



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #86 — MAR. 2, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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The Right's Incredible Sensitivity (of a Bulldozer!)

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 2, 2012)

I no longer even know what to say about this flaming a*s-hole! But isn't his thinking so representative? Unbelievable! What fucking year is it, Rush? 1405?

I suppose Dale would say that this story can't be true, because it appeared in the communist Huffington Post. "Consider the source," right? So you don't even attempt to wrap your mind around the indisputable FACTS. I'm very sorry that's the case, my friends on the Right.

"Rush Limbaugh: I'll Buy Georgetown Women 'as Much Aspirin to Put Between Their Knees as They Want'" by Laura Bassett and Jennifer Bendry, Huffington Post

Mar. 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/01/rush-limbaugh-sandra-fluke_n_1313891.html)

Conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh drew sharp criticism from Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) and others on Wednesday when he called Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown University law student, a "slut" and a "prostitute" for publicly advocating that employers cover contraception in their health plans. But instead of apologizing for his offensive comments on his show Thursday, he geared up for round two.

Channeling Foster Friess, a main financial backer of former Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), Limbaugh said that he would "happily buy [Sandra Fluke] all the aspirin she wants" to put between her knees in lieu of contraception.

He then expanded his offer to the whole university:

"A Georgetown coed told Nancy Pelosi's hearing that the women in her law school program are having so much sex they're going broke, so you and I should have to pay for their birth control. So what would you call that? I called it what it is," he said. "So, I'm offering a compromise today: I will buy all of the women at Georgetown University as much aspirin to put between their knees as they want."

Limbaugh, of course, was referencing the controversial comment Friess made in February, when he referenced the "gals" in "his day" who put aspirin between their knees in lieu of using contraception.

Fluke's testimony in the hearing was not, as Limbaugh claimed, about the fact that she's "having so much sex she's going broke buying contraceptives." She told the story of her friend who had an ovary removed because the insurance company wouldn't cover the prescription birth control she needed to stop the growth of ovarian cysts.

Limbaugh concluded his sexist rant by insisting that if women want their contraception covered, they should post pornographic videos of themselves online. "So Miss Fluke and the rest of you feminazis, here's the deal," he said. "If we are going to pay for your contraceptives and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which has raised a significant amount of money and gained support in the wake of the recent battles over birth control, circulated a petition on Thursday to ask Republican leaders to denounce Limbaugh's tirade.

"Rush Limbaugh has come to Republicans' defense in their war on women," said Jesse Ferguson, a spokesperson for the DCCC, "but now the real question is whether Republicans are willing to stand up to him and his repulsive attacks on women." [They aren't. They have no balls! –SteveB]

UPDATE: 3:45 p.m. -- More than 75 Democratic lawmakers signed a letter to House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday expressing outrage over Limbaugh's comments.

"On his February 29, 2012 show, Mr. Limbaugh repeatedly used sexually charged, patently offensive, and obscene language to malign the character of this courageous young woman who has chosen to be the voice for many of her peers," the letter says. "This kind of direct attack on a private citizen is unacceptable. Mr. Limbaugh is as free as any American to speak his mind about the political and social issues of our time, but using his radio show as a means for blatantly insulting a hard-working American with obscene and indecent language because he disagrees with her personal choices is an abuse of the public airwaves."

UPDATE: 4:15 p.m. -- Sandra Fluke responded to Limbaugh's comments in a statement on Thursday.

"I thank the thousands of women and men, including members of Congress, Georgetown University students and faculty, and total strangers of all political stripes across the country who have offered kind words and support following recent egregious personal attacks," she said. "We are fortunate to live in a democracy where everyone is entitled to their own opinions regarding legitimate policy differences. Unfortunately, numerous commentators have gone far beyond the acceptable bounds of civil discourse. No woman deserves to be disrespected in this manner. This language is an attack on all women, and has been used throughout history to silence our voices. The millions of American women who have and will continue to speak out in support of women's health care and access to contraception prove that we will not be silenced."

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20120301-01	09:51	Pam	Re: The 'Poor' One Percent (Boo-Hoo-Hoo!) (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #85)
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The ancient regime in France were pretty bummed too.

20120301-02	10:44	Beth	Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, FotM Newsletter #85)
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Sorry Phil, I don't find that funny. I had two Chrysler Sebring convertibles, which I loved and two electric blue PT Cruisers, which were great cars. On top of that I am a big fan of Obama.

[See, Phil, I told you that you were going to be in trouble! :-)-SteveB]

20120301-03	11:52	Pam	Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84) & Syrian Crisis
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There's an interesting article in the Jan. 5th *London Review of Books* on two biographies, one of Obama's father, one of his mother. It is quite revealing. His father was a jackass who drank heavily and whose talents failed to bring him the success he desperately desired. His mother was apparently more "normal," if you call her rather free-wheeling life normal. Perhaps it wasn't so remarkable in the 60s as we would view it today. The child is father of the man, so I always think it's interesting to know about a person's childhood in order to really understand

something about him. As a kid in Indonesia, Barack was taunted for being black and skinny, but he learned to ignore the teasing, which perhaps accounts for his incredible cool today. If as a ten-year old he had dissolved in tears or lashed out, he would only have brought on more harassment. Self control meant social survival.

I had not known that Michelle was assigned to be his mentor when he joined her law firm in Chicago. This is a power couple, to be sure, but I can't help feeling for them, trapped as they are in the nation's fishbowl. He has fulfilled the ambitions of his father and hopefully found a consistency with Michelle he didn't have with his mother. What a lot of baggage this man has, none of it his fault.

The article concludes by noting that Obama does better with foreign policy than domestic issues, the danger being our increasing interventionist tendencies, which leads me to my question of the day. Art, you have praised our military for their performance in Libya. Do you see the Syrian crisis as similar? Should we be jumping into that snake pit as well? One the one hand, it is dreadful to imagine what the people in Homs are going through, but if Syria is on the brink of all-out civil war, is that something we want to take on? Maybe these dictators need to fall and be crushed by their own people. Perhaps a decisive civil war would be better than a protracted insurgency. Whatever happens, I just hope it is explained to the American public without deceit or subterfuge. Art?

20120301-06 13:25 Art Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to Pam, above) & Syrian Crisis

Tough one but again I agree with the position we are taking. For the record I think I praised the Administration for its position in Libya but OK, the military handled it pretty well also. Syria needs to solve it one problems and we simply cannot be the world's policemen. Yes, I know it is tough to see all that suffering but if we go in and try to solve it for them, we will not receive any gratitude in the end, just dislike for interfering.

One of the hardest jobs I ever had was serving as the G-5 (Civil Affairs Officer) for the USA Army VII Corps in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. We occupied southern Iraq in the aftermath of the ground campaign and the Shiites revolted while we were there. They kept sending delegations south to request our assistance and I kept being told by CENTCOM not to talk to them. Easy to say when you are back in Riyadh or Tampa, not so easy when you are sitting just south of the Euphrates. So I sort of ignored CENTCOM (if anyone forwards this e-mail I will hunt you down) and did meet with many of them but had to tell them repeatedly we were not coming north to help. Tough, but I felt they deserved someone meeting them face to face and telling them the truth. Eventually Saddam crushed the rebellion.

Same with Syria today. I think again Clinton and the Administration has been very up front and honest about what we will and will not do. And I think it is the right answer. wed just can't solve everything Pam.

Tell Tanner to adopt another doggie and love it as much as Lily. Lily would like that.

20120301-04 12:18 MarthaH Re: Books! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84)

Along with Zinn: This is an "oldie" but have you read *Freethinkers* by Susan Jacoby? I was trying to put in pieces that did not fit after 2000 and came upon it.

Our school books didn't do justice to a lot of subjects we need to understand, but it did make flag wavers--and I am one of them WHEN it is appropriate.

There are many good reasons folks come to the US, legally and illegally. One only has to travel to see that most of the world lives in another century--and I don't mean the 20th. Until our selfishness gets us past a lot of things, we have no place UP to go. Power, *Faith and Fantasy* by Oren is another excellent, easier read on the reasons for our stupidity's beginning in the ME. Maybe you, :-), should compile a list of books. I would always throw in Zakaria!. I can't join a book club--they won't read what I want to read...mgch

And we wonder why folks can't write or read or THINK...

20120301-11 15:29 SteveB Re: Books! (reply to MarthaH, above)

I like the idea of a list of books. Kind of an FotM bibliography. Right now I'm working on the links for the website, which also compiles the sources of a lot of info. There could be a book list too...

We'll also make Pam aware of these. I think you two are the big readers of books in the group. I wish I could be one too, but I just don't have the time and they make me tired. Too much to write.

I guess my beloved book and magazine reading days are pretty much behind me. I once had a library of around 3000-4000 books that I had almost entirely read. I saved them for years. Finally, we just didn't have the space, plus I had an opportunity (we created) to donate them to the St. Lucia National Library. Now, when I'm on vacation there, I can stop-by and say hello to some of them, and know they are doing so much good there. We also used to box-up and send down text books that American schools were discarding. Anyway, that's the story of me and books.

I'm really appreciating your contributions, Martha.

20120301-05 12:50 SteveB "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences"

I told ya they go to heaven...

from the FotM Archive:

"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" by Jennifer Viegas, Curiosity.com/Discovery Channel

Oct. 8, 2010, (<http://news.discovery.com/animals/animals-spiritual-brain.html>)

Animals (not just people) likely have spiritual experiences, according to a prominent neurologist who has analyzed the processes of spiritual sensation for over three decades.

Research suggests that spiritual experiences originate deep within primitive areas of the human brain -- areas shared by other animals with brain structures like our own.

The trick, of course, lies in proving animals' experiences.

"Since only humans are capable of language that can communicate the richness of spiritual experience, it is unlikely we will ever know with certainty what an animal subjectively experiences," Kevin Nelson, a professor of neurology at the University of Kentucky, told Discovery News.

"Despite this limitation, it is still reasonable to conclude that since the most primitive areas of our brain happen to be the spiritual, then we can expect that animals are also capable of spiritual experiences," added Nelson, author of the book *The Spiritual Doorway in the Brain*, which will be published in January 2011.

The finding is an extension of his research on humans, which has been published in many peer-reviewed journals. A Neurology journal study, for example, determined that out-of-body experiences in humans are likely caused by the brain's arousal system, which regulates different states of consciousness.

"In humans, we know that if we disrupt the (brain) region where vision, sense of motion, orientation in the Earth's gravitational field, and knowing the position of our body all come together, then out-of-body experiences can be caused literally by the flip of a switch," he said. "There is absolutely no reason to believe it is any different for a dog, cat, or primate's brain."

Other mammals also probably have near-death experiences comparable to those reported by certain humans, he believes. Such people often say they saw a light and felt as though they were moving down a tunnel.

The tunnel phenomenon "is caused by the eye's susceptibility to the low blood flow that occurs with fainting or cardiac arrest," he said. "As blood flow diminishes, vision fails peripherally first. There is no reason to believe that other animals are any different from us."

Nelson added, "What they make of the tunnel is another matter."

The light aspect of near-death experiences can be explained by how the visual system defines REM (rapid eye movement) consciousness, he believes.

"In fact," he said, "the link between REM and the physiological crises causing near-death experience are most strongly linked in animals, like cats and rats, which we can study in the laboratory."

Mystical experiences -- moments that inspire a sense of mystery and wonderment -- arise within the limbic system, he said. When specific parts of this system are removed from animal brains, mind-altering drugs like LSD have no effect.

Since other animals, such as non-human primates, horses, cats and dogs, also possess similar brain structures, it is possible that they too experience mystical moments, and may even have a sense of spiritual oneness, according to Nelson.

Marc Bekoff, a professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, also believes animals have spiritual experiences, which he defines as experiences that are nonmaterial, intangible, introspective and comparable to what humans have.

Both he and primatologist Jane Goodall have observed chimpanzees dancing with total abandon at waterfalls that emerge after heavy rains. Some of the chimps even appear to dance themselves into a trance-like state, as some humans do during religious and cultural rituals.

Goodall wondered, "Is it not possible that these (chimpanzee) performances are stimulated by feelings akin to wonder and awe? After a waterfall display the performer may sit on a rock, his eyes following the falling water. What is it, this water?"

"Perhaps numerous animals engage in these rituals, but we haven't been lucky enough to see them," Bekoff wrote in a Psychology Today report.

"For now, let's keep the door open to the idea that animals can be spiritual beings and let's consider the evidence for such a claim," he added.

"Meager as it is, available evidence says, 'Yes, animals can have spiritual experiences,' and we need to conduct further research and engage in interdisciplinary discussions before we say that animals cannot and do not experience spirituality."

20120301-16	19:38	Art	Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Wow!! Beckie and I have had the sad duty to help a number of both dogs and cats cross the Rainbow Bridge over the years. We always make sure they are held in our arms and I swear they seem to know what we are doing and give it their blessing. Can't prove it and won't get mushy but there's something. Plus they are all very different with distinct personalities. Thanks.

20120301-17	20:24	SteveB	Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to Art, above) & "Even Dick Cheney's Dog Is Prone to Unprovoked Attacks"
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And innocent and pure and good, like most children. I just love the sweethearts! Even George Bush had a dog. But I bet Cheney never has.

Oops! I was wrong:

"Even Dick Cheney's Dog Is Prone to Unprovoked Attacks" by Nathan Pippenger, *The New Republic* [Interesting...is the emphasis on Cheney or dog? –SteveB]

Aug. 26, 2011, (<http://www.tnr.com/blog/the-study/94270/even-dick-cheney-s-dog-prone-unprovoked-attacks>)

Among the head-bursting revelations in Dick Cheney's new book is the news that the former Vice President's Labrador Retriever, Dave, once got into big trouble for an unprovoked attack. The incident in question took place at Camp David, where the canine companions of the president and vice president were accompanying their masters on retreat. Apparently, Cheney's dog caught sight of the president's treasured terrier Barney and immediately launched into a "hot pursuit." The chase got so out of hand that President Bush was moved to demonstrate a rare demand for accountability, appearing during the fracas to ask, "What's going on here?" The mad dog could only be calmed with a pastry from the breakfast buffet. Soon after, Cheney was told that his dog was no longer welcome at Camp David. But what could have driven the beast to such aggression in the first place? [Maybe living with Dick Cheney? –SteveB]

20120301-07	13:26	Pam	A Bad Day
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Today has been one of those days. Tanner's dog Lily died last night of very old age, and Tanner is so sad. Plus, and worse, Atty jumped off a slide at school and broke his leg. I've spent the day getting people from here to there and hanging out in various doctors' offices. I about fainted at the Urgent Care and had to lie down with a cold compress. I can't stand it when a child of mine--or any child--is in pain. I kept thinking about all those children in Syria, Iraq, and everywhere the bombs are falling. NOTHING is worth putting a child in pain like that. As you can tell, I am a bit rattled, but Atty is home now with his leg up on a pillow. I got him some chocolate ice cream, his favorite, so hopefully that will help.

I hope Lily had a spiritual experience. I know Tanner is broken-hearted.

A tough day, but it helps having friends like you guys.

20120301-18	21:30	SteveB	Re: A Bad Day (reply to Pam, above)
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Pam, I just got your email. I'm so sorry to hear about Lily and Tanner and, especially, Atty. What bad luck! I can imagine how much pain he must have been in, and you. It will heal and things will be OK, of course you know, but that never seems to help much at the time. I wonder why? Maybe the same reason that seeking heaven doesn't improve our personalities?

Those playgrounds are so dangerous, even though less so now. Remember what we used to play on! That awful/wonderful rocking merry-go-round that could break anything you put in the wrong place, and the "Log"! And what are you going to do? Kids must play and playgrounds are necessary and beloved.

I think most of my worst experiences in life involved the pain of one of my children. I hate it.

I once had to see a child I didn't know hit by a speeding car. I couldn't figure how the mother was going to live through that day.

To imagine the suffering in Syria...is perhaps beyond my capacity to imagine.

Anyway, I hope tomorrow (today) will be a better day. Please let us know how Atty's doing. (My Mom used to use that chocolate ice cream trick too! :-)

You have been so full of news lately. And you thought I had a busy life!

20120301-09 14:29 Dennis "Grantham Wonders If Marx Was Right After All"

Look who's discussing what marx got right...

"Grantham Wonders If Marx Was Right After All" by Al Lewis, MarketWatch/ *Wall Street Journal*

Feb. 29, 2012, (http://www.marketwatch.com/story/grantham-wonders-if-marx-was-right-after-all-2012-02-29?link=MW_popular)

(Commentary: Capitalism will gladly sell the rope used to hang itself.)

(DENVER) With all the news focused on Warren Buffett's annual shareholder letter, it was easy to miss Jeremy Grantham's more urgent missive.

Like Buffett, Grantham is a legendary value investor. He's co-founder of the Boston-based investment firm GMO LLC, which manages \$97 billion. That's about half the market value of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., but still big enough to produce a noteworthy letter. Read Grantham's letter to GMO investors: http://www.gmo.com/websitecontent/JGLetter_LongestLetterEver_4Q11.pdf.

Buffett, in his widely anticipated letter, is content to repeat platitudes, such as "America's best days lie ahead." The Oracle of Omaha proclaimed "the banking industry was back on its feet" and even managed to find the bright side of foreclosures: "Large numbers of people who have 'lost' their house through foreclosure have actually realized a profit because they carried out refinancings earlier that gave them cash in excess of their cost."

Grantham, however, takes a longer view, and isn't so "aw shucks" about the future of our broken economic system.

"Capitalism," he writes, "threatens our existence."

Already, capitalism is proving that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were at least partially correct. They "looked forward to globalization and the supranational company because they argued it would make capitalism even more powerful, overreaching, and eventually reckless," Grantham writes.

Globalization "would ... offer the capitalists more rope to hang themselves with ... rope ... bought from briskly competing capitalists, eager till the end for a good deal."

Grantham, who is British, studied economics at the University of Sheffield and has an MBA from Harvard Business School. He started his investment career as an economist with Royal Dutch Shell before starting GMO in 1977.

He says capitalism does almost everything better than any other economic system. It's just that its two or three main flaws are potentially fatal and have gone largely unaddressed. A sustainable economic system, for instance, can't be based on ever-increasing debt, corporations can't be allowed to run governments and loot treasuries, and "growth at any cost" is a recipe for planetary suicide.

Here are some of Grantham's finer points:

- Capitalism too heavily discounts the future value of cash flows as it seeks to raise debts: "Your grandchildren have no value."

- Companies foolishly reward executives for taking on debt: "Total remuneration ... for senior officers ... rose as a percentage of the average worker's pay from 40 times in Eisenhower's era to over 600 times today with no indication of any general improvement in talent."
- It's about profit, not people: "Capitalism in general has no sense of ethics or conscience. Whatever the Supreme Court may think, it is not a person."
- The more people borrow, the more they just gamble: "Leverage ... increases your returns over and over until, suddenly, it ruins you. ... There are no Investors Anonymous meetings to attend."
- This time, it's not so different: "Ignore the ... inevitable cheerleaders who will assure you that this time it's a new high plateau ... even if that view comes from the Federal Reserve itself. No. Make that, especially if it comes from there."
- Washington is becoming a corporate subsidiary: "What capitalism has always had is money with which to try to buy influence. ... The issues they influence are precisely ... the ones that are most important to society's ... very existence."
- Big companies can't help it: "Ethical CEOs can drag a company along for a while, but this is an undependable and temporary fix."
- Economic theory ignores natural laws. It suffers an "absolute inability to process the finiteness of resources. ... Capitalism wants to eat into ... limited resources at an accelerating rate with the subtext that everyone on the planet has the right to live like the wasteful polluting developed countries do today."
- It's not just inexpensive oil we are running out of: The "loss of our collective ability to feed ourselves, through erosion and fertilizer depletion — has received little or no attention."
- Americans are too optimistic: "They adopt a hear-no-evil approach to life and listen exclusively to good news. ... There are always a few experts lacking in long-horizon vision, simple common sense, or whose cooperation has been rented, like "expert" witnesses at a murder trial, who can be dragged out to reliably say that everything will always work out fine."
- Governments must step in. "To interfere with Marx's apocalyptic vision, we need some enlightened governmental moderation ... before capitalism gets so cocky that we have some serious social reaction."
- Where Marx and Engels got it wrong was in thinking workers would unite. "It's going to be hard to have a workers' revolution with no workers. Organizing robotic machine tools will not be easy."

(German political philosopher and economist Karl Marx was born in Trier in 1818 and died in London 1883.)

20120301-10	14:52	MarthaH	Fw: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline
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While he was a hero of my youth, we have parted ways. So to speak, I went LEFT and he went RIGHT. Here is the latest reply to my "observations" to his interns:

from Sen. Richard Lugar:

Thank you for contacting me to share your concerns regarding the proposed TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline.

As you may be aware, the Obama Administration recently announced a delay of this project until 2013, pending review of the pipeline's proposed route through the Sand Hills region of Nebraska.

I appreciate this opportunity to share the reasons for my support of the Keystone XL pipeline. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would carry oil from Canada's Alberta province and the Bakken oil formation in North Dakota and Montana to refineries on the U.S. Gulf coast. This major pipeline is shovel-ready in all states except Nebraska, and it is privately funded, meaning there would be no federal government subsidy.

In the 1,217 days that the Obama Administration has been reviewing the Keystone XL application for a permit, oil prices have sky-rocketed and our national interests have been challenged by major oil producing countries such as Iran, Venezuela and Russia. Our troops fight wars in the oil-rich Middle East at the great cost of lives and taxpayer expense, and in recent weeks, the Iranian government has made threats against the free flow of oil and the U.S. Navy.

Alleviating our dangerous addiction to oil from unreliable countries overseas requires production of more domestic oil and alternative fuels and innovation for fuel savings. At the same time, the sources of oil imports are important for ensuring reliable supplies and stable prices. Canada is Indiana's largest trading partner and a reliable oil source. The Keystone XL pipeline will help replace oil imports from hostile and unstable regimes.

The Keystone XL offers employment opportunities for tens of thousands of American workers, particularly those in the hard-hit construction and manufacturing sectors. These new jobs are in addition to perhaps hundreds of thousands of workers along the supply chain who will have their jobs bolstered in manufacturing parts for the pipeline and processing the oil it will carry.

Recently, I visited with Hoosier workers who would get a boost from the Keystone XL pipeline. To name just a few examples of the pipeline's impact on Hoosiers, in Greenwood employees of Endress+Hauser build gauges that will be used along the route. In South Bend, Koontz-Wagner builds control boxes to manage the pumps that would move the oil. In Lafayette, employees at Caterpillar build engines for the large trucks that are used to produce the oil in Alberta. In my judgment, the Keystone XL pipeline clearly will benefit Hoosier jobs and America's national security.

The Obama Administration examined the pipeline for 1,217 days before saying it did not have enough time to review the application – far longer than review periods for similar projects.

Should you wish to read the final environmental impact statement (EIS) released by the State Department after completing more than two and a half years of review, this report and a fact sheet about the project are available online at: <http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/clientsite/keystonexl.nsf?Open>. The EIS concluded that this project "would have a degree of safety greater than any typically constructed domestic oil pipeline system under current regulations and a degree of safety along the entire length of the pipeline system that would be similar to that required in high consequence areas as defined in the regulations."

I regret that we do not agree on this issue, but I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important topic. Thank you, again, for taking the time to contact me.

20120301-14	17:30	Pam	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Not ONE word about the environment or global warming. Jobs and money, money and jobs. That's all that matters. But god forbid the government should hire people--as teachers, police officers, social workers, etc. etc. Free Market uber allies. F-----g unbelievable!

20120301-15	18:35	Art	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
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And none of what he did say substantiated. You wonder, do they really believe this stuff?

"WikiLeaks vs. Stratfor: Pursue the Truth, Not Its Messenger" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Mar. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/wikileaks-vs-stratfor-pursue-truth-not-its-messenger-1330619364>)

WikiLeaks, the whistle-blower website, has again published a massive trove of documents, this time from a private intelligence firm known as Stratfor. The source of the leak was the hacker group "Anonymous," which took credit for obtaining more than 5 million emails from Stratfor's servers. Anonymous obtained the material on Dec. 24, 2011, and provided it to WikiLeaks, which in turn partnered with 25 media organizations globally to analyze the emails and publish them.

Among the emails was a short one-liner that suggested the U.S. government has produced, through a secret grand jury, a sealed indictment against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. In addition to painting a picture of Stratfor as a runaway, rogue private intelligence firm with close ties to government-intelligence agencies serving both corporate and U.S. military clients, the emails support the growing awareness that the Obama administration, far from diverging from the secrecy of the Bush/Cheney era, is obsessed with secrecy, and is aggressively opposed to transparency.

I traveled to London last Independence Day weekend to interview Assange. When I asked him about the grand-jury investigation, he responded: "There is no judge, there is no defense counsel, and there are four prosecutors. So, that is why people that are familiar with grand-jury inquiries in the United States say that a grand jury would not only indict a ham sandwich, it would indict the ham and the sandwich."

As I left London, The Guardian newspaper exposed more of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. phone-hacking scandal, which prompted the closing of his tabloid newspaper, the largest circulation Sunday newspaper in the U.K., News of the World. The coincidence is relevant, as News of the World reported anything but what its title claimed, focusing instead on salacious details of the private lives of celebrities, sensational crimes, and photos of scantily clad women. For this and his other endeavors, Murdoch amassed a reported personal fortune of \$7.6 billion.

Meanwhile, Assange—who, like Murdoch, was born in Australia (Murdoch abandoned his nationality for U.S. citizenship in order to purchase more U.S. broadcast licenses)—had engaged in one of the largest and most courageous acts of publishing in history by founding wikileaks.org, which allows people to safely and securely deliver documents using the Internet in ways that make it almost impossible to trace. He and his colleagues at WikiLeaks had published millions of leaked documents, most notably about the U.S. wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and thousands of U.S. diplomatic cables, true "news of the world." The Sydney Peace Foundation awarded Assange a gold medal for "exceptional courage and initiative in pursuit of human rights." In contrast, the U.S. government targeted him, possibly under the Espionage Act. Murdoch is hailed as a pioneering newsman, while pundits on Murdoch-owned cable-television outlets openly call for Assange's murder.

The Stratfor emails will be released over time, along with context provided by WikiLeaks' media partners. Already revealed by the documents are the close, and potentially illegal, connections between Stratfor employees and government-intelligence and law-enforcement officials. Rolling Stone magazine reports that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was monitoring Occupy Wall Street protests nationally, and the Texas Department of Public Safety has an undercover agent at Occupy Austin who was disclosing information to contacts at Stratfor. Stratfor also is hired by multinational corporations to glean "intelligence" about critics. Among companies using Stratfor were Dow Chemical, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Coca-Cola.

Fred Burton, Stratfor's vice president of intelligence, and a former head of counterintelligence at the U.S. State Department's diplomatic corps, wrote in an email, "Not for Pub—We have a sealed indictment on Assange. Pls protect." Burton and others at Stratfor showed intense interest in WikiLeaks starting in 2010, showing intense dislike for Assange personally. Burton wrote: "Assange is going to make a nice bride in prison. Screw the terrorist. He'll be eating cat food forever." Another Stratfor employee wanted Assange waterboarded.

Michael Ratner, legal adviser to Assange and WikiLeaks, told me, "The Obama administration has gone after six people under the Espionage Act. That's more cases than happened since the Espionage Act was actually begun in 1917. ... What this is about is the United States wanting to suppress the truth."

1917 is also the year when U.S. Sen. Hiram Johnson famously said, "The first casualty when war comes is truth." The White House is holding a gala dinner this week, honoring Iraq War veterans. Bradley Manning is an Iraq War vet who won't be there. He is being court-martialed, facing life in prison or possibly death, for allegedly releasing thousands of military and diplomatic documents to WikiLeaks revealing the casualties of war. President Barack Obama would better serve the country by also honoring Assange and Manning.

We should pursue the truth, not its messengers.

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20120301-13	17:21	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Hands-Off Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid!
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from CREDO Action:

The corporatist wing of the Democratic Party once again has its sights set on cutting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits under the guise of deficit reduction. And our friends on Capitol Hill tell us House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer is leading the charge.

Last November CREDO activists helped stop Senate Democrats from agreeing to a terrible Super Committee deal, which would have resulted in deep cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits in exchange for promised but unspecified tax increases that may have never materialized.

But now House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, a prominent member of Democratic Leadership in Congress, is once again pushing a similar legislative proposal that would sell out our social safety net. He is working on a potential backroom deal to put the cuts we defeated last year back on the table.

According to recent reports, Rep. Hoyer is "looking to shake legislative politics" by forcing a vote on what the *Washington Post* called "a so-called grand bargain to raise taxes and restrain entitlement spending."

Hoyer declined to provide any specifics to this proposal but he gave his remarks at an event hosted by an organization called Third Way, which is a Washington-based, so-called "moderate" Democratic think tank that shills for corporate interests and has previously advanced debunked arguments promoting cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

Hoyer's move — which appears to be in coordination with Third Way — poses a danger to our social safety net. We cannot remain quiet while such a prominent member of Democratic Leadership appears to be working on a proposal which likely includes brutal cuts to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits.

Medicare and Social Security are wildly popular programs, and the clear majority of Americans want to protect these benefits. If we push back hard and make sure that conservative Democrats like Hoyer don't cut a back room deal on benefit cuts with Republicans, we can hold the line and protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

House Democrats will be particularly sensitive to this kind of pressure in an election year — if we can expose this potential sell out, we can quash the momentum Hoyer and conservative Democrats need to move forward with a "grand bargain" at the expense of benefit programs pivotal to millions of Americans.

To be clear, we are not against sensible reforms to these programs. But we shouldn't be cutting benefits for our seniors and other vulnerable Americans in order to spend more on our bloated military or keep taxes low for the ultra-wealthy.

If Democratic Leaders such as Hoyer are serious about addressing our nation's debt and deficit, they should work to address the biggest drivers of our debt — the Bush tax cuts, foreign wars and our economic downturn.

Sign our petition today and let House Majority Whip Steny Hoyer know that we are watching and we will not stand for any back room deal that puts cuts to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits on the table. Click below to sign the petition:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5537665&id=35909-3891339-CQmhh0x&t=10>

Thank you for speaking out. – Murshed Zaheed, Deputy Political Director

20120301-08	13:27	Art	Continuing Saga: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment
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Probably the last of these but this shows the difficulty of getting people to think differently. [I hope not. –SteveB]

Dear Bob/RoyS,

Well as I said previously I certainly hope you are right. Trouble is facts and science say otherwise. I'll stop after this e-mail but first a couple of facts:

- Recently a corpse discovered in the Alps was labeled the Ice Man. The body had been there covered and preserved by ice and snow for SIX THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED (6300) years. It was exposed after all that time when the ice melted away.
- The fabled Northwest Passage searched for in previous centuries by Henry Hudson, Martin Frobisher, and John Franklin among others opened in 2009, and ships sailed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
- The glaciers in Glacier National Park have disappeared.

I could go on and these are just a few examples of global warming but these are undisputed facts, period. By themselves each could be labeled an anomaly but taken together, they began to form a worrisome picture. I am not sure who these environmentalists are who preach global warming and anti nuclear power but I think they are mainly a figment of the imaginations of a lot of extreme right wing politicians like Limbaugh. I personally think we need to look seriously at all alternate sources of energy to fossil fuels recognizing that nuclear power has it's risks. When it goes bad, it goes very bad. Chernobyl for example and Japan recently.

As for the Keystone Project, as far as I know, it has nothing to do with natural gas. It is production from tar sands oil and very dirty. Of course I do realize that House Speaker Boehner recently invested quite a bit in at least 7 companies in Canada producing that oil, so his personal enthusiasm for the project is understandable.

from Wikipedia:

Making liquid fuels from oil sands requires energy for steam injection and refining. This process generates two to four times the amount of greenhouse gases per barrel of final product as the "production" of conventional oil. If combustion of the final products is included, the so-called "Well to Wheels" approach, oil sands extraction, upgrade and use emits 10 to 45% more greenhouse gases than conventional crude.

The below extracted from the National Park Service when I was confirming the status of any remaining glaciers in Glacier National Park:

Despite scientific evidence about the realities of climate change, we are still faced with persistent and confusing myths in the media. To allow the National Park Service to manage for climate change, we have dissected and examined these myths and found the realities of potential climate forecasts sobering. Not only

will climate change impact the natural, cultural and historic resources we protect, but also how we serve the National Park Service mission and maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

The climate change story is more than dire predictions of the future. There are compelling reasons for federal agencies, as well as individuals, to act quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The future is not written yet. The actions we take today will determine the future Earth we leave our children and grandchildren. Will they be proud that we embraced the challenges of climate change? Or will they be dismayed at our excuses to avoid controversy and challenge? We find hope in the fact that we still have time to create a better, more livable planet.

As the National Park Service moves forward in a world where climate change is a reality, we find common ground where all Americans can stand. First, we are charged with preserving some of the most amazing resources in this country, resources that American livelihoods are based on, and these special places provide a connection with nature and offer personal inspiration. Second, the actions we can take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions ultimately create a better world through energy efficiency, healthy ecosystems, energy independence and improved human health. These are all desirable outcomes that benefit everyone, regardless of climate change.

[20120301-19](#) 23:59 SteveB

Photo: Two Dogs from Friends of the Middle Out for a Drive in Glacier National Park, Montana

(In a PT Cruiser, no less, Beth!)

<http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-photo/troycar4444/1/1246969051/wa-driving-dog-personx.jpg/tpod.html>

Maybe THIS is doggy Heaven—the “Last Best Place”



—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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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>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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