



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #88 — MAR. 6, 2012

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

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Free Trade vs. Democracy

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 6, 2012)



America is desperately in need of jobs and has been for a long time. Yet the discussion of how things got that way and what we can do about it, other than glittering generalities, seems to be completely missing from American politics. I've been saying it for years and will keep saying it: "FREE" TRADE IS NOT FREE. THE ENTIRE GAME IS TILTED AGAINST THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. LAWS MUST BE CHANGED TO "ENCOURAGE" COMPANIES TO INVEST IN AMERICA. FOREIGN PROFITS MUST BE TAXED WITH A PENALTY TAX. DOMESTIC PROFITS REINVESTED OR PAID AS DOMESTIC SALARIES SHOULD NOT BE TAXED AT ALL. OTHER THAN PENALTY TAXES, INCOME TAXES ON AMERICAN BUSINESSES SHOULD NOT EXIST.

But my emphasis has always been economic. Now we understand that the human cost of "free" trade, both here and abroad, is enormous.

"Free Trade or Democracy, Can't Have Both" by Dave Johnson, NationofChange

Mar. 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/free-trade-or-democracy-can-t-have-both-1330873243>)

Recent stories about the conditions of Apple's contractors in China have opened many people's eyes about where our jobs, factories, industries and economy have been going, and why. The stories exposed that workers live 6-to-12-to-a-room in dormitories, get rousted at midnight to work surprise 12-hour shifts, get paid very little, use toxic chemicals, suffer extreme pollution of the environment, etc. Is this "trade?" Or is it something else?

Is This "Trade?"

"Trade" means to exchange, to buy and sell, you buy from me and I buy from you. I have something you want and you have something I want, and we exchange. We both end up better off than where we started.

Is it "trade" to close a factory here and move it to a country where people don't have a say? It is "trade" to just move all of the machines from a factory here to a factory there, send the same parts and raw materials over there, and then bring bring back whatever it was the factory used to make and sell it in the same places here? Is that really "trade?" Or would another word be more appropriate?

When People Have A Say

When people have a say we insist on good wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and a clean environment. We even go so far as to say we want good public schools, parks, and opportunities for our smaller businesses. When We, the People have a say we get so uppity and ask for the most outrageous things!

Efficiency vs. Humanity

Yes, countries where people do not have a say are more "efficient" and "business friendly." Countries where people do not have a say can make things at a much lower cost than workers where people have rights. But when we let exploitation of human beings be a competitive advantage it undermines our own democracy. It means that democracy is a competitive disadvantage in world markets.

We Can't "Compete" With This, We Have To Fight It

Let's get right to the core of this. Suppose the South actually did rise again, and they reimposed all-out slavery. Would it be "trade" to close factories here and move them south, so the companies would have lower costs?

When we allow companies to just import stuff that is made by exploited workers in countries where people do not have a say, we are granting not-having-a-say an advantage over having a say. We make democracy a competitive disadvantage.

This Is About Preserving Democracy, Not About "Trade"

How often do you come across arguments that "globalization" and "free trade" mean that America's workers have to accept that the days of good-paying jobs and US-based manufacturing are over? We hear that countries like China are more "competitive." We hear that "trade" means that because it's cheaper to make things over there we all benefit from lower-cost goods that we import.

How often do you hear that we need to cut wages and benefits, work longer hours, get rid of overtime and sick pay? They say we should shed unions, get rid of environmental and safety regulations, gut government services, and especially, especially, especially we should cut taxes.

What they are saying is that we need to shed our democracy, to be more competitive.

P.S. Tell Congress and the White House to Stop China's Illegal and Unfair Trade Practices:

http://capwiz.com/americanmanufacturing/issues/alert/?alertid=60932291&MC_plugin=2801.

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20120305-01	07:25	Martha	"A 7th Advertiser Pulls Out of Limbaugh's Show"
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Read the last line. The plot thickens...

Whata phenomena: Limbaugh did not reply to msnbc.com's request for a comment.

"A 7th Advertiser Pulls Out of Limbaugh's Show" by Tali Arbel, AP

Mar. 4, 2012, (<http://www.newsday.com/business/a-7th-advertiser-pulls-out-of-limbaugh-s-show-1.3577423>)

(NEW YORK) A flower company is the seventh advertiser to pull its ads from conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh's radio program in reaction to his derogatory comments about a law student who testified about birth control policy.

ProFlowers said Sunday on its Facebook page that it has suspended advertising on Limbaugh's program because his comments about Georgetown University student Sandra Fluke "went beyond political discourse to a personal attack and do not reflect our values as a company."

The six other advertisers that say they have pulled ads from his show are mortgage lender Quicken Loans, mattress retailers Sleep Train and Sleep Number, software maker Citrix Systems Inc., online data backup service provider Carbonite and online legal document services company LegalZoom.

ProFlowers had said on Twitter that posts it received about Limbaugh's remarks affected its advertising strategy. ProFlowers is an online flower delivery service.

Limbaugh called the 30-year-old Fluke a "slut" and "prostitute" last week after she testified to congressional Democrats in support of national health care policies that would compel employers and other organizations, including her university, to offer group health insurance that covers birth control for women.

He apologized to Fluke on Saturday after being criticized by Republican and Democratic politicians and after several advertisers left the show.

Clear Channel's Premiere Radio Networks Inc. hosts Limbaugh's program, one of the country's most popular talk radio shows. The company is supporting Limbaugh, whose on-air contract with Premiere runs through 2016.

"The contraception debate is one that sparks strong emotion and opinions on both sides of the issue," Premiere Networks said in a statement emailed Sunday by spokeswoman Rachel Nelson. "We respect the right of Mr. Limbaugh, as well as the rights of those who disagree with him, to express those opinions."

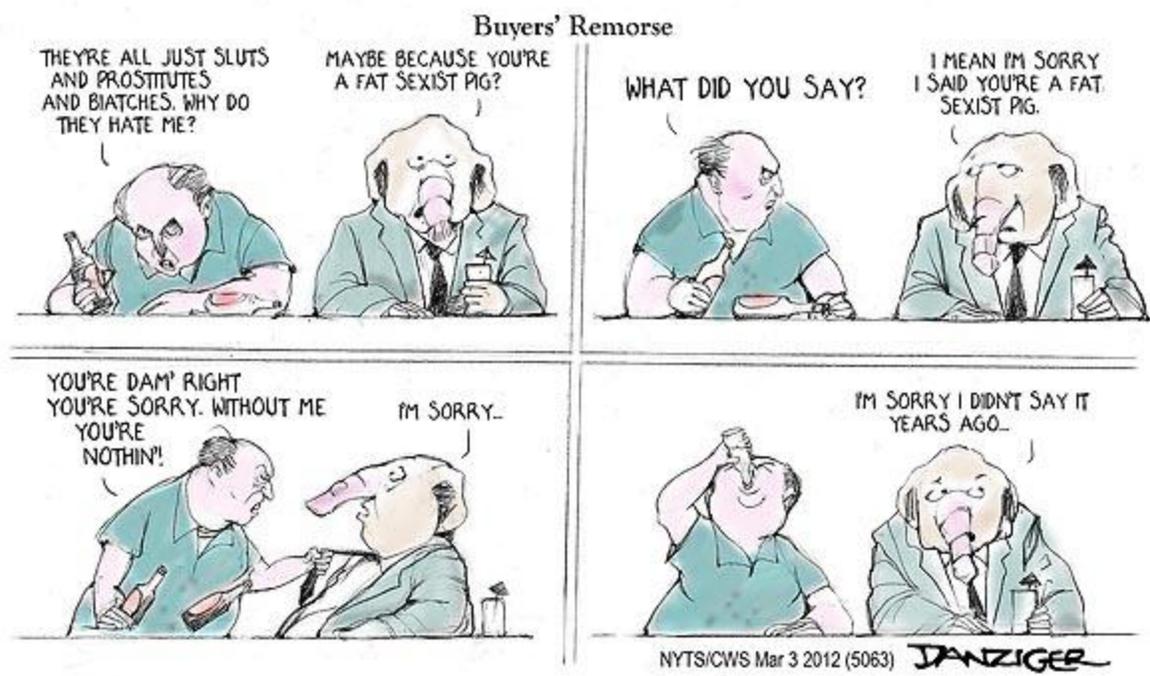
Clear Channel Media and Entertainment operates more than 850 radio stations in the U.S., and Premiere says it's the largest radio content provider in the country, syndicating programs to more than 5,000 affiliate stations.

When asked which companies or organizations were the largest advertisers on Limbaugh's show, Nelson said that that information was "proprietary." Nelson didn't immediately respond Sunday to questions about how much revenue the company will lose with the advertiser defections or how much revenue Limbaugh's show brings in.

Clear Channel's parent company was taken private in 2008 by private equity firms Thomas H. Lee Partners and Bain Capital.

20120305-02	09:53	Pam	Re: How's This for Nostalgia?(reply to Beth, FotM Newsletter #87)
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You're so right, Beth. I wouldn't go back in time, certainly not to the days before polio vaccine and all the other medical advances of the past 40 years. I had measles before there was a vaccine, and I was sick for a year from complications. Children did die (and still do) because they weren't buckled safely in the car. I loved my physical freedom when I was a kid, but that was before Polly Klaas and Elizabeth Smart. There was no PBS, no Masterpiece Theater, no brie in the supermarket, no decent wine; there was a lot we didn't have in the "good old days." The one thing I do miss is kids being untethered from TV, computer, and cell phone. Just running around in the sunshine--or the rain or snow--was soul-enhancing. Imagination was required to avoid boredom. Overall, I think life is better today. Our kids will be just as nostalgic for the 20'teens as we are for the 50s, 60s, and 70s.



The petition lists remaining advertisers of Rush. [List not found. -SteveB]

Medications are medications and treat medical problems. Contraception medications allow for treatment of certain medical conditions for women, they are not a religious issue but a medical issue.

Imus got fired within two days for comments and yet Rush is still around – double standard?

from Daily Kos:

Nine advertisers have pulled their support for Rush Limbaugh's radio program over his outrageous personal attacks on Sandra Fluke. As the outrage continues to grow, the number keeps climbing.

Nearly 100,000 members of the Daily Kos community have signed our petition telling Rush Limbaugh's remaining advertisers to pull their support. Please, add your name now before we deliver the signatures tomorrow:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=81.

Keep fighting, Joan McCarter, Daily Kos

You are exactly right about the medical issue part, SteveG. The oral contraceptive for women is a very useful medicine. And these are the same insurance companies, that I believe (though it seems impossible) have no problem covering Viagra for men? Is that correct? Where is Viagra mentioned in the Bible? In the part where it's OK if I make slaves of my daughters? (Gee, maybe the morality in the Bible is rooted in a slightly more primitive culture. Slavery and ridiculous sanctions don't seem very timeless nor divine to me.)

I think Rush can't get it up because that's God's way of telling him to slow down. Maybe he should listen and retire!
Frustrated, anal-retentive as*-hole!

20120305-08 17:51 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Rush Limbaugh Must Go!

from Daily Kos:

Please send an email to Armed Forces Network, asking them to support servicewomen and women veterans and stop airing Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

In addition to the eleven sponsors that have withdrawn their advertising from Rush Limbaugh's radio program, now a group of female veterans are calling on Armed Forces Network to drop Rush Limbaugh from its programming. Here is an excerpt from the letter they sent to the network:

Rush Limbaugh has a freedom of speech and can say what he wants, but in light of his horribly misogynistic comments, American Forces Radio should no longer give him a platform. Our entire military depends on troops respecting each other – women and men. There simply can be no place on military airwaves for sentiments that would undermine that respect. When many of our female troops use birth control, for Limbaugh to say they are "sluts" and "prostitutes" is beyond the pale. It isn't just disrespectful to our women serving our country, but it's language that goes against everything that makes our military work.

Support servicewomen and women veterans by joining their call: send an email to Armed Forces Network, asking them to stop airing Rush Limbaugh's radio program:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=84

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

20120305-13 22:17 SteveB Rush Limbaugh's Giant Lie (& Joke) of the Day

From Rush Limbaugh (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0312/73619.html>):

"I always tried to maintain a very high degree of integrity and independence on this program." --RL

LOL! This is why Rush has always reminded me of Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, or Wolf Blitzer. A paragon of truth and integrity. (I love it that he slipped and used the past tense.)

"In fighting them [the Demoncrats --SteveB] on this issue last week, I became like them. Against my own instincts, against my own knowledge, against everything I know to be right and wrong, I descended to their level when I used those two words to describe Sandra Fluke. That was my error. I became like them." --RL

LOL! Ya, that damned Obama is famous for calling private female citizens "ho's". Happens every day. But, of course, the evil liberal media never reports it, but let Limbaugh make one little innocent mistake and they're on him like Santorum on his famous "man-on-dog".

20120305-06 16:23 SteveB "The 'All Natural' Scam: How to Shop Healthy for You and Your Family"

I believe the "scam" is much grander than indicated—extending to the common fallacy that "natural" is inherently any better in the first place.

"The 'All Natural' Scam: How to Shop Healthy for You and Your Family" by Andre Evans, NationofChange

Mar. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/all-natural-scam-how-shop-healthy-you-and-your-family-1330966761>)

How do you make an educated food purchase that will protect you and your family from harmful yet common food contaminants? You must be privy to the subtleties. Many people today accept 'all natural' as a stamp of integrity for their food. FDA regulations, however, make the guidelines for authenticity rather lenient, and capitalize on the unawareness of the average buyer with strong advertising.

The average person on a base level acknowledges that there are dangerous additives like MSG and high fructose corn syrup in many products. As a result, they generally attempt to avoid these, and will instead often pick a product with an 'all natural' label in an effort to do so. Products that are labeled as such, however, oftentimes don't contain many 'natural' ingredients.

Under federal regulations, it's entirely acceptable to include additives that are not even deemed as 'natural', or use unnatural preparation methods like frying, genetic modification, or pasteurization. The product only has to be part 'natural'. But what does natural really mean?

The definition of a 'natural' product has no defined parameters in law or regulation, so essentially these products can be — and are easily — as contaminated as what the consumer may have originally tried to avoid.

In a cunning way, company advertisers have adapted to the fact that consumers are aware of the issues with their food products, but have performed a proverbial hijack by marketing their products within what the consumer believes to be the alternative to chemical-laden food. These products pose as the real deal, but are often just as unhealthy as their formers.

Generally, consumers think they want 'all natural' products, but really are looking for certified organic foods. Certified organic products are generally of higher quality and maintain greater nutritional value than conventional foods and the 'natural' alternatives.

Despite even this, organic labeling requires only 70% of the product to be organic in order for it to be certified. This means that similar to how the 'natural' foods are manipulated, the product can be organic, yet still be subject to unnatural preparation methods. In addition, the product may contain certain quantities of non-organic substance.

What people are really looking for are the most unprocessed, purest organic foods they can buy or grow. These are the highest in nutritional value, and are completely free of any form of manipulation. If they are self grown (to get started check out our starting guide on organic gardening), then they are subject solely to the individual's care, and are completely free of processing or outside manipulation. Despite this, many do not grow their own foods, and there are good products to be found out there.

So what does the smart consumer look for?

- Organic products will contain a percentage of organic content as indicated on label. Look for the highest possible percentage rates.
- GMO-free foods. Among health concerns, genetically modified food is arguably the highest priority to avoid. Most foods that contain GMOs are not labeled. GMO-free products make a note that they are such, often with a verified GMO-free label.
- Pay attention to certain food processing methods, like pasteurization, irradiation, or frying.
- Check sugar and salt content. Despite being organic, it's still not healthy to consume huge amounts of sugar or sodium.
- Most oils used in products (canola, sunflower, vegetable) unless otherwise stated, may be GMO.
- Avoid soy as it is one of the most genetically modified crops used in food products today.

- Avoid artificial sweeteners like aspartame and sucralose. [But not "stevia" from Bolivia! Great product! Natural! –SteveB]

- Note the number of ingredients in a product in general. The less number of ingredients, the less processed it is, and usually foregoes the majority of chemical additives.

You may even be so inclined as to learn the names for many of the artificial preservatives, so you are aware of their presence in foods. Often when you can't pronounce or recognize what it is, it likely should not be a part of your diet.

20120305-07	16:55	SteveG	"Where Are the Progressive Christians?"
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Interesting article, especially when combined with the "60 Minutes" report that ran last night (Mar. 4) in regards to the Catholic church in Ireland. No priest is allowed to speak or be alone with a child – another adult has to be present. Further, the Vatican has pulled its ambassador to Ireland. All because of the abuse of priests against children and the following cover ups.

Please read the article, below, then go back and watch the "60 Minute" piece.

"Where Are the Progressive Christians?" by Dekker Dreyer, NationofChange

Mar. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/where-are-progressive-christians-1330960317>)

Where are the left-wing Christian voices in American politics? The rise of Rick Santorum to a contender position in the GOP primary race, alongside the current debate over contraception has shown proof positive that Christian conservative politics are near the height of their power in guiding the national conversation. This month, while questioning President Obama's Christianity, Bill O'Reilly said, "A Christian wouldn't be telling other Christians that you have to put your belief system aside and do what the government tells you as far as birth control or anything else." On every front it appears that this year's Republican political race will be defined by theology, but why is the Christian perspective so one sided?

I, like nearly one in four Americans, am not a Christian. In fact, I was raised as secular and my understanding of the Christian faith has been an education from afar. I have never belonged to a church and likewise I have never seen any reason to deny anyone of any faith their right to worship. Over the past decade I have to admit that my primary source of information about the Christian church has been through mainstream coverage of fundamentalist talking points. I know that by human nature there must be a difference of political opinion within Christianity, if there wasn't then numbers alone would dictate that the 78% of Americans who are Christian would continually out-vote liberals. But where are they in the national media? Why do these Christians allow conservative fundamentalists to dictate the popular perception of their faith? The answer is more complicated than it would seem.

In some schools of thought Christians are not supposed to, by virtue of their faith, publicly disagree with any church leaders. This is a bible-backed mandate based upon interpretation of scripture. In a Feb. 14, 2012 sermon on the nationally syndicated radio show "The Gospel Truth"¹, Rev. Andrew Wommack is quoted as saying:

"God calls people to be leaders in the church. He raises up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. So God ordained this governmental system in the body of Christ. But does that mean that every pastor functions exactly the way God wants them to? Does that mean every one of them is perfect so therefore you have to just submit to everything that they say? No. This isn't saying that people don't make mistakes and that there's not room for improvement, but I'm telling you this... that rather than you go in if somebody does something wrong as a member of the church and splitting the church and coming against the governmental system and saying I don't like the way you're doing it so I'm criticizing you, you're worse than the person and what they're doing wrong."

This thread of ambiguous punishment for criticizing church authority is only one in a variety of issues facing the rise of a left-leaning Christian movement. Another set of obstacles is in the insular nature of the Christian community itself. If you are not inside of the Christian religious community you may be largely unaware of the amount of media outlets that cater specifically to the faithful. In every part of the United States you'll find numerous radio and television stations that deliver information directly to their target audience. Aside from broadcast media, the local Christian infrastructure often includes multiple churches, faith-based civic organizations, Christian business coalitions, and after school programs. The need for national media outreach may seem unnecessary to liberal minded Christians when there are so many options for them to make themselves heard within the religious spectrum.

I asked the operators of the blog community, "Christians Tired of Being Misrepresented"², about this and received the following quote in email:

Jesus never demanded attention, prominence, recognition, influence or wealth. He went about doing the will of the Father, touching lives one by one. While the Religious Right cloaks itself as the "Christian Choice" merely because they are anti-choice and loudly proclaim selectively chosen scriptures from the Bible as their political platform, it seems like they get all the attention. Generally, Christian Liberals are less interested in the attention and more interested in changing the lives of their neighbor through love and social justice.

It may have the best of intentions, but the local action agenda may not be enough to combat the conservative media machine. The belief in ground-level insular politics is not shared by well funded right-wing organizations like The Speak Up Movement of the Alliance Defense Fund³ which offers guidance and legal assistance to churches who wish to preach a fundamental political agenda while maintaining their tax exempt status. This goes hand in hand with methods employed by the Christian Coalition of America who regularly circumvent the issue of individual churches maintaining their tax exempt status by being a third party entity which supplies agenda pamphlets and other supporting materials directly to church members.

Although their mainstream reach may be limited, some Christians are breaking the mold and speaking out against fundamentalists. I posed the question of why politically liberal Christians have not gained the kind of media traction that their conservative counterparts enjoy to the organization "The Christian Left". They are a movement-based organization that fosters a growing Facebook community of over 60,000 members. Their CEO, Charles Toy, referred me to a recent radio interview on KLAV AM's "The Practical Christian"⁴ program in which board member Rev. Mark Sandlin is quoted as saying:

One of the reasons why the right is so connected is because they've been around for so long and they kind of naturally formed these connections; and then you look at our side, in terms of if we're naming who's on what side, the Christian Left is, at least in comparison, a fairly new movement.

Longevity may be a factor, but it's not the whole story. Many Christians know that a ground-swell of conservative politics sprung up in their churches over the past thirty years, but not as many know how. To understand the rise of fundamental politics you need to understand one man, Pat Robertson. His position in the current world of conservative Christianity can't be understated and in many ways he is the architect of it. In a playing field that included Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority and Robert Grant's Christian Voice organization, only Pat Robertson's political ministry has stood the test of time. Robertson's influence extends not only into the media and church, but directly into American politics through campaign contributions and placement of his Regent University students in positions of government. He also actively fights the judiciary through his American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative counterpoint to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Robertson is one of the forefathers of televangelism, having started the foundations of his Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in 1960 by buying a small rural UHF affiliate. It wasn't until 1977 that cable television made his long-established dream of a national media outlet for conservative Christians a reality. His rise to celebrity came quickly and donations to his organization could now be solicited at the national level through his ever expanding cable television properties, making his ministry one of the best funded in the world. In 1986, when Falwell's Moral Majority was in its twilight, he gained greater exposure by running for the United State's Presidency. Robertson is the son of Virginia congressman / senator Absalom Willis Robertson whose collective political career in Washington

lasted 33 years. Robertson learned first-hand the power of political office and how the fundamentalist agenda could be served by mingling religion with politics. His 1988 bout for the Republican nomination ultimately failed, but what was left in its wake was a new era for right-wing theologians. In 1989, Robertson, now flush with cash from his exposure as a Republican candidate, continued to operate CBN and "The 700 Club", but began building a network of theo-political organizations to further his agenda. The first was the aforementioned Christian Coalition for America. That same year he renamed his small campus for theological study to Regent University, placed himself as chancellor, and established a distance learning program to expand its reach nationally. In 1990 he founded the American Center for Law and Justice to fight on behalf of his beliefs in the court system.

In the years that followed, Robertson continued to directly aid political candidates, including being a major campaign financier to Virginia Attorney General Mark Earley (R), who in 1999 refused prosecution of Robertson on charges of willfully misleading the public in solicitation of donations against the recommendation of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Office of Consumer Affairs. In 1994 Robertson's Christian Coalition was sued by the Federal Election Commission for "coordinating its activities with Republican candidates for office in 1990, 1992 and 1994 and failing to report its expenditures"⁵, after which the Coalition was fined for improperly financing current GOP primary candidate, and then Representative, Newt Gingrich.

Robertson's acolytes have continued to foster the politicalization of Christianity with many Regent University graduates entering government under the Bush administration. These hirings came under fire in 2007 by The Boston Globe⁶ due to George W. Bush's appointment of Kay Coles James, former Dean of Regent's Government School as Director of the Office of Personnel Management prior to the hirings.

In essence, a small group of well-funded, politically connected, conservative theologians have controlled nearly every aspect of the national Christian political message for over two decades. Robertson's strategies for political organization in the name of Christianity have been used as a template to establish many modern conservative groups and churches.

Even though Christians may have their own religious conflicts with speaking against fellow believers, it's clear that the system is rigged against them even if they decide to take a public stand. The statements from The Christian Left hold serious weight when examined against the history of the rise of fundamentalism. What makes things difficult for liberal Christians isn't finding their voice, but finding the platform to broadcast it. The opposition to their message is well established. With conservative news organizations in close relationships with the fundamentalists, especially Fox who purchased Pat Robertson's Family Channel in 1997, Christians who don't share conservative political views are hard-pressed to get air time.

The left is also at fault. Many progressive news organizations consider faith-based commentary outside of their editorial mandate, and they may be doing a disservice to themselves by that. Perhaps the left oriented political press should be more welcoming of voices from Christianity who have a different point of view from what is presented by the fundamentalist lobbying arm of their religion. With three out of four Americans associating themselves as Christian, embracing the liberal voices from that community and giving them a platform might help to close the rift between secular America and believers; A rift that a select few conservative political organizations have fought so hard, and spent so much, to widen.

Footnotes:

¹<http://www.awmi.net/radio/2012/week7>

²<http://christianstiredofbeingmisrepresented.blogspot.com/>

³<http://speakupmovement.org/church>

⁴<http://soundcloud.com/thechristianleft/111022-1>

⁵<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-dc-circuit/1354172.html>

20120305-10 20:21 MarthaH Quotes: Bipartisan

The problem with political jokes is they get elected.
—Henry Cate

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.
—Aesop

If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these acceptance speeches there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.
—Will Rogers

Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber.
—Plato

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.
—Nikita Khrushchev

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.
—Clarence Darrow

Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you.
—Author Unknown

Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel.
—John Quinton

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.
—Oscar Ameringer

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.
—Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952

A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country.
—Texas Guinan

Any American who is prepared to run for president should automatically, by definition, be disqualified from ever doing so.
—Gore Vidal

I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.
—Charles de Gaulle

Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.
—Doug Larson

Don't vote; it only encourages them.
—Author Unknown

There ought to be one day - just one - when there is open season on senators.
—Will Rogers

[20120305-11](#) 21:11 Pam Re: Quotes: Bipartisan (reply to MarthaH, above)

Wonderful. Each and every one.

[20120305-12](#) 21:42 SteveB Re: Quotes: Bipartisan (reply to MarthaH, above)

Excellent! Thank you.

I love my job. I love fighting for what I believe in. I love having fun while doing it. I love reporting stories that the Complex refuses to report. I love fighting back, I love finding allies, and - famously - I enjoy making enemies.

—Andrew Breitbart

[20120305-04](#) 11:21 Art Re: Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 1 (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #87)

I'll take a dozen!

[20120305-14](#) 23:58 SteveB Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 2

We actually got quite a lot done today, though it may not sound like much.

1. We rounded-up samples of five possible vendor trays for our outside salesmen. We will probably have the final product made by a local artisan—of wicker or whatever you call that. They must be above average looking (the vendor trays, not the artisan, GaryC). Distinctive.
2. We looked at some promising chairs in a few places and even saw a couple of refrigerators nearby. We have identified much of our other required equipment—mixer, oven, A-C, water heater, sink, etc.
3. I spent some time (while Marci worked half a day lawyering) going over possible fonts for our logo and emailed back and forth with my logo design artist in Portugal. We discussed dark chocolate brown as a good possibility for one of our colors, probably with some shade of red and white.
4. I thought about couches and a coffee table for one area of the shop instead of table and chairs.
5. We had a long meeting with our accountant discussing business organization, taxes, etc. We have decided to skip the limited liability corporation temporarily and quickly form a proprietorship with a side contract between Marci and me that covers partnership. Partnerships don't exist here the way they do in the U.S., for some reason. We will pay a 13%+3% quasi-value-added tax on sales, recoverable from the same tax we pay on equipment and materials. We will also pay a 25% income tax on profit at the end of the year. There are no personal income taxes in Bolivia, though wages are subject to 13% of the quasi-value-added tax, also recoverable when taxes are paid—essentially to avoid double-and-up taxation. This is why I call it a *quasi*-value-added tax.
6. We fantasized and dreamed together about what it will all be like.

We'll probably see our landlords tomorrow and arrange a few things. We can't actually sign the contract until we have a tax ID number, known in Bolivia as the famous "NIT". (Famous because that's the number many people must use everywhere, for anything they buy, in order to recover taxes paid.) I'm sure other adventures await.

<http://www.myperuboliviator.com/blog/samaipata-2.html>

Cuevas Falls, Samaipata, Bolivia (Ahhhh! Refreshing!)



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

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