



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #50 — JAN. 12, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Yet Another Tax Scam: Most Businesses Pay Zero

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 12, 2012)

Who Are They Trying to Kid?

It seems like one of the favorite Republican talking points during the recent 1% and 99% tax fights was that everyone, even the poor, should pay some taxes. You've read the catch phrase in this forum. **The poor need to "have some skin in the game."** Republicans complain vehemently as they voice this claim that the poor don't pay taxes. They never seem to complain about the rich who pay no taxes. Funny. Republicans complain even more bitterly about the most efficient government-run welfare system ever devised by man—the Earned Income Tax Credit—because it gives a tax refund to poor people who pay no taxes to begin with. I guess the jargon confuses the Right. Just remember, Republicans, if it quacks like a duck...maybe it has more to do with a slightly hidden social program than actual tax policy.

I want to talk about two groups of people and the taxes they pay—the poor and businessmen (shorter than businesspeople, but you know what I mean). And I'm really talking about very broad groups of people here. You could include the whole middle class with the poor. And I mean all businessmen who own or run a business of any size. All that's important is that they pay federal taxes as a business.

What I intend to show is that all these groups of people pay taxes (more or less), and those taxes are surprisingly flat in actuality. Here's how it works. Here's the big secret. Businesses don't pay any taxes. Ever. They make their customers pay the taxes. They pass the taxes on to somebody further down the food chain. Taxes are simply another business expense that gets figured into the price you pay for goods and services.

It's that simple. It works this way for a "C" corporation where the CEO is an employee (both pay taxes) or an "S" corporation, LLC, partnership, proprietorship, where taxes devolve to the owner(s) of the business.

My Republican friends want to grab the microphone right now and tell you that, accounting-wise, income taxes are not treated the same way as other business expenses. Income is taxed after expenses are deducted, as everyone knows. Expenses are the other outflow, not taxes. And it's profit that is taxed. But, normally, a business has some control over how big that profit is. And, normally, it knows in advance about how much tax it will have to pay. If I am a businessman who must live on the proceeds of my company, or if I run a larger business that must meet its cash flow, earnings, and budget targets, in either case, it's really the bottom line that interests me most. After everything is paid, how much is left for me and mine?

What a businessman always tries to do is build his expenses into his pricing structure and that invariably includes taxes. Don't believe that? Have Mr. Obama threaten to raise taxes on business and see how long it takes for

businessmen to call their Congressmen yelling and screaming that they'll have to raise prices if the increase becomes law. Exactly. Pass those expenses on to the consumer. There are constraints from competition on pricing, but they can be managed. You see, unlike other competitive business expenses, taxes are relatively equal for most competitors. It's just a fixed expense of doing business, as a percentage of sales. That's how it really works.

And businesses are pretty free to claim all kinds of things as legitimate business expenses, including ski trips to Aspen, baseball tickets, and fine Cuban cigars. Seriously.

So who really pays all the taxes? Consumers! (And, to some degree, that includes businesses, but they pass these costs on to consumers too.) **Who pays essentially no taxes? Businesses!**

Now who's got skin in the game and who doesn't???

Every time a poor person buys something from a rich businessman (however indirectly), he's paying the rich dude's taxes! Fact! The lies and deceptions have to stop!

FotM NEWSLETTER #50 (Jan. 12, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120112-00		SteveB	Yet Another Tax Scam: Most Businesses Pay Zero by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120111-01	09:55	Pam	Re: Graphic: Giva-a-Sh*t vs. Age (reply to Phil, FotM Newsletter #49)
20120111-02	10:30	Pam	Re: Capitalism and Good Government (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #49.)
20120111-03	13:09	GaryF	Fw: Letter to Former Sen. Alan Simpson
20120111-04	13:25	SteveB	Re: Letter to Former Sen. Alan Simpson (reply to GaryF, above)
20120111-05	14:57	Pam	David Brooks Gets It Right
20120111-06	15:35	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Start Your Own Petition!
20120111-07	18:27	SteveG	"5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today"
20120111-08	20:14	Art	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120111-09	21:27	Pam	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120111-10	21:42	SteveG	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to Pam, above)
20120111-11	21:59	SteveB	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120111-12	22:28	SteveG	"Mitt Romney Tells the 99% to Stop Being Jealous & Bend Over Quiet Down" & "Romney: Any Concern For Income Inequality Is 'About Envy'"
20120111-13	23:55	Tom	Photo: Just Wrong!
20120111-14	23:59	SteveB	Re: Photo: Just Wrong! (reply to Tom, above)

20120111-01	09:55	Pam	Re: Graphic: Giva-a-Sh*t vs. Age (reply to Phil, FotM Newsletter #49)
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I love your graph, Phil. [Age vs. Give-a-Sh*t] It says it all.

20120111-02	10:30	Pam	Re: Capitalism and Good Government (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #49.) & "Have the Super-Rich Seceded from the United States?"
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"Who is John Galt?"

This article just confirms what I've been thinking ever since NAFTA was signed into law. It seemed odd to me at the time that we would want to eliminate trade barriers with Mexico, when it was so obvious that corporations were just waiting to go down that drain. I get these hunches, then I tell myself I'm being crazy, that other people who are smarter and know more than I surely know what they're doing. I keep knocking my head against plausibility and come up reeling when what seemed impossible actually happens: the Iraq War, any hope that Afghanistan can be brought into the modern age, that corporations are people, that America is not a theocracy, etc.

You can tell how worried the super-rich are when they carry on about "class warfare." You can tell how disconnected they are when they ascribe massive unemployment and foreclosures on laziness and poor judgment. I agree that the super-rich are retreating from not just America but from every wealthy country. Places like Dubai are virtual country clubs for the best-off, with immigrants to do the work and have few, if any, rights. Just as I cannot imagine what life would be like if I lived under a bridge, the super-rich cannot imagine that "normal" families might not be able to afford to take their kids to McDonald's or buy them school supplies and soccer uniforms. The super-rich live in another world from the rest of us, yet they control all the mechanisms that control our lives. We serve at their pleasure. The rich giveth and the rich taketh away, and there's not much we can do about it.

Our leading politicians are either corrupt or crazy. The only ones I can think of who aren't are Alan Grayson and Elizabeth Warren. I hope there are others, but no names spring to mind. I just read a mystery novel by Donna Leon; some of you may know of her. Her books are set in Venice, and after reading about the corruption at every level of Italian society, I no longer consider Tuscany my dream escape destination. I'm not anti-Italian, but if this run-of-the-mill novel, which is not primarily concerned with corruption but describes it as an ordinary part of the background, is any indication, I don't want to live there, thank you very much.

I find systematic corruption incredibly dispiriting. Just the thought of the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, many African nations, and countries where bribes are part of doing business makes me crazy. What I find really upsetting is my suspicion that human nature is basically corrupt and honesty and generosity are the anomalies. If that is true, then we are doomed to repeated cycles of repression and exploitation that will never end. If I don't stop this line of thinking, I'm going to make myself depressed.

So, here's my solution--for today anyway. We live in a fallen world. The Garden of Eden may be a myth, but the idea of original sin is absolutely correct. Human animals, for all their intelligence and strength, are deeply flawed creatures, which means the world in general will never be substantially better in the long term. In the long term, Nature always wins, and if that means the earth freezes over and species go extinct, or if it means that we exhaust our resources and back ourselves into an existential corner, all we can do here and now is try our best to ameliorate the worst. And think small.

At the end of **Candide** Voltaire swears off philosophy and urges man to "cultivate your garden." Do the work that lies closest at hand, grow your food, be kind, and let the rest go. I have a confession. If it weren't for literature I would have despaired long ago. I firmly believe (and read somewhere recently someone else who thinks so too) that people who read novels are more empathetic, and empathetic people are more moral. Also more understanding. Chaucer saw the sins of us all without flinching, but turned them into cautionary tales that teach and delight (Horace's purpose of art). Examples are too numerous to list. Art takes the tragedy of life and transmutes it into something bearable.

They say a change is as good as a rest, so yesterday I rearranged my living room furniture. I now have a cozy little reading corner from which I can survey the entire room and see out the front window. I have a little table for my tea, a good light, and a stack of books just waiting for me to get off this computer. When I hear Newt pontificating like the jackass he is, I can tell myself that Dante, Shakespeare, and George Eliot would have a place for him, where I could read about him without weeping.

Sorry this is so long, but you don't have to read it, do you? :-)

Truer words were never spoken! The "greediest generation"!

[Source of original email unknown. It appears to be a legitimate email in response to Alan Simpson's famous gaffes of Aug., 2010. -SteveB]

Patty is P*SSED!!! I agree!!! Regardless of one's Party affiliation.

Alan Simpson, former Senator from Wyoming, Co-Chair of Obama's deficit commission, calls senior citizens the Greediest Generation as he compared "Social Security" to a Milk Cow with 310 million teats.

Here's a response in a letter from PATTY MYERS in Montana ... I think she is a little ticked off! She also tells it like it is!

"Hey Alan, let's get a few things straight..

1. As a career politician, you have been on the public dole for FIFTY YEARS.
2. I have been paying Social Security taxes for 48 YEARS (since I was 15 years old. I am now 63).
- 3 My Social Security payments, and those of millions of other Americans, were safely tucked away in an interest bearing account for decades until you political pukers decided to raid the account and give OUR money to a bunch of zero ambition losers in return for votes, thus bankrupting the system and turning Social Security into a Ponzi scheme that would have made Bernie Madoff proud.
4. Recently, just like Lucy & Charlie Brown, you and your ilk pulled the proverbial football away from millions of American seniors nearing retirement and moved the goal posts for full retirement from age 65 to age 67. NOW, you and your shill commission is proposing to move the goal posts YET AGAIN.
5. I, and millions of other Americans, have been paying into Medicare from Day One, and now you morons propose to change the rules of the game.. Why? Because you idiots mismanaged other parts of the economy to such an extent that you need to steal money from Medicare to pay the bills.
6. I, and millions of other Americans, have been paying income taxes our entire lives, and now you propose to increase our taxes yet again. Why? Because you incompetent bastards spent our money so profligately that you just kept on spending even after you ran out of money. Now, you come to the American taxpayers and say you need more to pay off YOUR debt.

To add insult to injury, you label us "greedy" for calling "bullsh*t" on your incompetence. Well, Captain Bullsh*t, I have a few questions for YOU.

1. How much money have you earned from the American taxpayers during your pathetic 50-year political career?
2. At what age did you retire from your pathetic political career, and how much are you receiving in annual retirement benefits from the American taxpayers?
3. How much do you pay for YOUR government provided health insurance?
4. What cuts in YOUR retirement and healthcare benefits are you proposing in your disgusting deficit reduction proposal, or, as usual, have you exempted yourself and your political cronies?

It is you, "Captain Bullsh*t", and your political co-conspirators called Congress who are the "greedy" ones.. It is you and your fellow nutcases who have bankrupted America and stolen the American dream from millions of loyal,

patriotic taxpayers. And for what? Votes. That's right, sir. You and yours have bankrupted America for the sole purpose of advancing your pathetic political careers. You know it, we know it, and you know that we know it.

And you can take that to the bank, you miserable son of a b*tch .

If you like the way things are in America delete this. If you agree with what a fellow Montana citizen Patty Myers says, PASS IT ON!!!!

20120111-04 13:25 SteveB Re: Letter to Former Sen. Alan Simpson (reply to GaryF, above)

Here's a good reply I found online to the letter, above:

from <http://politicsorpoppycock.com/2011/11/11/greediest-generation-not/>

Patty, I wholeheartedly concur with your poignant response to Senator Simpson. He is a career politician and as such is only interested in advancing his cause (self-preservation) not the preservation of our beloved US.

That is why I am dedicated to their removal. Visit my website: Throw All Bums Out of Office, <http://www.throwallbumsoutofoffice.com>. I welcome your support and all others who are tired of the lies and double dealing in DC. Please join me in ousting them all.

--Ron Wilner, Founder and Creator of the Taboo Party (Taboo is an acronym for Throw All Bums Out of Office)

20120111-05 14:57 Pam David Brooks Gets It Right

David Brooks has a good piece in yesterday's New York Times about the paucity of liberal voices in this country. Corruption is rampant, in government and out. No one trusts Wall Street, but no one trusts government either. What we need, Brooks says, is a Martin Luther, someone who will take a stand, nail his theses to the church door, and cleanse the Augean stables (how's that for a mixed metaphor?). The Catholic Church was corrupt, rich, and powerful, yet Luther was able to turn the world in a new direction. The point is not that Luther was followed by peace and tranquility, but that challenging an established institution can be done. Brooks calls for a Steve Jobs, who can simplify government, the tax structure, Medicare, and make them all user-friendly. What we have now is a nest of snakes, where there's lots of pointless activity fueled by vicious motives. This truly is the moment for a good man or woman to rise to the occasion, forget about political expediency and personal self-interest, and shift the nation's gears. I'm no Libertarian, and I think Ron Paul has his head in a bucket, but at least he's not afraid to talk straight. The rest of the Republican herd has become so tangled in the traces they can't stay on their feet. Things must change. I hope that if Obama can't be our Martin Luther, someone else can. But the status quo won't go down without a fight. Things could get ugly.

20120111-06 15:35 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: Start Your Own Petition!

from MoveOn:

A couple months ago, a MoveOn member named Robert Applebaum started up a petition for student loan forgiveness using our new website, SignOn.org. Robert's petition spread quickly, especially after we emailed it to our list.

Then, something really amazing happened. President Obama actually responded—not with a form letter, but with an actual change in policy that will lower student loan payments for over 1.6 million people.

Of course, Robert didn't do this alone, and this isn't the total solution to the student debt problem. But it proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that petitions *can* make a difference.

Now it's your turn. Using SignOn.org, you can start your own online petition on any issue—local or national—and invite your friends to sign it. We'll send the most popular petitions to other MoveOn members to help build support for your cause.

Click here to start your own petition on SignOn.org right now:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=263094&id=34639-20195165-XgHgZ0x&t=1>.

Thanks for all you do.

--Steven, Anna, Michael, Adam Q., Stefanie, and the rest of the team

Want to support our work? MoveOn Civic Action is entirely funded by our 5 million members—no corporate contributions, no big checks from CEOs. And our tiny staff ensures that small contributions go a long way. Chip in here:

https://civic.moveon.org/donatec4/creditcard.html?cpn_id=457.

20120111-07	18:27	SteveG	"5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today"
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"5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" by Rob Boston, AlterNet

Jan. 10, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/153727/>)

(Thomas Jefferson believed that a coolly rational form of religion would take root in America. Was he ever wrong.)

To hear the Religious Right tell it, men like George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were 18th-century versions of Jerry Falwell in powdered wigs and stockings. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Unlike many of today's candidates, the founders didn't find it necessary to constantly wear religion on their sleeves. They considered faith a private affair. Contrast them to former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (who says he wouldn't vote for an atheist for president because non-believers lack the proper moral grounding to guide the American ship of state), Texas Gov. Rick Perry (who hosted a prayer rally and issued an infamous ad accusing President Barack Obama of waging a "war on religion") and former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum (whose uber-Catholicism leads him to oppose not just abortion but birth control).

There was a time when Americans voted for candidates who were skeptical of core concepts of Christianity like the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus and the virgin birth. The question is, could any of them get elected today? The sad answer is probably not.

Here are five founding fathers whose views on religion would most likely doom them to defeat today:

1. George Washington

The father of our country was nominally an Anglican but seemed more at home with Deism. The language of the Deists sounds odd to today's ears because it's a theological system of thought that has fallen out of favor. Deists believed in God but didn't necessarily see him as active in human affairs. The god of the Deists was a god of first cause. He set things in motion and then stepped back.

Washington often employed Deistic terms. His god was a "supreme architect" of the universe. Washington saw religion as necessary for good moral behavior but didn't necessarily accept all

Christian dogma. He seemed to have a special gripe against communion and would usually leave services before it was offered.

Washington was widely tolerant of other beliefs. He is the author of one of the great classics of religious liberty – the letter to Touro Synagogue (1790). In this letter, Washington assured America's Jews that they would enjoy complete religious liberty in America; not mere toleration in an officially "Christian" nation. He outlines a vision of a multi-faith society where all are free.

"The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for giving to Mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation," wrote Washington. "All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens."

Stories of Washington's deep religiosity, such as tales of him praying in the snow at Valley Forge, can be ignored. They are pious legends invented after his death.

2. John Adams

The man who followed Washington in office was a Unitarian, although he was raised a Congregationalist and never officially left that church. Adams rejected belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, core concepts of Christian dogma. In his personal writings, Adams makes it clear that he considered some Christian dogma to be incomprehensible.

In February 1756, Adams wrote in his diary about a discussion he had had with a man named Major Greene. Greene was a devout Christian who sought to persuade Adams to adopt conservative Christian views. The two argued over the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity. Questioned on the matter of Jesus' divinity, Greene fell back on an old standby: some matters of theology are too complex and mysterious for we puny humans to understand.

Adams was not impressed. In his diary he wrote, "Thus mystery is made a convenient cover for absurdity."

As President, Adams signed the famous Treaty of Tripoli, which boldly stated, "[T]he government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion...."

3. Thomas Jefferson

It's almost impossible to define Jefferson's subtle religious views in a few words. As he once put it, "I am a sect by myself, as far as I know." But one thing is clear: His skepticism of traditional Christianity is well established. Our third president did not believe in the Trinity, the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus, the resurrection, original sin and other core Christian doctrines. He was hostile to many conservative Christian clerics, whom he believed had perverted the teachings of that faith.

Jefferson once famously observed to Adams, "And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter."

Although not an orthodox Christian, Jefferson admired Jesus as a moral teacher. In one of his most unusual acts, Jefferson edited the New Testament, cutting away the stories of miracles and divinity and leaving behind a very human Jesus, whose teachings Jefferson found "sublime." This "Jefferson Bible" is a remarkable document – and it would ensure his political defeat today. (Imagine the TV commercials the Religious Right would run: Thomas Jefferson hates Jesus! He mutilates Bibles!)

Jefferson was confident that a coolly rational form of religion would take root in the fertile intellectual soil of America. He once predicted that just about everyone would become Unitarian. (Despite his many talents, the man was no prophet.)

Jefferson took political stands that would infuriate today's Religious Right and ensure that they would work to defeat him. He refused to issue proclamations calling for days of prayer and fasting, saying that such religious duties were no part of the chief executive's job. His assertion that the First Amendment erects a "wall of separation between church and state" still rankles the Religious Right today.

4. James Madison

Jefferson's close ally would be similarly unelectable today. Madison is perhaps the most enigmatic of all the founders when it comes to religion. To this day, scholars still debate his religious views.

Nominally Anglican, Madison, some of his biographers believe, was really a Deist. He went through a period of enthusiasm for Christianity as a young man, but this seems to have faded. Unlike many of today's politicians, who eagerly wear religion on their sleeves and brag about the ways their faith will guide their policy decisions, Madison was notoriously reluctant to talk publicly about his religious beliefs.

Madison was perhaps the strictest church-state separationist among the founders, taking stands that make the ACLU look like a bunch of pikers. He opposed government-paid chaplains in Congress and in the military. As president, Madison rejected a proposed census because it involved counting people by profession. For the government to count the clergy, Madison said, would violate the First Amendment.

Madison, who wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, also opposed government-issued prayer proclamations. He issued a few during the War of 1812 at the insistence of Congress but later concluded that his actions had been unconstitutional. As president, he vetoed legislation granting federal land to a church and a plan to have a church in Washington care for the poor through a largely symbolic charter. In both cases, he cited the First Amendment.

One can hear the commercials now: "James Madison is an anti-religious fanatic. He even opposes prayer proclamations during time of war."

5. Thomas Paine

Paine never held elective office, but he played an important role as a pamphleteer whose stirring words helped rally Americans to independence. Washington ordered that Paine's pamphlet "The American Crisis" be read aloud to the Continental Army as a morale booster on Dec. 23, 1776. "Common Sense" was similarly popular with the people. These seminal documents were crucial to winning over the public to the side of independence.

So Paine's a hero, right? He was also a radical Deist whose later work, *The Age of Reason*, still infuriates fundamentalists. In the tome, Paine attacked institutionalized religion and all of the major tenets of Christianity. He rejected prophecies and miracles and called on readers to embrace reason. The Bible, Paine asserted, can in no way be infallible. He called the god of the Old Testament "wicked" and the entire Bible "the pretended word of God." (There go the Red States!)

What can we learn from this? Americans have the right to reject candidates for any reason, including their religious beliefs. But they ought to think twice before tossing someone aside just because he or she is skeptical of orthodox Christianity. After all, that description includes some of our nation's greatest leaders.

(Rob Boston is senior policy analyst at Americans United for Separation of Church and State.)

20120111-08	20:14	Art	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Good article. That's why the Constitution separates church and State. Need to keep it that way. Thanks.

20120111-09	21:27	Pam	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
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I LOVE this article. It should be required reading in every classroom in America--and every church. I'm with Voltaire, who called the [Catholic] church, "That infamous thing." When people have to make excuses for institutions--government, church, family, the military, whatever--then you know the institution is flawed. OK, we're all flawed. But it is rank hypocrisy to exempt religion from the same standards we apply to everything else. People say, "It's not the church that's bad, it's the people in it."

People say that about communism as well. Why is skepticism so frightening? Why is moral ambiguity so threatening? All I can conclude is that most people have teensy, weensy minds. (Forgive my choler, but this article has my juices flowing.)

20120111-10	21:42	SteveG	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to Pam, above)
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If you ask most people on the street or in typical classrooms a question the usual answer starts with "because" – "Because that is what I read", "Because that is what my parents said", "Because that is what the teacher said", and the "because" go on and on and on. Critical thinking is and has not been a priority in the home environment or the educational settings for decades and decades. People, on the average, do not know how to problem solve, to think for themselves, to find the answer – it is easier to say and believe the answer is because. I know of factories that openly stated that their largest need in hiring entry level workers was finding people with critical thinking.

Pam – you are increasing my vocabulary and reminding me of Mrs. Gilberts' English class at GHS when I pitted myself against Steven S. Stevenson in writing.

20120111-11	21:59	SteveB	Re: "5 Founding Fathers Whose Skepticism About Christianity Would Make Them Unelectable Today" (reply to SteveG, above)
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And you have a truly incredible memory, SteveG!!!

--Steven Stephenson Stevens (aka Dick Travis)

20120111-12	22:28	SteveG	"Mitt Romney Tells the 99% to Stop Being Jealous & Bend Over Quiet Down" & "Romney: Any Concern For Income Inequality Is 'About Envy'"
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Right... Just bend over. Idiot can't tell the difference between jealousy and anger.

"Mitt Romney Tells the 99% to Stop Being Jealous & Bend Over Quiet Down" by ThinkProgress War Room

Jan 11, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/progress-report/mitt-romney-tells-the-99-to-stop-being-jealous-quiet-down/?mobile=nc>)

(Mitt Romney: We Shouldn't Be Critical of Wall Street or Our Broken Economy in Public.)

As we reported earlier this week, Mitt Romney's record at Bain Capital is one of a rapacious corporate raider who amassed a quarter-billion dollar fortune by bankrupting companies and laying off thousands of hardworking Americans. What's more, Romney takes advantage of unfair tax loopholes to pay a lower tax rate on his millions of dollars in ongoing annual profits from Bain than tens of millions of middle class Americans pay on the wages they earn.

Romney has come under withering criticism for his record at Bain in recent days, with much of it coming from fellow Republicans. This morning, Romney responded by calling such criticism un-American "class warfare" that is simply motivated by "envy." Romney added that our broken economy — one that is only working for the wealthy few right now — should not even be discussed in public, saying discussions of income inequality were only fit for "quiet rooms."

Don't believe Romney actually said that? [See below.]

"Romney: Any Concern For Income Inequality Is 'About Envy'" by Tanya Somanader, ThinkProgress

Jan 11, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/01/11/402671/romney-any-concern-for-income-inequality-is-about-envy/?mobile=nc>)

As GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney begins to solidify his frontrunner status, his pitch as the "business" candidate who understands the "real economy" is faltering under heavier scrutiny of his time at Bain Capital. As CEO of the private equity firm, Romney "maximized returns by firing workers, seeking government subsidies, and flipping companies quickly for large profits" while a significant number of those companies went bankrupt and thousands of workers lost their jobs. "Make a profit. That's the name of the game, right?" he said.

Now even members of his own party are damning the callous nature of his work. Chafing from the criticism, Romney blasted his "desperate" opponents yesterday for joining President Obama in "put[ting] free enterprise on trial" and engaging in "the bitter politics of envy."

This morning on the *Today Show*, host Matt Lauer asked Romney — twice — whether he truly believed any questions regarding the practices of Wall Street or the distribution of wealth and power is merely "envious" or more about "fairness." Both times, Romney insisted that it was solely an "envy-oriented" attack on "millionaires and billionaires and executives and Wall Street":

LAUER: When you said that we already have a leader who divides us with the bitter politics of envy, I'm curious about the word 'envy.' Did you suggest that anyone who questions the policies and practices of Wall Street and financial institutions, anyone who has questions about the distribution of wealth and power in this country, is envious? Is it about jealousy, or fairness?

ROMNEY: You know, I think it's about envy. I think it's about class warfare. When you have a president encouraging the idea of dividing America based on the 99 percent versus one percent — and those people who have been most successful will be in the one percent — you have opened up a whole new wave of approach in this country which is entirely inconsistent with the concept of one nation under God. The American people, I believe in the final analysis, will reject it.

LAUER: Yeah but envy? Are there no fair questions about the distribution of wealth without it being seen as 'envy,' though?

ROMNEY: I think it's fine to talk about those things in quiet rooms and discussions about tax policy and the like. But the President has made it part of his campaign rally. Everywhere he goes we hear him talking about millionaires and billionaires and executives and Wall Street. It's a very envy-oriented, attack-oriented approach and I think it will fail.

Watch the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ismksjp10q0

The exchange is indeed shocking in what it reveals. In a time when income inequality is at its worst level since the Great Depression and Americans are increasingly concerned over the shrinking middle class, Romney is insisting that anyone who questions — let alone tries to reform — the unfair advantages of the extremely wealthy or the destructive practices of the financial industry that single-handedly shoved America into a recession is nothing more than “envious” of these people’s success.

Perhaps his answer shouldn’t be so surprising given how myopic the view is from his high perch. Romney is, after all, a millionaire who is still making money from the predatory equity firm while paying little in taxes and owes much of his political viability to Wall Street’s pocketbook. Indeed, he suggested the public office should be the province of rich people. Perhaps he’s just defending his own.

As the Washington Post’s Greg Sargent points out, “Romney was twice given a chance to nod in the direction of saying that concerns about these problems have at least some legitimacy to them, that they are about something more than mere envy or class warfare, and that they are deserving of a public debate. And this is the answer he gave.” Fellow candidate Newt Gingrich had another description for Romney’s answer: “baloney.”

[20120111-13](#) 23:55 Tom Photo: Just Wrong!

Look Close at this lovely photo. Such a good-looking couple?! Think about it??!!!



[20120111-14](#) 23:59 SteveB Re: Photo: Just Wrong! (reply to Tom, above)

This is so awful it’s great! Thanks, Tom.

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

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