Will the Real John Maynard Keynes Please Stand Up?" by Rick Lowe, Weblog Bahamas

Dec. 12, 2011, (http://www.weblogbahamas.com/blog_bahamas/2011/12/cato-unbound-will-the-real-john-maynard-keynes-please-stand-up.html)

Just when many of the political class around the world thought it was safe to cart the spectre of John Maynard Keynes out yet again, Cato Unbound (<http://www.cato-unbound.org/>) opens up the debate.

Tim Congdon, British Economist and Businessman, leads off with his essay entitled: "Dangerous Waffle about the 'Liquidity Trap'" <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2011/12/05/tim-congdon/dangerous-waffle-about-the-liquidity-trap/>.

Response essays from Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Don Boudreaux of George Mason University, and Robert Hetzel, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond can be found at the links below:

Dean Baker: "Keynes and the Current Crisis" <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2011/12/07/dean-baker/keynes-and-the-current-crisis/>.

Don Boudreaux: "Keynes, Friedman and Higgs" <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2011/12/09/donald-j-boudreaux/keynes-friedman-and-higgs/>.

Robert Hetzel: *Tim Congdon on Liquidity Traps vs. Portfolio Rebalancing*, <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2011/12/12/robert-hetzel/tim-congdon-on-liquidity-traps-vs-portfolio-rebalancing/>.

20111212-02 15:55 Pam Re: The Return of Bad Newt (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #31)

I guess you've all see Newt's economic proposals to forget about jobs, throw out regulation, lower the tax rate on corporations, and eliminate capital gains. Good Lord. Obama is right: the differences between the two parties are stark. I don't believe I've seen a more significant election than the upcoming one. I feel about it like I'd feel about major surgery. I hope the outcome will be good, and I can't wait until it's over.

20111212-03 17:50 SteveB Animation: Happy Ride



The picture here is an animated GIF that I hope works for you in the email. If not, you can open it with this link:

(http://i22.photobucket.com/albums/b314/tmcatee/l_dca3f880d61e59e216f0855be9ef5667.gif)

I'm not sure who did this. Some right-wing blog, I think. I guess it is supposed to somehow be critical of the President and his "buddies."

But I think it is a very funny, cool, happy video. It would certainly never happen in real life. It's a shame we're in too serious a crisis for the clip to ever happen, but I wish it could. It just makes me smile!

Enjoy!

20111213-05 Larry 16:40 Re: Happy Ride (reply to SteveB, above)

I think that is soooooooooo funny!

Take care over the holiday, and thank you for the enjoyment your new "Friends of the Middle" brings to me.

20111212-04 19:04 SteveB "The Personhood of a Mississippi Zygote"

I'm probably bad, but I just loved this! LOL! Never heard of this guy before, so he's a discovery for me!

"The Personhood of a Mississippi Zygote" by Walter Brasch, Nov. 30, 2011, (<http://www.pacificviews.org/>)

"O.K., class, we have a few minutes at the end of today's lecture about how the godless Communists created evolution to try to destroy the decent loyal patriotic capitalist society of America. Any questions? Yes, Billy Bob."

"Mr. Jim Bob, I heard about this thing called a person. What is that?"

"Good question. With all the distortions by the lyin' liberal left-wing, it can get confusing. But, it's really simple. A person is an egg that has just been fertilized by a sperm. We call this young person a Zygote."

"Does it have to be a goat? Can it be anything else?"

"Well, Susie Bob, if you nurture it, that fertilized egg can grow up to be anything it wants to be, because this is the United States of America. And no one has the right to tell us white folks what to do."

"Are there advantages of being a single-celled person?"

"Definitely. Their parents don't have to wait until they emerge from the birth canal to claim them as an IRS deduction. Also, with more persons in Mississippi, we can get more single-cell congresspersons to represent us."

"Then why did our parents vote against the constitutional amendment?"

"It was a close defeat. While those abortion activists voted against the measure, most of the opposition was because us conservatives were worried that the way the proposed amendment was written would allow them liberal types to go to Washington and overturn our states' rights."

"You mean Congress can do that?"

"No, Junie Bob, the Supreme Court can do that. It was a craps roll. You see, there are four decent Americans on the Supreme Court. And there are four who are women, or Jews, or both. And they were likely to say something stupid, like the state isn't allowed to use religious dogma to justify new laws. That would mean there would be a 4-4 tie. We couldn't trust the other judge to do what's right, because he changes what side he's on all the time. Even our illustrious governor said he had doubts about how broad that amendment was, and what the courts would do."

"But he voted for it anyway."

"He's a politician, Kenny Bob. That's what they do. Next question."

"My mommy says that abortion and wearing condoms is murder, and to protect persons she plans to run down baby-killer doctors when she sees them on the streets."

"Your mommy is looking out for the best interests of the fertilized egg. In that case, the courts will rule that what your mother does is justified homicide. Just like them lynchings your pappies and grandpappies might have done for fun on some hot weekend. It sent a message that we don't tolerate uppity colored people doing dumb things like voting or demanding constitutional rights. Those were meant only for the white people."

"Is slavery still legal?"

"No, Bertie Bob, Mississippi outlawed it in 1995 when we ratified the 13th Amendment to the Constitution."

"Why did it take so long?"

"Well, Martha Bob, you have to understand that decent conservatives just don't go rushing into making important decisions. It takes time to figure out all the issues and their implications. Thirteen decades seemed about the right time."

"I'm still confused Mr. Jim Bob. My pappy says that we got to keep the gummint out of our lives, like not allowing revenooers on our property. Don't all of them laws intrude on our rights?"

"Sometimes, you have to intrude for the good of society. That's why we have laws about who you can and can't marry?"

"You mean, me and-?"

"Yes, Jenny Bob, I was planning to talk to you about you and your brother. Marriage has to be between a man and a woman who aren't siblings."

"So, it's OK for me and Calvin Bob to marry?"

"Since you're first cousins that's OK, just as long as marriage is between a man and a woman, as God intended."

"Is that why we don't like the coloreds and the Asians to marry us? I heard that half the state doesn't want intermarriages and the rest are the colored people."

"What people don't understand, Beauford Bob, is that we made those laws to help the colored people. Before the War Between the States-Praise Jeff Davis and Jesus, Hallelujah!-we allowed white slave owners to have sex with anyone they wanted, as long as they were women. But, then we realized that wasn't fair to the African people, because it diluted their purity. So, to protect the darkies, we didn't have any choice but to forbid whites from marrying anyone with even one-eighth dark blood."

"I heard about this thing called sodomy, which them homosexual and lesbian ladies practice. That's just yucky."

"Indeed it is. That's why sodomy is a felony, and homosexuals can get 10 years in prison, where they can practice deviant. After that, they have to register as sex offenders. That's another reason why the government is allowed into our bedrooms, so they can protect respectable voyeurs from having to participate in such immoral activity. Time for just one more question. Yes, Horatio Bob."

"Mr. Jim Bob, how did you become so wise?"

"I'm a graduate of the Mississippi school system."

(Walter Brasch's latest book is the mystery/thriller, *Before the First Snow*, set in rural Pennsylvania. The book is available through <http://www.greeleyandstone.com>, <http://www.amazon.com>, and other bookstores.)

20111212-06	20:03	Art	Re: "The Personhood of a Mississippi Zygote" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Good one.

As sort of an add on, I am on Speaker Bonehead's electronic mailing list (perhaps many of you are) and get the opportunity to respond to some of his more interesting ideas. The latest, of course, is the brilliant idea to connect the proposed pipeline from Canada and the payroll tax break extension. I am at a loss to see the connection of these two and therefore took the opportunity to make my views known.

What struck me, as I read through the numerous replies (maybe close to a hundred) posted on his web site, was the contrast between responses of those that support the Speaker and those opposed. Those that supported the Speaker's position were almost to a message inarticulate with poor to nonexistent grammar and only sort of vague references about how that "commie socialist in the whit horse' is out to destroy us all." Not a single one (I confess it was simply to wearying to read them all) that I read had one laid out logical argument. In fact there was no argument presented at all - just hate for that pinko commie president whose goal is to destroy us all.

By contrast those who opposed linking the two topics all presented some rational as to their position. Whether you agree or not with the proposal or their positions, the contrast was striking.

I'm not sure what this means but it does mirror my personal experience. I have challenged a number of my right wing leaning friends outside this august body to tell me exactly what they feel is wrong with President Obama. Most have not responded or said "I just don't trust him". No reason just a gut feeling. One objected to his 'Apology Tour' which the Washington Post Fact Checker pretty well debunked this week. So I am left with nothing but vagueness. I do believe for these people the approach is "I am not interested in facts or logic, I just want to hate who I want to hate." On the other hand, the hate is really there. Doesn't say much for us as a people does it?

[20111212-07](#) 20:18 Dennis Re: "The Personhood of a Mississippi Zygote" (reply to SteveB & Art, above)

Yep, it does no good to argue logic with most right-wingers, except for my libertarian friend Larry who has all the dogmatic reasons for his position down pat since reading Ayn Rand in college. My rightist relatives have all the rants memorized from the FauxNews-Blech-Limpbag echo chamber. When I argue that their opinions are delusional it somehow pisses them off. Not even an intervention could save them.

[20111212-08](#) 20:27 Pam Re: "The Personhood of a Mississippi Zygote" (reply to SteveB & Art, above)

It's hard for me to believe anything other than that the majority of people are, well, dim. I want to believe in the goodness of the human heart, and I know there are plenty of good, smart people, but I can't help noticing that a huge number of them aren't. Americans want so much to grant everyone dignity and respect (unless you're gay, non-white, or non-Christian) that we can't bring ourselves to find fault with our own species. "The American People" is an entity that does not exist, certainly not if it's seen as something wise and judicious. Like most cultures, I suppose, we are riddled with suspicion, contempt, selfishness, greed, intolerance, and anger. Jonathan Swift certainly saw this in the 18th c. and wrote scorching satires that are still relevant today. We are in many ways an adolescent culture; we often act like one. We are, I fear, junior high writ large.

[20111212-05](#) 19:39 Art "Fed Bashing Gone Wild"

"Fed Bashing Gone Wild" by Robert J. Samuelson, *The Washington Post*

Dec. 11, 2011, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fed-bashing-gone-wild/2011/12/09/gIQA6sMDoO_story.html)

The further we get from 2008, when the American economy flirted with another Great Depression, the more people forget what happened and create stories that satisfy some political, ideological or journalistic urge. Among the biggest losers in this revisionism is the Federal Reserve. Although it helped save the economy from a deeper collapse, it is increasingly portrayed as the epicenter of an unspoken conspiracy to use government money to benefit Wall Street at everyone else's expense.

[Continue reading at The Washington Post...](#)

[20111212-09](#) 20:30 Pam Re: "Fed Bashing Gone Wild" (reply to Art, above)

This is why I like to keep the information coming in. Maybe at the end of the day the truth will rise to the top.

[20111213-01](#) 09:21 GaryF Joke: The Difference Between Democratic & Republican Brains

In the hospital the relatives gathered in the waiting room, where a family member lay gravely ill. Finally, the doctor came in looking tired and somber.

"I'm afraid I'm the bearer of bad news, he said as he surveyed the worried faces. The only hope left for your loved one at this time is a brain transplant. It's an experimental procedure, very risky, but it is the only hope. Insurance will cover the procedure, but you will have to pay for the BRAIN."

The family members sat silent as they absorbed the news. After a time, someone asked, 'How much will a brain cost?'

The doctor quickly responded, "\$5,000 for a Republican's brain; \$500 for a Democrat's brain."

The moment turned awkward. Some of the Republicans actually had to 'try' to not smile, avoiding eye contact with the Democrats. A man unable to control his curiosity, finally blurted out the question everyone wanted to ask, "Why is the Republican's brain so much more than a Democrat's brain?"

The doctor smiled at the childish innocence and explained to the entire group, "It's just standard pricing procedure. We have to price the Democrats brains a lot lower because they've been used."

20111213-02 10:12 Dale "How to Create 6 Million Jobs with a Few Changes: Milken Economist"

I don't even know who this guy is, but his observations are very interesting and positive in nature. I'm sure there is some way to put a political spin to this and there will be those who feel compelled to do so, but sometimes it's better to just read non-partisan intended suggestions/comments with an open mind and look for ways they could be applied.

"How to Create 6 Million Jobs with a Few Changes: Milken Economist" by Gil Weinreich with Armen Bedroussian, AdvisorOne

Dec. 12, 2011, (http://www.advisorone.com/2011/12/12/how-to-create-6-million-jobs-with-a-few-changes-mi?utm_source=dailywire121211&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=dailywire)

WEINREICH: Negativity about the economy has reigned over the past several years. Is that attitude still justified?

BEDROUSSIAN: There's a lot of cause for optimism, contrary to many people's beliefs out there. Despite low consumer sentiment and the debt crisis in Europe, there is a resurgence in business investment in equipment and software, purchases of servers and routers, communications equipment. These purchases are being made very aggressively. Natural gas is seeing increased productivity. Exports have remained a big source for growth; they grew 18% compared to a year ago. Exports of high tech products, computers and peripherals should enjoy rapid growth in the next 5 years.

[Continue reading at AdvisorOne...](#)

20111213-03 11:32 Pam Re: "How to Create 6 Million Jobs..." (reply to Dale, above)

Why can't our politicians talk like this? I don't even want to know this guy's politics; what he says makes sense to me. It's refreshing to hear some real-world, practical solutions rather than America uber allies and Let's go mine the moon.

20111213-04 14:37 Art Re: "How to Create 6 Million Jobs..." (reply to Dale, above)

Thanks Dale, Interesting and I agree with some of this, but he flings out a lot of numbers for employment without much to back it up. Some things I do know a little about. Dual-use technology is tricky. Most of it is obviously military related and we do not want to give away some significant advantages on the battlefield lightly. As for Corporate taxes that's an old song. How about this: reduce corporate taxes and raise individual taxes for the rich to pay for it? R&D credits are a good idea but not sure his rates have anything to do with his employment numbers. Rest of it seems reasonable at first look.

Not trying to be negative but it's sort of like "trickle down" economics. Would like to have a little more data as to how these 'outcome' decisions were reached.

20111213-06	20:40	SteveG	"Analysis: Gingrich's Tax Plan Would Cause Perpetual Trillion Dollar Deficits, Triple the Debt by 2024"
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[Dear SteveG, I couldn't get the exact link to work in your email. They have an entire section on Newt, if anyone is interested. I found another article for today, but would be happy to add the one you intended for tomorrow. – SteveB]

"Analysis: Gingrich's Tax Plan Would Cause Perpetual Trillion Dollar Deficits, Triple the Debt by 2024" by Seth Hanlon, Think Progress

Dec. 13, 2011, (<http://thinkprogress.org/tag/newt-gingrich>)

2012 GOP presidential frontrunner Newt Gingrich is outdoing his Republican rivals in promising enormous tax cuts for the very wealthiest Americans. According to an independent analysis by the Tax Policy Center, Gingrich's plan would violate basic notions of fairness by requiring middle-class families to pay higher tax rates than millionaires.

But that's not all that's wrong with it. Gingrich's plan is by far the most fiscally reckless plan to be released by a major 2012 contender. The magnitude of the tax cuts he is proposing to the wealthy and corporations would drive the debt to unprecedented and dangerous levels even if federal spending is cut drastically.

20111213-07	21:07	SteveG	Fw: DCCC Petition: Stop Holding the Payroll Tax Cut Hostage to Tea Party Demands!
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from DCCC:

Moments ago, Speaker John Boehner, Eric Cantor and Tea Party Republicans rammed through their plan to hold the middle class hostage in exchange for extending the payroll tax cut.

Their plan is a radical blow to seniors and middle class families. And it's a gift to billionaires and big oil.

Here are the most outrageous Republican provisions:

- Requires millions of seniors to pay more for health care.
- Cuts unemployment insurance benefits for one million Americans.
- Tacks on unrelated, controversial provisions like the Keystone XL Pipeline while undermining environmental air quality standards.
- Lets billionaires and big oil off the hook. They won't pay one more cent under the Republican plan.

This is an extreme plan, and President Obama has already issued a veto threat. Stand with President Obama against the Republicans' extreme bill:

<http://www.dccc.org/pages/payroll>.

—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.

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FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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