



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #122 — APR. 23, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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Sad Conclusion (A Conversation)

(posted by Friends of the Middle, Apr. 23, 2012)

Pam (Apr. 20, 14:29):

A piece I heard on NPR the other day has been rattling around my head like a pebble in a shoe. It was about Apple and its outsourcing of much of its production to Asia, especially China. Workers, many newly arrived from the countryside, work 12-hr. shifts, six days a week, making iPads or whatever, and sleep in Spartan dormitories. Conditions that would be intolerable to an American worker are actually a step up for China's factory workers. Americans are enlightened enough to know that slavery is wrong, yet we support it everyday. What is an underpaid, Third World worker but a slave with a different name?

Despite his bad rep. these days, Marx was prescient about many of the things we see today. He asked two important questions, according to John Lanchester in the London Review of Books 5 April 2012: "what is money and where does its value come from?" Leaving out several steps in his argument, Marx says, in essence, that there "is a gap between what the labourer sells his labour for [the minimum the employer can pay and still attract workers], and the price the employer gets for the commodity [as much as the market will bear], and that difference is the money which accumulates to the employer and which Marx called surplus value." This is the "basis of capitalism: all value in capitalism is the surplus value created by labour."

My argument is that every "advanced" civilization has depended on some form of "slave" labor in order to exist. One crucial element any civilization requires is a surplus of food. Our capitalist society requires a surplus of value, i.e., money. Peasants in medieval Europe toiled in the fields so that the elite were free to do what elites do--make art, wage wars, build monuments, explore. In ancient Athens slaves worked so philosophers could walk around and think. In ancient Rome slaves worked so citizens could engage in politics. Today Chinese workers toil so that I can sit here all day at my computer, and Latin American women make T-shirts so I can buy them for a few dollars. For thousands of years this imbalance has prevailed. It is my contention that it always will. We are like birds sitting on crocodiles that feed and support us. What happens when the crocodile decides he'd rather have someone feed him? I see no way out of this dilemma, if that is what it is. Those of us fortunate enough to live in America or Europe are complicit in daily injustice and exploitation. I don't single anyone out for blame. We are all to blame. I'm going to continue buying cheap T-shirts at the GAP and grumbling when the price of gas goes up. I'm not a Christian, but the church is right about one thing: we are all sinners.

Today is my day off from taking care of my grandson, hence my prolixity.

SteveB (Apr. 20, 18:50):

Thinking about your post, Pam, and everything from everybody else the last few days of editing...

I'm tossing around a lot of ideas—triggered by y'all's comments—that do not necessarily represent a coherent philosophy such as that which I find myself applying to most things. Like all of us, after a lifetime, I believe this and that. I have learned some things I consider to be facts. Some I honestly know to be hopes. Part of what I want to talk about fits into the gray areas of this edifice I have constructed out of the pieces largely given to me. I probably will not be politically correct and I don't much care. I'm sort of thinking out loud and trying to work this out as I write it.

World Standard of Living

Let me try to guess something here, because I have never read any information on the subject. It seems to be missing from the liberal bibliography and conservatives wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole. What is a good liberal, living in any relatively well-to-do country, supposed to think about the lives of most people in the world? You know, the estimated 2 billion people (30% of the world's population) who live on an income of less than \$3 per day. An awfully lot more live on less than \$5 per day, more than half the world's people. This is not much money, even in the poorest countries where terrible housing and worse food are relatively cheap. What am I to think, as a modern, educated, progressive person? (Admittedly, giving myself the benefit of the doubt!)

You might have a knee-jerk reaction to immediately go on line and help some of these people, and that would be a proper response, though nearly futile in the larger scheme of things. The U.S. trade deficits have recently been reduced to "merely" about \$50 billion per month. This has been going on for a long time, essentially shipping that much money to the rest of the world every month (plus government aid), and we don't seem to have made a dent in world poverty, while nearly going broke ourselves. I honestly don't think your \$3 a month is going to help much, but have at it.

So, what is our goal? To keep all these people living minimally, but without so many starving? What about dependable water? Health care? Transportation? Education? Jobs? Infrastructure? Whose problems are those? America's? We can't even control our border with Mexico or provide these essentials to nearly enough of our own citizens. Yet we believe that if someone does not save the world, there will be hell to pay, right? Maybe it's just too late and there will be hell to pay either way? The word "hopeless" comes to mind.

Is our perfectly logically liberal but unstated goal that we want the world standard of living raised to, say, that of Mississippi? Then haven't we bitten off more than we can possibly chew, my friends? What a world of grief and guilt we are in for if our objective is to Americanize the world. Yet that is the unspoken de facto goal that has become the dominant paradigm of liberal thought. I don't have a clue as to what the conservatives think of all this except maybe, "F*ck 'em!"

I know many of these people who make less than \$5 or even \$3 a day. They seem to do pretty well, actually, (though I know many others truly suffer) even in relatively modern societies such as Latin America and the Caribbean. Am I evil to say that I don't really want to live like the poor, am eternally thankful I don't have to (though what if I didn't know anything different?), am thankful to the people who do live like that, and am happy that they can?

For the world as a whole, any other alternative (than billions of poor people) would be unmitigated disaster to the vast majority of us. Isn't that apparent? Sorry. It's not the world I would have wanted to create, but we're stuck with it. Now, let's be good conservatives and try to preserve as much of it as we can, not try to change it into Mississippi.

Lately, Apple seems to have finally taught America that it is difficult to Americanize even China (and what will be the long-term fruits?).

Can you use your imagination on the rest, or do I have to spell it out for you? Let me know, I'm movin' on. The world's poor don't have cars, video games, computers, or modern appliances. But (OMFG!) what if they did? DISASTER!

U.S. Standard of Living

To me, the U.S. is an entirely different case. Here, there is hope for at least a while longer.

And, myself, I'd rather be like Canada or New Zealand—an island of prosperity in a cold sea of poverty—than be drowning in those dark waters of suffering. But that's just me.

We should be conservative and go back to what worked—high taxes, especially on accumulated capital and the rich, government regulation, unions, and a prosperous middle class. These are the things that made America great. Not greed. Sharing the fruits of our labor, creativity, and frugality. Any two out of the three can make a country prosperous—i.e. Germany or Japan. The U.S. had all three!

I will put the principle as simple as possible: Incomes shall be made more equitable or there will be outright rebellion. None of us wants that. It's a good enough reason for sharing, even if there were not countless others.

Investment money is pouring into the U.S. as I write this. It must be employed for the long-term good of the country, not simply to satisfy illogical, short-term, wreck-the-world greed, not simply for the wealthy few to make slaves of their brothers—yet again.

Karl Marx

Well, Marx was right, of course, in that labor produces surplus value that largely disappears into the pockets of the moneyed class. But I believe creativity and the accumulation of capital can also produce surplus value. These are important capitalistic principles, yet I think it is obviously time that we look beyond capitalism for solutions. Governments can accumulate capital. Workers can too. Financial institutions can be created which serve people rather than attempt to bankrupt them.

Marx, like Darwin, was right about many things, but controlling the environment can mitigate the effects.

The great failure of Marx and of all economists is that they are essentially historians and the world is always different. Marx does not provide a working blueprint for any way forward past capitalism. I guess he and a few others thought he did, but they were wrong. Excuse me.

Corporations vs. People

Corporations do one thing well. They bring together the means of production to maximize short-term profit. Asking them to do anything else is like asking a cow to lay an egg. If corporations are people, they are pretty strange, incomplete people. They can never focus on anything long-term, not even profits. Politically, within any corporation, the long-term barely exists. That's the way it must be. People, on the other hand, live in the real world, with grandchildren and such. They have to think about the future in a very large way, and so do the political projections of those people—their governments.

Business is not an end in itself. The true end is the happiness of the people. Corporations are simply a tool we employ for our benefit. We must control them, not they us. I have often compared unregulated corporations to Terminator robots. They are probably even more heartless. How many examples do you need? Read our FotM newsletter. Read a little history. We must take control back from these monsters soon or they will destroy us (if they have not already done so).

Why I'm a Conservative

When I say that I am a conservative, I am probably saying something stupid, because I always then have to immediately explain myself. The definition has shifted so far in my lifetime, but what I mean is that I think we have to be very careful about change. Even about growth, which is a kind of change, is it not?

America roared out of the adversity of WWII with a government and set of ideas, well entrenched and extensively implemented, that remained relatively constant until Ronald Reagan—high taxes, government regulation especially of key economic sectors like banking and finance, encouragement of unionization and union rights, a fierce commitment to public education at all levels, and effective international trade barriers. The middle class and, hence, nearly all of America flourished. We became the richest and most powerful nation on Earth.

This system was constructed by Democrats and Republicans of the Greatest Generation and handed to us, the Lesser Generations, with every expectation that their hard-won gains would be continued. Movies, television, and science-fiction showed us worlds of continuing upward progress. Why, we could do anything! We have almost totally forgotten that spirit.

From Reagan until now, the system that worked to produce an economic powerhouse was de-constructed. Everything was changed! Just what a true conservative does not want, yet the charge was led by conservatives! Amazing! Everything right was made wrong again: taxes were lowered ridiculously, discouraging reinvestment, deregulation held sway, axes were swung, shackles restraining greed were thrown off, banks started blowing their inevitable (to anyone who lived through or bothered to read about the Great Depression and the years leading up to it) bubbles, union busting became a national pastime, public education was gutted and told it needed to “privatize”, and “free” trade led to the destruction of millions of good jobs.

What else have we gained? Nearly constant wars and a broken health care system that omits way too many people, while providing increasingly poor and ridiculous service at a price that is bankrupting the country. Oh, and now we seem to have gained a completely dysfunctional government, because of these same conservatives who have led us down the path of drastic change.

All this is change I can live without. When are we going to wake up and realize that we know what works! It is, amazingly enough, what worked before! The tried and true! Exactly the opposite course that we have followed since the Gipper threw us off our horse all those many years ago.

And please don't think I'm talking about nostalgia here. I have no desire to return to a pre-internet, pre-sexual revolution world. I don't long for the good ole days. I don't have misconceptions of years I lived through. I was there. What I say is based only on hard economic data from a completely different implemented philosophy of government than we have now, and how the economy has performed under “conservative” principles since Reagan.

Toward a More Reasonable American Foreign Policy

Am I lying when I say the world as a whole is headed for disaster? Aren't we already there in many places? Haven't we been for a long time?

I guess it's already too late for isolationism. I may sound a little too much like Ron Paul for my own comfort, but I think whatever we can do in the direction of developing and protecting our native resources, factories, and economy, we should do as China does—think of ourselves and our long-term goals first, and make our American companies and foreign companies who wish to do business with us tow the line.

We have to stop throwing money away by giving it to foreign governments and dictators. We need more bang for our bucks. What Japan and Great Britain do, for instance, is they assess what projects would most help people and that's what they do. In Santa Cruz, Japan built a hospital and gave it to the people. In St. Lucia, the British built a tunnel through the mountain blocking the capitol from most of the rest of the country. These donor countries are loved and honored for what their governments do. Our government is hated for what it does for very much more money.

The wars must stop. We must find a way to deal with the world mainly with peace and a few well-planned covert actions. We must find a way to slow down change, or even more people will die. And if “free trade” can't accomplish peace, what is it good for?

Liberals might have to accept things like genetic modification of crops if billions more are not to die in the worst ways possible. But this area is too crucial for decisions to be made alone by companies like Monsanto, who have

only short-term profit goals. The people and their governments must be involved in all these decisions, not just corporations. Just as with Global Warming and Evolution, let's apply science and see where it leads us when the decisions are open, informed, and democratic. We need a lot more food and need to figure out how to produce it without destroying ourselves. I trust no corporation on Earth with decisions of such consequence.

In foreign relations, the main goal of our government—if we choose to avoid isolationism—should be the prosperity of American citizens and companies. There should be no aid without trade. No assistance where American companies are shut out. American intellectual property rights must be protected. Friendliness and peace should be used to promote trade. Every politician should, by law, have to take sales samples to any foreign country they might visit. I'm sick and tired of going everywhere in the world and finding superior American products shoved off the shelves by the Germans, Japanese, Koreans, and now the Chinese and Indians. If we're such good capitalists, why don't we compete? It sure ain't because of high taxes or low American productivity, that's for certain. It's time for the excuses to stop!

Pam (Apr. 22, 12:58):

I just read this over again--there's so much in it!

--"We should be conservative and go back to what worked—high taxes, especially on accumulated capital and the rich, government regulation, unions, and a prosperous middle class. These are the things that made America great. Not greed. Sharing the fruits of our labor, creativity, and frugality. Any two out of the three can make a country prosperous—i.e. Germany or Japan. The U.S. had all three!

I will put the principle as simple as possible: Incomes shall be made more equitable or there will be outright rebellion. None of us wants that. It's a good enough reason for sharing, even if there were not countless others."-- (I don't know how to put that little line beside a quote.)

--"America roared out of the adversity of WWII with a government and set of ideas, well entrenched and extensively implemented, that remained relatively constant until Ronald Reagan—high taxes, government regulation especially of key economic sectors like banking and finance, encouragement of unionization and union rights, a fierce commitment to public education at all levels, and effective international trade barriers. The middle class and, hence, nearly all of America flourished. We became the richest and most powerful nation on Earth."

This is a description of conservatism I can go along with, but I don't think many "conservatives" today would agree to higher taxes and more regulation. Alas. The post-War years that saw so much American growth are often remembered now for being conformist, dull, and socially repressive, which they were. Our goal then was to create an economic engine that would power a huge middle class, and that was a very smart thing to do, whether anyone consciously realized it at the time or not. Stability, peace, and, yes, growth depend on a huge middle class. Look at any country in the world that doesn't have one, and you'll see a disaster. The middle is where most folks need to be; we should be able to say, We are ALL middle class. The American mentality IS a middle-class mentality. I am a child of the 'sixties, and I well remember my impatience with conformity, with staying inside the lines. A whole generation of us kicked our way out of those constraints, and the nation is the better for it. But in some ways we threw the baby out with the bath. In the 'fifties housing improved, more people went to college, unemployment was low and well-paying jobs were widely available. The disparity between the rich and the middle class was far smaller than it is today, which had great social benefits. One danger of democracy, according to deToqueville, is envy. The possibility of upward mobility naturally leads to competition and envy of those above you on the greasy pole. If those you envy are only a bit better off than you, your envy will encourage you to try harder, not enrage and humiliate you. Mitt Romney is so much richer than all but a few of us that most people resent him and can't identify with him, even his own party. Obama, to take just one example, makes a whole lot more than I do, and more than most of you I imagine, but not so much more that he lives in a world I can't begin to understand. My first husband grew up in Akron, Ohio. His father was a high school graduate with no college at all. He was a businessman who started with a small movie theater and created other businesses that gave his family a very comfortable life. A basic education, limited resources, and a strong work ethic were enough to put him solidly in the middle class. My husband grew up next door to the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal, a juxtaposition I doubt you would find today.

I agree with you, Steve, that change is often best when it is relatively slow, but we need to be specific about what change we're talking about. Edmund Burke condemned the French revolution because it catapulted the nation from one way of being into a drastically different one virtually overnight, with disastrous results. The British took longer to institute reforms--many decades--and avoided revolution and mass executions. On the other hand, I agree with Martin Luther King that "justice delayed is justice denied." Edging toward greater income parity is fine; forcing people to wait for equal rights is not.

--"The great failure of Marx and of all economists is that they are essentially historians and the world is always different. Marx does not provide a working blueprint for any way forward past capitalism. I guess he and a few others thought he did, but they were wrong."--

When Marx and Engels looked at the London slums and the midland factories, they saw appalling inequality, exploitation, and an absence of social responsibility. They didn't make anything up; they described what they saw. I believe any of us would react as they did. Marx was an astute historian, and his explanation of capitalism is, I believe, sound, but he got a lot of crucial things wrong. He didn't foresee that people would be more loyal to their own country than to their social class across national boundaries. We still don't know if his prediction that capitalism will evolve into something else is right, but if it is, I don't see any signs of a paradigm shift yet. Communists of the Stalinist stripe insanely took "The Communist Manifesto" and used it as a foundation for their goal of drastic, immediate change. In that respect, they have something in common with the French Revolution. Marx was right about political evolution, IMHO, but I think he was wrong about revolution. (This is way too complicated. What about the Arab Spring? I support that revolution.) Our situation is not yet so dire that out-and-out revolution is likely, but if it worsens anything is possible. The Occupy movement might be just the first shot across the bow. What Marx saw was wealthy manufacturers with homes in London and in the country on enormous estates, where there had traditionally been common lands and a self-respecting yeomanry. Beside the lavish lifestyles of the newly rich, under their very noses in fact, were tenements whose first floors were uninhabitable because they were flooded with raw sewage; little children apprenticed to Master chimney sweeps, who climbed up hot flues because they were small enough to fit in tight spaces, who had their heads shaved and climbed naked and slept on the bags of soot they collected, giving them an appalling incidence of cancer of the scrotum. Read William Blake. The English in the 19th c. enacted a series of Reform Bills that expanded the franchise and took steps to ameliorate the worst abuses of the industrial revolution. They did this not just because they wanted to do the right thing, but because they saw the revolutions breaking out all over Europe, and they didn't want to go down that road. What we see in America today is not sweat shops and child labor (unless, of course, you count immigrants both illegal and documented) but rich corporations and their political minions lavishing millions on birthday parties, golf trips, and multiple homes beside a whole generation of young people being crushed by debt, millions without adequate health care, and a growing incidence of hunger among the poor. I saw a movie with Will Smith (can't remember the name) where he cons a rich couple into taking him into their fancy New York apartment as a kind of son. I believe he tells a buddy at one point, The rich are broke, just like you and me, but at a higher level. We're the 19th c. in Britain, but at a higher level.

Life is not fair, and there will never be liberty and justice for all. That being said, our greatest responsibility is to those closest to us. Charity really does begin at home, or should. We cannot catapult Afghanistan into the 21st c., but we can provide health coverage to all Americans. I know we can't afford the luxury of a small military, but I wish we could be more like Canada and New Zealand, "an island of prosperity in a cold sea of poverty." But like it or not, America does have a responsibility to the rest of the world. Someone has to keep the North Koreans from totally losing it. I think our biggest problems are really moral ones: hedge fund managers who cheat, insurance companies that refuse to pay for cancer treatment, politicians who abuse their power, corporations that put profits above people. Look at where the wealthy live. It sure ain't on land that's being fracked. I like Kant's categorical imperative: live as if it would be a good thing if everyone acted as you do. (Obviously not an exact quote.) There's a good article in this week's New Yorker about guns in America. The NRA, naturally, believes that the more citizens who are armed, the better. I do not. I'm not saying no one should own a gun, but I believe the world would be a better place if no one did, so I will live accordingly.

I'm sorry to have rattled on so long. Writing helps me think.

Art (Apr. 22, 13:55):

These are all really good. If I could just add a couple of points:

1. As we came out of WW II, the country was A, used to high taxes to sustain the great effort, winning the war. And B, the new President Eisenhower, had a great vision, to build the interstate highway system (which he got from observing the German Autobhan system by the way). At least part of the reason to sustain some of those taxes was to accomplish this great national goal. I think people understood this and largely supported the effort. So while I agree we need to adjust taxes upward, people need to see and believe what it will accomplish. Today, reducing the deficit may be enough.
2. I also agree that, if we continue this disparity in wealth, it will eventually create violence. Frankly, I have come to the point personally, I feel nothing in common with greedy self serving people like Romney. I wouldn't want to spend a minute talking or listening to him or them. To me, he and his kind are utterly contemptible. They are worth the loyalty to people they have exhibited, exactly none. Equally, and this is from a former soldier who proudly saluted the Flag for 30 years, I don't think the serving people like him is worth the life of one Army private, to poorly paraphrase Frederick the Great. I certainly wouldn't waste my time, much less risk my life, serving any of these self serving individuals.
3. I also think that where Marx may have had a point (remember he lived and developed his philosophy in 19th century Great Britain, which was a bastion of social privilege largely based on birth and privilege) the real answer to prosperity lies in the middle. Business should be encouraged by honest government and laws intended to support the development of business. However we must never forget that business and businessmen have but one goal, to make money, the more the better. That is the sole reason it exists. That should be encouraged to be successful but never trusted to do anything beyond that one objective. Businesses and businessmen will lie, cheat, steal, abuse employees etc. and justify it or see no wrong in it, if they can increase profits. History is full of examples and look at Apple today or Monasanto. Nothing has changed from the child labor or sweat shops of the 19th century. Again, we should not fault this, but never expect any thing more from business than this approach. That is where governments come in. Governments must serve to curb these actions to provide a level field. Fair wages, decent working conditions, reliable products you can safely eat or use, all really on government's regulating practices. Of course, business and businessmen will do everything they can to prevent government oversight because they restrict the one sole objective of business, making more profits.

So the question is, can we really trust a slash and burn businessman as President? Which side will he be on?

Pam (Apr. 22, 14:16):

I think the three of us ought to be government consultants (not lobbyists). I agree, Art, that we should expect nothing more from big business than corner-cutting and ruthlessness. "I love to fire people." Business and government are, in many ways, adversarial, which optimally achieves a rough balance of power. The problem today, as I see it, is that business and government are in bed with each other, with business on top (if you'll forgive my analogy). I think this election is probably the most crucial one in my lifetime. If Romney wins, we will circle the drain faster and faster. If Obama wins, we will circle more slowly, which will give us a breathing space to figure out what to do next. Our conversation (FotM) is really helping me figure things out.

SteveB (Apr. 22, 15:05):

I think business being "on top" is the perfect analogy, Pam, only I think it's rape and the government isn't having so much fun anymore.

Yes, business seems to have taken control of its adversary, and that's what Eisenhower warned us about, as Art has said.. It's what we should have done everything possible to prevent because, now, it's gonna be hard to get them

out, out of bed, dressed, and back out into the f*cking street where the low lifes belong. Not in bed with my government of the people and for the people.

The polls seem to be saying R0mney and Barry are neck-`n-neck. How is this possible? Where are the women, blacks, and Hispanics? Has the cheating already started? How is to nor Barry 80%, R0mney 20%. That's his natural constituency...about 20% of the voting public. I thought the primaries pretty much proved that. Now that you throw in Democrats, he's doing better? Doesn't make any sense to me.

Here's my thought for the day (which is about the most I am capable of): "R0mney is a man who will do what he is paid to do. That's his entire political philosophy and plan for the country in a nutshell." The voters be damned.

We know who's paying him. The result of R0mney would be ruin.

SteveBA (Apr. 22, 20:25):

This thread seems to be dominated by the socialist and some belief that the government can make all things well by punishing the successful and giving their wealth to the rest of us. I would challenge one and all here to identify one government enterprise that has worked. We have 2 choices of economic systems, one where the decisions are centralized and one where capital is free to go where it is related best. The soviet union is a classic example the failed enterprise of centralized planing and for some reason was admired the socialists but it failed in part because it took away the freedoms of the individual. For bother failed experiment we only need to go 90 miles south of Florida where Castro version of Marxism has caused great human suffering but garners the admiration of Sean penn. and finally there is France Spain, Italy and Greece all socialist economies nd all failing because the majority worked for the government. Last but not there is china a curious blend of political repression, centralized planing and free enterprise. There they have millionaires and the people's party.

On the other hand we have our version of capitalism, where we decide where we want to invest. And it has produced the highest standard of living in the history of mankind, the most innovations in the world and for all our problems people are still willing to cross the rio grande to get here. The dislocation that we face is that our manufacturing base has moved over seas to cheap labor and eliminated a lot of middle class jobs. IMHO this loss of jobs was caused by both big business unions and government, all characterized by bloated bureaucracy. The auto industry is the classic example where the companies built cars that nobody wanted with union labor that priced the cars out of reach the common man. In comes Honda and the rest and good by gm and Chrysler. Free markets, that is the us consumer were punishing the inefficient and perhaps the best long term solution was to let them fail. Interestingly ford is profitable and prospering but not so for the other two.

Summary capitalism serves best a society that values its freedoms. Centralized governments take away economic and individual freedoms. For all it's flaws our system works best

SteveB (Apr. 22, 21:04):

"I would challenge one and all here to identify one government enterprise that has worked."

You're joking, right, like you are about the "socialist" crap?

I can give you thousands of government enterprises that have worked. Let's start with the New Deal, American education (including your own, SteveBA), WWII, Social Security until Congress robbed it, the Postal Service until Congress robbed it, NASA, Apollo, the Space Shuttle, the internet, the railroads, the airline industry, semiconductors, the understanding of DNA, and air traffic control, the Polio vaccine...all government enterprise.

Let us all strive not to tow any party lines here, my friend, especially to the point of saying something so ridiculously radical as I quoted. I don't really think you are that incredibly far right.

But you are right in saying that we must truly be the greatest nation on Earth if the poorest people will cross the mighty Rio Grande to find if the American dream still lives...or if it has been killed by the last 40 years or so of Republican-brand conservatism.

And, hey, I'm all for more freedom. For people! That means the rich and the corporations are going to have to give up a lot of their freedom abusing powers, mainly purchased from our self-interested politicians on both sides of the aisle.

Ben (Apr. 22, 22:29):

SteveBA, you must be very busy this election season, towing party lines. Good work, if you can get it, I guess.

And... you forgot the Interstate Highway System, the Tennessee Valley Authority, whatever that campaign was that brought electricity to farms in the 1930s... it really is a heck of a list.

Jim (Apr. 22, 23:16):

Concerning Art's point about paying for WW II, people today are used to having a war or two going on without paying for them and just letting the debt pile up from all the military spending. That wartime spending was setup to be outside of the pay-as-you-go policy that the rest of the budget was supposed to use.

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<u>20120423-00</u>		FotM	Sad Conclusion (A Conversation) by Friends of the Middle (sample conversation)
<u>20120420-01</u>	07:05	MarthaH	Democrats.org Petition: Repeal Shoot First Laws
<u>20120420-02</u>	07:53	MarthaH	"President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks" (w/ Photo)
<u>20120420-03</u>	09:58	Art	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 19, 2012) & "Common Climate Change Myths"
<u>20120420-04</u>	11:01	Pam	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA & Art)
<u>20120420-12</u>	14:47	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA) & "Clean Air & Natural Gas"
<u>20120420-16</u>	18:13	SteveBA	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Dennis)
<u>20120420-18</u>	18:27	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
<u>20120420-05</u>	11:35	SteveG	Fw: Media Education Video: "Cause & Effect"
<u>20120420-06</u>	12:11	Bill	Fw: AMA's Opinion of Obamacare
<u>20120420-07</u>	13:29	SteveG	Fw: PFAW Action: Send Scott Walker a Copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<u>20120420-08</u>	13:32	SteveG	Fw: DSCC Petition: Take a Stand to Protect Women
<u>20120420-09</u>	14:05	SteveG	"Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas"
<u>20120420-10</u>	14:45	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
<u>20120420-13</u>	14:47	SteveB	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
<u>20120420-14</u>	14:58	SteveG	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
<u>20120420-15</u>	16:42	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
<u>20120420-11</u>	14:46	SteveB	Video: Jon Stewart Interviews Robert Reich
<u>20120420-17</u>	18:15	SteveBA	"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work"
<u>20120420-19</u>	21:32	Jim	Fw: The Fable of the Porcupine
<u>20120421-01</u>	10:14	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Petition: Tell Angie's List to Drop Support of Rush Limbaugh
<u>20120421-02</u>	10:15	SteveG	"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor"
<u>20120421-03</u>	10:16	SteveB	"Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare"
<u>20120421-04</u>	10:19	SteveG	"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs"
<u>20120421-05</u>	17:07	Dennis	"The Autism Epidemic & Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?"
<u>20120422-01</u>	15:11	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send John Boehner a Mutant Shrimp Picture
<u>20120422-02</u>	23:57	SteveB	"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China"
<u>20120422-03</u>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Earth Day 2012

<u>20120420-01</u>	07:05	MarthaH	Democrats.org Petition: Repeal Shoot First Laws
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from Democrats.org:

The ground is starting to shift on "shoot first" laws and your willingness to act is a big reason why. Here's what has happened since you signed our "Repeal Shoot First Laws" petition:

- Governor Rick Scott of Florida announced he'll reevaluate their controversial "Stand Your Ground" law -- that's the one that was at the center of Trayvon Martin's death and has been a key component of the NRA agenda.
- And ALEC -- the shady, Washington coalition that wrote these dangerous laws in the first place -- announced they would now end their work in issues like these "shoot first" laws. This is exciting progress but we've still got a lot to do.

We won't stop until we do right by the communities and families who are so deeply affected by senseless gun violence. The crucial thing we need to do right now is keep growing our movement. Right now we're 250,000 strong, but if we're going to keep the pressure on, it's really important we're able to show more and more people standing up to gun violence every day. With enough people, we can create real change on this issue.

http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50495/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell_a_friend_KEY=8344

Please, tell your friends and family about this progress and ask them to join you and get involved today.

Or simply forward this email, and they can click here to join you: <http://licensedtokill.org/>.

It's going to take all of us coming together to keep marching forward toward sensible gun laws in this country. But seeing this progress over the last month, I'm confident we can get there if we keep working together.

Thanks for all you do, Joe Grace

20120420-02	07:53	MarthaH	"President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks" (w/ Photo)
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History lesson, wow!

"President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks", ClickonDetroit.com/MSNBC

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47101747#.T5CwaKtYtj0>)

A just-released picture by the White House shows a tender moment President Barack Obama had while in Michigan on Wednesday.

Obama was in town for two fundraisers but stopped at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn to sit inside the bus made famous by Rosa Parks.

On Dec. 1, 1955, the 42-year-old African-American Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery City bus for a white man. She was arrested and sparked a civil rights movement.

Obama said he took the time to sit in the bus to "ponder the courage and tenacity that is part of our very recent history."

"We have a lot at stake in this election ... But we have the truth on our side," he added.



Pete Souza / The White House via Getty Images

[20120420-03](#)

09:58

Art

Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 19, 2012) & "Common Climate Change Myths"

SteveBA, I just have to respond to the first part of your e-mail. It continues to amaze me when obviously bright people like yourself deny the facts. The below are not theories, they are facts, period.

1. 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. That ice and snow is gone now.
2. The fabled Northwest Passage, searched for in previous centuries by Henry Hudson, Martin Frobisher, and John Franklin among others but always closed by ice and frozen seas, was open for the first time in human history in 2009 and ships sailed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
3. 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 is a non issue 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.

I'll stop now, since I doubt we will ever agree on this. My personal belief is it has the emergency equivalent requirement of a major war. The effort is much more difficult because it will require a world wide effort and we can't even get our own country to agree. One of the worst thing that could have happened to the better

understanding of global warming in this country was when Al Gore made that movie, "An Inconvenient Truth". He was right of course, but that set off the right wing who hate Gore and most anything else that is different and that politicized the issue on the right. To take corrective step, as you point out, will be very inconvenient indeed.

If the simulations are even remotely correct when we increase much beyond 2 degrees Celsius, it will set off a chain of events we can no longer control and pretty much wipe all life from earth, the 6th mass extinction in earth's history. It will happen fast and by 2100 most species including humanity will be dying out everywhere. I fear we are condemning our grandchildren to a miserable agonizing early death. If the WW II generation was the Greatest Generation, we will be known as the Most Selfish Generation. Of course the good news is there probably won't be anyone around to remember.

Finally, a neighbor who like you feels this is all a conspiracy by 97% of the world's climate scientists and the current Administration to deceive the great American people, advise me he got his information on the other side from the renown Anthony Watts. I looked Watts up. he is not a climate scientist, does not even have a undergraduate degree in anything, and his sole qualification was, he was a local weather person in Chico, California. I think I'd rather get my information from people who have some qualification to speak on the subject.

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

"Common Climate Change Myths" by National Park Service

Apr. 22, 2010, (<http://www.nature.nps.gov/climatechange/myths.cfm>)

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.

Myth 1: The current warming trend is a natural process, the Earth has done this before and nature is capable of coping.

The Earth's temperature fluctuates naturally over what humans view as very long periods of time; tens of thousands to millions of years. The temperature increase attributed to a sharp rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide occurred over a few decades. So while life on this planet copes with gradual change in a dynamic environment, the current warm up, and the speed at which it happens, is unprecedented over the last 1,300 years.

Myth 2: Scientists are in disagreement.

A recent survey of climatologists reveals that 97% of those scientists think that global climate change is occurring presently and that human activity is the primary cause. The myth that scientists disagree about the existence of

climate change persists because the scientific method is pitted against an apparent societal need for absolute certainty portrayed in the media.

When faced with a question, scientists first develop a "hypothesis" and then subject their hypothesis to rigorous experimentation and observation. Multiple proven hypotheses may be collected into a "theory," which summarizes several experiments and observations. Theories are lines of thinking that scientists accept as true, but scientists always make room for an exception, or for science to come along with new discoveries that can disprove previously accepted hypotheses and theories. A theory need not have 100% agreement to be valid, and theories seldom achieve unanimous approval. Scientists may disagree about certain aspects of climate change, but this is part of the scientific process, not a sign that a theory is inaccurate. As new facts come to light, science adjusts its theory. A "law" is a predicted set of observations with no significant exceptions. Theories do not "grow up" to be laws once they are proven. In fact, scientists are still refining Newton's laws of gravity.

Let's be clear. Climate change is happening all around us, and human activities are accelerating it. The evidence is overwhelming, and the theory of global warming is sound. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which conducted the survey above, consists of thousands of scientists from all over the world who specialize in different aspects of climate science. A separate study by the National Academy of the Sciences drew the same conclusions.

As a scientific agency, the National Park Service has learned to adapt our management practices to new evidence as it becomes available. For example, we used to manage forest fires by putting them out as quickly as possible. We now realize that fire is a natural process, and this process must remain active in fire-dependent ecosystems to promote healthy forests, and healthy forests release less carbon into the atmosphere in the long run.

We acknowledge that uncertainty remains over how fast and how much the temperature will increase. Nor are we certain about rainfall levels and the number or severity of storms. Some scientists think that the outcomes will slowly increase like turning a dial; while other scientists think it will be more like flipping a switch. Despite the uncertainty, we believe it far riskier to do nothing. We will move forward with the best science we have today. Our mission demands that we do so.

Myth 3: Global climate change is not human caused we can't possibly affect something as big as the planet.

Our history is alive with examples of human impacts on global systems, from something as large-scale as damming mighty rivers to a myriad of small actions like shooting the last passenger pigeon. We all have the ability to add and take away in small amounts to a global system. We find evidence of how humans have affected natural and cultural resources in our national parks. Petrified Forest National Park was once covered with pieces of petrified wood—not today. The park is facing the possibility that it may lose the singular thing that defines it—because some visitors have taken just one piece of petrified wood. When it comes to climate change, it is not just individual impacts but the collective impact that changes the global system.

Myth 4: If climate change were true we would be seeing the impacts already.

We ARE seeing the impacts in many places around the world. The most obvious impacts are currently visible in more northern latitudes, along the coasts, and in high-elevation habitats. The glaciers in Glacier National Park, for example, are shrinking—the park once had 150 glaciers larger than 25 acres in size, and now only 25 are left, and they are predicted to be completely gone by 2020. Plants like Joshua trees in Joshua Tree National Park or sugar maples in many eastern parks need a particular temperature zone to survive. They have already begun a shift across the landscape to reach the right growing conditions. Fire seasons in the West appear to start earlier and last longer into the fall. Park facilities and homes in Alaska are sinking due to thawing permafrost. Once gone, these fragile ecosystems and cultural resources are gone forever.

Myth 5: Cold weather disproves global warming.

While we may say "climate" when we mean "weather," and vice versa, they are two very different things. As Mark Twain put it, "Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get." Weather is what we get on a day-to-day basis, whereas climate is the average weather conditions over long periods of time. With the 2010 heavy snowstorms in

the Washington DC area, some declared that climate change was over. But climate scientists tell us that with climate change we can expect more flooding, more drought, extended heat waves, and more severe storms. Furthermore, one cold winter does not by itself change the long term average (the climate) much. Both the overall climate and the extremes of weather are a concern for national parks. In 2006, huge floods damaged many of the main roads in Mount Rainier National Park in the Washington state. The park was closed to visitors for many months to repair damaged roads and make it safe for visitors to reenter the park. Those storms may not be directly attributable to climate change, but the increased frequency of such storms will certainly impacts parks.

Myth 6: Climate change is being caused by the sun?

Recent records of the sun's activity show that solar radiation reaching the Earth varies by about 0.1%. That change is too small to explain documented warming over the past 50 years, and scientists haven't found any long-term trend in solar output that would explain it. Two factors control how much energy the Earth receives from the sun. First, subtle wobbles in our planet's orbit around the sun vary the amount of solar radiation received and changes the seasonal cycles. These "Milankovitch Cycles" affect the Earth on timescales of thousands of years and their impact on climate change is well understood. Second, the sun's energy output changes following the 11-year sunspot cycle, but also may vary gradually over longer periods of time.

Myth 7: Alternative energy is too expensive and cannot solve our energy needs.

We need to compare short-term and long-term costs to settle this myth. In the short-term, today's alternative energy producers are often more expensive than traditional energy sources. However, when long-term costs such as pollution, global warming, and quality of life are factored into the economics of energy, alternative energy shines. When faced with the need to change, America produces innovative solutions that lead the world. Many of these changes were very expensive and limited at the beginning. America's national parks were another innovative idea, sometimes called "America's best idea." They were expensive and controversial 100 years ago. Now they are priceless gems that reconnect us with nature, our heritage, and the larger world around us.

Myth 8: There is plenty of time to react to climate change.

Changes in the Earth's climate, because of the increased level of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, already affect our national parks and visitors' experience in the parks. Let's say we could stop pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere today. The amount we have already released would linger for decades and continue to raise the temperature at the surface of the Earth where we already see the effects of climate change. In the Rocky Mountains, for example, pine trees have already been infested by the mountain pine bark beetle, a blight brought on by the stresses of climate. Acres of dead trees have increased the threat of more severe fire activity, changed the visitor experience and created a hazard for campers in some national parks. By the time we realize such climatic effects, it is often too late to do something about it; a planned response to climate change is much better than a hasty reaction.

Myth 9: There's nothing I can do to change this, so why should I care?

One individual CAN make a difference, a difference that is compounded when others join in. We need your help to make changes so we can fulfill the mission of the National Park Service: to conserve our natural, cultural and historic resources for the enjoyment of this and future generations. We need your help to ensure generations to come experience the tallgrass prairie, see spectacular waterfalls, mountains and hear the call of the pika among wildflowers in the alpine tundra. Please join us.

20120420-04

11:01

Pam

Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA & Art)

Let us assume that some of the positions on both sides of the political spectrum are true:

1. Big government stifles progress and interferes with individual rights; big money controls governments worldwide, and the oil industry controls big money; ergo the oil industry, by calling the shots politically,

determines policy, especially energy policy. It follows logically that if you support big oil, you also support big government.

2. Obama is like every other politician, a tool of the monied interests. This explains why he has not tried harder to reign in big oil, and his administration has seen oil companies raking in unprecedented profits.

3. Obama is at heart a socialist and has a liberal agenda that includes destroying the oil industry, expanding support for "green" energy, and lowering our standard of living. He wants to do this because he's a liberal, and it's liberals who favor sustainable energy, not because he recognizes the science that proves climate change and the very real prospect of Earth becoming uninhabitable. I'm tempted to invoke Pascal's wager here. Pascal was an Enlightenment mathematician who didn't believe in God, but on his deathbed, he converted to Catholicism. His reason was, If there is no God, it doesn't matter what I do. If there is, then I'm covered. Why take the chance? Even if YOU are unconvinced that climate change is real and exacerbated by human activity, wouldn't it be prudent to be on the safe side and wean ourselves off fossil fuels? If Obama is anti-oil, what is his motive, if not to save the world?

4. Our standard of living today is worth more than the health and welfare of the Third World and more than our own children and grandchildren. Having to curtail our use of energy would be more onerous than "sharing" energy with developing nations or planning for the future (which was yesterday). Better that we have cars and planes and big-screen TVs and computers and warm homes and cool homes (all of which I have or use, BTW), even if it means depriving most of the world's population of a standard of living even remotely like ours. We deserve it. They don't. The future will somehow take care of itself, just as it always has. (Ask the dinosaurs.)

5. It's easier to accuse Obama of having nefarious intentions than to acknowledge the danger we are in. Believing something in the face of overwhelming opposition from people you don't like anyway feels far better and safer than opening your mind to the possibility of massive tragedy. When it's you against the world, it's easy to feel self-righteous. (Ask a teenage girl whose father hates her boyfriend.) When uncertain about who or what is responsible for x,y, or z, find a scapegoat and blame him for EVERYTHING. If you still don't feel safe but can't admit to yourself the world just might be changing in ways that will destroy life as we know it, if you feel helpless in the face of something so overwhelming, then take refuge in a threat--black helicopters, earthquakes, epidemics, terrorism--that you can at least have a chance of defending yourself against. Join a militia, dig a bunker in the back yard, stockpile a year's worth of food--then sit back and relax. If that doesn't appeal to you, just embrace the inevitable as God's will. Think about it--YOU will be present at Armageddon. How thrilling.

Don't all these evasions seem crazier than confronting the problem of climate change, figuring out what we can do about it, and implementing whatever steps are necessary to save the world? We're Friends of the Middle, right? I don't think that is limited to politics. For all to survive, all must have something. The world will not endure if a few have lots, and the rest have nothing. Our standard of living must fall, and the standard of living of Congo must rise. We must meet in the middle. (Ask Marie Antoinette.) We have been lucky, and I'm very grateful for that. But out luck will not hold when temperatures rise, major cities are submerged, and millions die. I am NOT arguing for absolute equality. There is no such thing, and it wouldn't be good if there were. All I'm saying is, America, Europe, indeed the whole world, need a broad middle class. That is not class warfare; it's human survival.

Sadly, so sadly, I don't see any progress on the part of the U.S. to deal with this crisis. I very much fear that we, who have given the world so much, will be responsible for hastening its ruin. I'm sorry to say, SteveBA, that nothing you said gives me any comfort. I only wish it did.

[20120420-12](#)

14:47

Dennis

Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA) & "Clean Air & Natural Gas"

Well, SteveBA, I don't know where you get the idea that Obama is opposing the development of natural gas, unless you only watch Fox News. Despite accusations by Republicans, like James Imhofe, who seem to love dirty air, Obama's new rules, as announced by the EPA, for restricting harmful emissions from natural gas wells are not his

way of slowing the boom in NG production. They are, in fact, a win-win, good for the environment and profitable for industry. Even the American Petroleum Institute does not oppose them (see NY Times editorial link below). It wasn't the API that you were referring to when you mentioned his Chicago buddies, was it?

"Clean Air and Natural Gas" New York Times Editorial

Apr. 19, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/opinion/clean-air-and-natural-gas.html?_r=2&ref=opinion)

(The Obama administration's new rules aimed at cutting harmful emissions from natural gas wells are a win for the environment, for the public and for industry. And despite what Republican politicians claim, the rules will not impose major new costs or slow what has been a remarkable boom in natural gas production.)

The rules, announced on Wednesday by the Environmental Protection Agency, are the first federal effort to address air pollution problems associated with hydraulic fracturing. They will require drillers to capture toxic and smog-forming pollutants, along with methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, before they escape into the air.

James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, immediately denounced the rules as one more administration effort to regulate gas production "out of existence." This followed Mitt Romney's absurd charge that President Obama was determined to use environmental regulations to "slow down the development of our own resources." The new rules would do nothing of the sort; even the American Petroleum Institute said it could live with them.

Roughly 13,000 wells are "fractured" each year. The rules would require drillers to undertake so-called green completions, in which gases emerging at the wellhead are captured and stored in trailer-mounted tanks and routed back into pipelines. Colorado and Wyoming already require green completions. And several major producers are making money by recapturing gas and reselling it, which more than offsets the costs of the new equipment.

Mr. Obama has repeatedly said that he favors robust exploration for natural gas, in part because it is plentiful and cheap and in part because it produces only about half the greenhouse gas emissions that coal does. Coal produces nearly half the country's electricity. But natural gas's share, now a little over one-fifth, is rising as more supplies are found and prices drop.

There are still legitimate concerns about hydrofracturing's potential impact on water supplies — an E.P.A. study is due next year. But the rules should ease concerns about the process's effect on air pollution and global warming. Far from presenting new obstacles to drilling, the rules could win supporters for hydrofracturing.

20120420-16	18:13	SteveBA	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Dennis)
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I worry about You, his hit men the EPA has gone the natural gas industry tooth and nail. He couldn't even get Reid to support tax subsidies to quicken the implementation of CNN conversion but pushed through tax breaks for anyone who buys the volt from government gm motors. Ps I have heard that the battery replacement for the volt is 40k if car doesn't catch on fire first.

20120420-18	18:27	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
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Well, this confirms that you are getting your fallacious information from Fox News. The EPA are "hit men"? I wish. As for the Volt, it was named car of the year in Europe and is very well liked by the people who own one, even if it isn't such a great value that takes 26 years to break even on it. However, the "catch on fire" BS was disproved and only lingers on in the minds of you and the Fox News bubbleheads.

20120420-05 11:35 SteveG Fw: Media Education Video: "Cause & Effect"

from Miss Representation:

Every parent, woman, girl, or man who cares about women and girls needs to see this video:

<http://www.upworthy.com/what-happens-to-3-out-of-4-girls-after-leaving-through-a-fashion-mag-for-3-minut?c=nm4>.

20120420-06 12:11 Bill Fw: AMA's Opinion of Obamacare

The American Medical Association has weighed in on Obama's health care package. The Allergists were in favor of scratching it, but the Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves. The Gastroenterologists had sort of a gut feeling about it, but the Neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve.

Meanwhile, Obstetricians felt certain everyone was laboring under a misconception, while the Optometrists considered the idea shortsighted. Pathologists yelled, "Over my dead body!" while the Pediatricians said, "Oh, grow up!"

The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness, while the Radiologists could see right through it. Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing and the Internists claimed it would indeed be a bitter pill to swallow.

The Plastic Surgeons opined that this proposal would "put a whole new face on the matter". The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists were pi*sed off at the whole idea. Anesthesiologists thought the whole idea was a gas, and those lofty Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.

In the end, the Proctologists won out, leaving the entire decision up to the a*s-holes in Washington.

20120420-07 13:29 SteveG Fw: PFAW Action: Send Scott Walker a Copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

from People for the American Way:

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has launched an all-out assault on the rights of his constituents. And to add insult to injury, he's made smug comments trivializing those same fundamental rights and protections.

Walker clearly needs to be educated about people's rights and their importance. That's why we're going to deliver a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the governor -- on your behalf if you sign here:

<http://site.pfaw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=UDHR&autologin=true>.

You know Walker and his right-wing allies in the state legislature stripped workers' collective bargaining rights. But what you might not know is that he said about collective bargaining:

It's not a rights issue. It's an expensive entitlement.

And we told you about Walker's repeal of Wisconsin's Equal Pay Enforcement Act -- ending pay-equity protections for women, veterans, seniors and disabled workers. But did you know he said the equal pay law was nothing more than a "gravy train" for trial lawyers?

Scott Walker denies that these important rights -- rights that many people depend on -- are rights at all. But the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations following World War II, says differently.

Article 23 of the UDHR is very explicit:

- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

It's time to set Scott Walker straight.

Send Scott Walker a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights now.

Obviously, Gov. Walker could stand to read it. We'll deliver a nice hardcover copy of the Declaration to Walker in Madison, as our gift to him on your behalf. Just sign your name to the note that will accompany it urging him to read it.

Millions of Wisconsinites depended on the important legal protections that were in place to safeguard these basic human rights. Help make Walker understand what he took away from them. Thank you for standing up for the rights of all Americans -- in Wisconsin and nationwide -- against attacks from the Far Right.

-- Diallo Brooks, Director of Field Mobilization

20120420-08	13:32	SteveG	Fw: DSCC Petition: Take a Stand to Protect Women
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from Emily's List:

Frankly, I'm disgusted that I even have to write this message. You would think that if any issue was safe from political posturing, it would be violence against women.

But no. Next week, the Senate is scheduled to vote on renewing the Violence Against Women Act, and Republicans can't stop playing politics for a single day on an issue this important. Many, many Republicans in Congress have announced their opposition to renewing the Act -- including some of those running against our women.

This vote could actually be close. It's enough to make me want to throw up my hands and scream. But that won't help the women who need the protections in this law.

What will help them? Showing them that we're standing together to protect women's health and safety.

The vote is coming soon, so we need you to act right now. [Click here](#) to tell Republicans to stop playing politics with women's lives.

Since President Clinton first signed it, the Violence Against Women Act has given law enforcement agencies the tools they need to stop domestic violence, and given women resources to protect themselves. This legislation has saved countless lives, and every time it has come up in Congress for renewal, it has passed easily and with bi-partisan support.

But now we're facing a new political reality, one where the Republican Party is run by its most extreme elements. Something that used to be a no-brainer is now just another political football for Republicans to use to impress the Tea Party radicals who are calling the shots for them.

Make no mistake: they are playing politics with women's lives.

We can win this. There are Republicans wavering, a few who know this is too important for politics and are ready to buck their party to support renewing VAWA. But they need to hear from you.

[Click here](#) right now, before the Senate votes, and tell Republicans to protect the health of women and their families:

<http://www.dscc.org/vawa?track=20120420-VAWA-EmilysList>.

I don't need to tell you that our EMILY's List champions in the Senate are leading the fight to protect women. And we're going to keep working to elect more pro-choice women to fight for us -- like Barbara Mikulski and Patty Murray and Dianne Feinstein -- so the next time VAWA comes up for renewal, there is no fight. But there's no time to waste if we want to win this fight today. Thanks for your support.

Warmly, Stephanie Schriock, President

20120420-09	14:05	SteveG	"Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas"
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"Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (w/ Video) by Reuters/MSNBC

Apr. 20, 2012, (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/20/11306372-catholic-nuns-group-stunned-by-vatican-scolding-for-radical-feminist-ideas?lite>)

The Catholic Church accused the nation's largest organization of American nuns of espousing "radical feminist" ideas. MSNBC's Lawrence O'Donnell discusses the charges with Sister Jeannine Gramick, who was once silenced by the Vatican, and Jeff Stone, communications director of Dignity USA.

A prominent U.S. Catholic nuns group said it was "stunned" that the Vatican reprimanded it for spending too much time on poverty and social justice concerns and not enough on abortion and gay marriage.

In a stinging report on Wednesday, the Vatican said the Leadership Conference of Women Religious had been "silent on the right to life" and had failed to make the "Biblical view of family life and human sexuality" a central plank in its agenda. It accused the group of promoting "certain radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith."

It also reprimanded American nuns for expressing positions on political issues that differed, at times, from views held by American bishops. Public disagreement with the bishops -- "who are the church's authentic teachers of faith and morals" -- is unacceptable, the report said.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a "doctrinal assessment" saying the Holy See was compelled to intervene with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to correct "serious doctrinal problems."

The nuns group, based in Silver Spring, Md., said in a statement Thursday on its website, "The presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious was stunned by the conclusions of the doctrinal assessment." It added it may give a lengthier response at a later date.

The conference says it represents 80 percent of America's 57,000 Catholic nuns. It is influential both in the United States and globally.

Academics who study the church said the Vatican's move was predictable given Pope Benedict's conservative views and efforts by Rome to quell internal dissent and curtail autonomy within its ranks.

"This is more an expression of the Church feeling under siege by trends it cannot control within the Church, much less within the broader society," University of Notre Dame historian Scott Appleby said.

That includes a steady drumbeat of calls to ordain women as priests, which the pope has reasserted was an impossibility.

The Vatican named Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain and two other U.S. bishops to undertake the reforms of the conference's statutes, programs and its application of liturgical texts, a process it said could take up to five years.

(Msnbc.com's James Eng contributed to this report from Reuters.)

20120420-10	14:45	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
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The Catholic church still lives in the Middle Ages. I simply cannot imagine how American Catholics reconcile their submission to an authoritarian hierarchy with a commitment to democracy. I have Catholic friends, but I've never had the nerve to ask them this.

20120420-13	14:47	SteveB	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
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This one is absolutely sickening to me. How can all those devoted, good women continue to serve a Pope like that, who slaps them in the face as if they were dogs? Amazing.

The Catholics here almost universally love the Church but loathe its positions on, well, everything except maybe God. But that doesn't make pigs fly or women priests.

Pssst!....I hear the Vatican has been seeking Iran's help in building an atomic bomb. I don't think it's too late for a preemptive strike!

20120420-14	14:58	SteveG	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
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If you were born in Saudi Arabia you are probably Muslim.

If you were born in Israel you are probably Jewish.

If you were born in India you are probably Hindu.

If you were born in China you are probably Buddhist.

If you were born in Utah you are probably Mormon.

If you were born in South America you are probably Catholic.

If you were born in the US (except for Utah) you are or were probably protestant.

Religion is based on geography and the strength of the controlling religious body.

20120420-15	16:42	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
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There's some kind of mafia/murder mystery swirling around the Vatican. I await developments.

20120420-11	14:46	SteveB	Video: Jon Stewart Interviews Robert Reich
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Video: "Robert Reich Extended Interview" from NationofChange

Apr. 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/robert-reich-extended-interview-1334932520>)

Americans can't rely only on getting good people elected, Reich argues, because nothing positive happens in Washington unless good people outside Washington are organized to help make those things happen after the election. But in order to be effectively mobilized, we need to see the big picture. Reich connects the dots for us, showing why the increasing share of income and wealth going to the top has hobbled jobs and growth for everyone else, while undermining our democracy; has caused Americans to become increasingly cynical about public life; and has turned many Americans against one another. He also explains why the proposals of the "regressive right" are dead wrong and provides a clear road map for what must be done instead. Here is a blueprint for action for everyone who cares about the future of America.

20120420-17	18:15	SteveBA	"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work"
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I thought I would share with you a picture of the dems in the senate hard at work.

"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work" posted by Ed Morrissey, Hot Air

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/04/19/picture-of-the-day-democrats-not-at-work/>)

Guy Benson says that this is a picture worth 1,086 words — one for each day since the Democrat-led Senate passed the budget resolution required by law each April 15th. This picture comes from yesterday's so-called "mark-up session" of the Senate Budget Committee, a meeting which chair Kent Conrad helpfully promoted by declaring that he wouldn't allow any votes to be taken on budgets. That turned the meeting into nothing more than a discussion forum, one that Conrad's colleagues decided to skip. The picture, taken by a Republican staffer at the meeting, shows all 11 Republicans sitting on the far side of the table — and almost no Democrats in their chairs.

The meeting was broadcast on one of the C-SPAN channels, so this isn't exactly a secret. Only three Democrats bothered to show up at all, out of a dozen assigned to it. Republicans showed up, prepared to cast votes to finally bring the ignominious streak of 1,085 days (as of yesterday) without a budget resolution to an end. Sadly, Democrats — who control the committee, the chamber, and the White House — don't have the same sense of responsibility.

Senator Jeff Sessions, like all of the other Republican members of the Senate Budget Committee, actually showed up for work. Sessions delivered a stinging rebuke to the leadership for their irresponsibility and utter lack of leadership on a core function of the Senate.

For a party that demands that voters put them in charge, they seem utterly unwilling to do the job once they have it. Voters should keep this in mind in November, up and down the ballot.



[20120420-19](#) 21:32 Jim Fw: The Fable of the Porcupine

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com does NOT confirm this story. –SteveB]

Fable of the Porcupine

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold.

The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together to keep warm. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions.

After awhile, they decided to distance themselves one from the other and they began to die, alone and frozen. So they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the Earth.

Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. They learned to live with the little wounds caused by the close relationship with their companions in order to receive the heat that came from the others. This way they were able to survive.

The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people, but when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities.

The moral of the story is: Just learn to live with the Pricks in your life!



20120421-01	10:14	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Petition: Tell Angie's List to Drop Support of Rush Limbaugh
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http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/al_limbaugh/?r=6878444&id=38786-3891339-ZRuiO2x

20120421-02	10:15	SteveG	"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor"
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"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor" by Cynthia Tucker, The National Memo

Apr. 21, 2012, (<http://www2.nationalmemo.com/when-in-need-of-political-distraction-bash-the-poor/>)

Poor people are useful during political season.

Politicians offer up the impoverished to distract from the myriad problems for which their platforms propose no workable solutions: Is the treasury awash in red ink? Are there too many demands on a shrinking government purse? Then let's tighten up on largesse for the very poor.

Never mind that traditional welfare programs barely make a dent in federal spending. Middle-class voters are eager to hear plans that aim the budget-cutting ax away from the entitlement programs, such as Medicare, which have a large constituency among the well-heeled.

After all, voters, like political candidates, find it useful to point the finger at the less fortunate. The impoverished serve to remind the rest of us of our obvious moral superiority, of our wise choices, of our supreme good judgment in not being born poor.

That's why the current season has brought another round of the faddish insistence on mandatory drug tests for beneficiaries of welfare. Nathan Deal, Georgia's Republican governor, has become the latest political leader to get in on the mischief-making, signing a bill passed by the GOP-dominated Legislature that would require drug tests for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

In places where conservative policymakers tend to gather — such as meetings of the American Legislative Exchange Council — proposals such as this are offered up in lieu of legislation that might actually reduce spending or boost government efficiency or improve the lives of the poor.

Mitt Romney, the likely GOP nominee for president, has endorsed the idea. In February, congressional Republicans refused to pass an extension of unemployment benefits until the legislation allowed states to require drug tests for the jobless.

You might have thought that conservative ideologues — those who insist that the U.S. Constitution guides their every brainwave and that an overweening government is the greatest threat to the survival of the republic — would hesitate to pass a law that so clearly violates principles laid out in the Bill of Rights. You'd be wrong.

Indeed, Georgia proceeded with imposing mandatory drug tests even though a federal judge has blocked a similar law in Florida.

And that's not the only lesson to be learned from the Florida experience, where GOP Gov. Rick Scott signed the drug-test requirement last year.

Though conservatives insist that the measure will save money, it didn't in the Sunshine State. It didn't reduce welfare rolls or uncover a culture of meth- or crack-addicted "welfare queens."

According to Florida state documents released last week, only 108 of the 4,086 would-be beneficiaries who were tested from July to October of last year failed. (The documents were released by the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, which obtained them as a result of a lawsuit against the drug-testing requirement. The ACLU notes that the law violates the Fourth Amendment ban against unreasonable search and seizure.)

That's 2 1/2 percent, folks — a far smaller percentage of drug users than among the general population. According to last year's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, conducted by the federal government, 10 percent of Americans reported regularly using illegal drugs.

Since taxpayers pay for the drug tests and since the requirement is likely to continue generating lawsuits, it will end up costing more in the long run. But it's pretty clear that this idea was never about saving money or helping the poor. Quite the opposite: It's another in a long list of mean-spirited proposals to inconvenience and intimidate the impoverished, as if their lives are not already difficult enough.

Back in the 1990s, when Republicans pushed a wide-ranging welfare reform plan through Congress, I was naive enough to believe that its proponents were genuinely worried about multi-generational dependency. They imposed lifetime limits on welfare, which should have calmed any concerns about "welfare queens" and a culture of seeking "hand-outs."

But it's now clear that they need to keep hammering at the poor for their alleged failings. It's useful political theater.

(Cynthia Tucker, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a visiting professor at the University of Georgia. She can be reached at cynthia@cythiatucker.com.)

20120421-03	10:16	SteveB	"Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare"
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"Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare" by Jonathan Alter, Bloomberg View

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-19/barney-frank-makes-a-misdiagnosis-on-obamacare.html>)

Representative Barney Frank, who is not seeking re-election, gave a memorable exit interview this week to *New York* magazine suggesting that President Barack Obama "underestimated, as did Clinton, the sensitivity of people to what they see as an effort to make them share the health care with poor people."

The Democratic Party "paid a terrible price for health care," Frank said. "I would not have pushed it as hard."

Frank's take is self-serving. He argued that Obama should have proposed financial reform first, which is convenient considering that he was chairman of the House Financial Services Committee at the time and would have loved all eyes on his bill.

But the question remains: Is Frank right? We know what Republicans unanimously think. What's surprising is how many Democrats, with the benefit of hindsight and speaking sotto voce, agree with Frank. Although they support the substance of the law, they are appalled by its political fallout and wish they had a do-over. Their thinking was summarized this week in the *National Journal* by Michael Hirsh, who wrote that by embracing health care reform amid the economic crisis, Obama confused his priorities and took his eye off the ball, much as President George W. Bush did when he invaded Iraq instead of worrying more about al-Qaeda.

This analysis has new resonance because of the recent Supreme Court oral arguments over Obamacare (a term, by the way, that the Obama campaign now embraces). Democrats are wondering if it was worth it to lose the House in 2010 and perhaps the White House in 2012 over a bill that may be declared unconstitutional, anyway.

The answer is yes. To understand why, we need to be clear about the purpose of politics.

It's not to win elections -- hard as that may be to believe in the middle of a campaign. Public approval as expressed in elections is the means to change the country, not the end in itself.

Insuring 30 million Americans and ending the shameful era when an illness in the family meant selling the house or declaring personal bankruptcy? Nothing to sneeze at, whatever the cost to one's political career.

Frank is mistaken that the White House underestimated the political price. At various points, Vice President Joe Biden, senior advisor David Axelrod and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel advised the president to focus entirely on the economy and leave comprehensive health care for another day. "I begged him not to do this," Emanuel told me when I was researching my book about Obama's first year in office.

I asked the president in late 2009 why he overruled his team. He answered: "I remember telling Nancy Pelosi that moving forward on this could end up being so costly for me politically that it would affect my chances" in 2012. But he and Pelosi agreed that if they didn't move at the outset of the Obama presidency "it was not going to get done."

Obama was right that his political capital would diminish over time. Even if the Democrats had delayed health care and held the House in 2010, their numbers would almost certainly have been reduced. Can you imagine trying to bring it up now or in a second term?

Hirsh argues that Obama should have stayed focused on the economy not for appearances' sake but because it was worse off than he and his closest advisers recognized. This wrongly assumes that he could have done substantively more to spur a rebound or keep the benefits of recovery from skewing toward the top 1 percent.

Liberal critics rightly say that Obama should have had a broader circle that included liberal economists. But their remedy -- restructuring of the banks -- turned out to be unnecessary for reviving the economy and would have cost, by some estimates, several hundred billion dollars on top of the Troubled Asset Relief Program.

It's important to remember that Obama began his presidency with economic recovery, not health care. In his first month in office, he pushed through a mammoth stimulus package that, contrary to the analysis of Drew Westen and others, was as big as Congress would allow. There was no political appetite for a second stimulus before the first had even kicked in -- the period when health care was on the table. In other words, the opportunity costs of health-care reform were zero.

As for other priorities, passing the Dodd-Frank financial reform in 2009 would have accomplished nothing except to further slow momentum for health care. In the New York magazine interview, Frank says his bill, which passed in July of 2010, ended up with almost all he wanted anyway.

The other possible legislative achievement -- pushing a cap-and-trade energy bill before health care -- was a nonstarter. Even after that bill cleared the House in mid-2009, Max Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, made clear that it would never become law.

The "eye off the ball" critics have a point, but it relates to the second year of Obama's presidency, not the first.

Just as Nixon had his "18.5-minute gap" on the Watergate tapes, so Obama had his 18-month gap, from the signing of the Affordable Care Act in March 2010 until the introduction of his jobs bill in September 2011.

If the president had pivoted more quickly from health care to a jobs agenda and signed a bill before the midterms, he would be better off politically and might even have helped the economy a bit.

But let's not pretend health-care reform was a fatal Iraq-style distraction from the main event. Instead of costing thousands of lives, it will potentially save many more with its incentives for preventive care, among other historic provisions.

The public might not appreciate it yet, but Obamacare took leadership and guts from the president whose name it bears.

20120421-04	10:19	SteveG	"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs"
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"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs" by Mia Steinle, POGO

Apr 18, 2012, (<http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2012/04/stuck-in-the-past-does-cold-war-mindset-leads-to-billions-blown-on-nuke-labs.html>)

We've been saying for some time that the U.S. nuclear weapons complex is a relic of the Cold War. Now it seems even the Department of Defense (DoD) has had enough, according to a Pentagon memo obtained by the Project On Government Oversight, and is calling out the Department of Energy (DOE) for its refusal to downsize its nuclear weapons laboratories. POGO sent a letter to Members of Congress today—along with a copy of the leaked DoD memo—urging them to ensure that DOE does not circumvent the congressional funding process and pour even more money into its oversized lab system. We also urged DOE to follow DoD's lead by closing redundant lab space and by placing a cap on contractor compensation at the labs.

The DoD memo appears to have been written in response to a new interagency council comprised of DOE, DoD, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The council is looking for ways "to engage in interagency long-term strategic planning" for the DOE labs. Simply put, the interagency council could create new missions for the nuclear weapons labs and could allow the agencies to funnel funding into DOE nuclear projects without congressional approval.

But, at a time when President Obama is calling for a "leaner" military and the Administration is considering shrinking the nuclear stockpile to reflect the realities of the 21st century, DOE nuclear labs should be getting smaller too.

As the DoD memo notes, experts have been urging DOE to downsize its labs (including the three nuclear weapons laboratories) since the end of the Cold War. The White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy concluded in 1995, "the DOE laboratory system is bigger and more expensive than it needs to be," and there is "excessive duplication of capabilities among the labs."

However, funding for the labs now exceeds Cold War levels, due in part to lobbying by the DOE lab directors. According to the DoD memo, the Administration's plans to increase funding to \$8.6 billion per year over the next ten years is almost 70 percent higher than spending during the Cold War in constant dollars. In another leaked

memo obtained by POGO, an official from the Office of the Secretary of Defense noted that the DOE labs want to take on new missions as a way to justify their oversized infrastructure.

By contrast, the DoD has undertaken five Base Realignment and Closure rounds, or BRACs, since 1988, closing 21 laboratories and eliminating excess capacity. This past November, a DOE Office of Inspector General report concluded that DOE should carry out a BRAC-like review of its labs, which could lead to consolidation or realignment—which are ultimately money-savers for the labs and for taxpayers.

And, as we point out in the letter, taxpayers are footing a hefty bill for the labs. Seven of the top fifteen officials at the three nuclear weapons labs make more than the Administration's \$700,000 executive compensation cap. In theory, any amount above the compensation cap shouldn't be a burden on taxpayers, as the labs are required to pay for the difference out of their own profits. However, because the labs use their government-granted award fees to pay the difference, taxpayers end up picking up the slack. For instance, in 2009, taxpayer dollars covered all of former Sandia Lab Director Tom Hunter's \$1.7-million salary.

What's more, the DOE is clearly resistant to transparency, keeping under wraps the justification for the labs' award fees. Since, 2009, the department has denied the public timely access to its revealing Performance Evaluation Plans (PEPs) and Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs), which POGO called "perhaps the single most important information available to hold NNSA [National Nuclear Security Administration] accountable" in a letter to President Obama. We've only been able to see recent PERs due to the efforts of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, which filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the NNSA for access to the documents.

Congress needs to step in. POGO echoes the call of other experts who believe the DOE must reevaluate its oversized, outdated lab system. Instead of giving the DOE lab complex a blank check to continue to grow, it's time to end the bloat.

20120421-05	17:07	Dennis	"The Autism Epidemic & Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?"
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Here's why the EPA really should do a "hit" on environmental polluters such as Monsanto:

"The Autism Epidemic and Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?" by Dr Brian Moench, Truthout

Apr. 21, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/news/item/8586-the-autism-epidemic-and-disappearing-bees-a-common-denominator>)

On a recent front page of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, a frightening, oversized headline read, "Highest rate in the nation, 1 in 32 Utah boys has autism." Less well publicized, another national story ran the same day: "New pesticides linked to bee population collapse." If you eat food and hope to do so a few years from now, this should be equally frightening. A common denominator may underlie both stories.

A recent Stanford University study, examining 192 pairs of twins, where one twin was autistic and one was not, found that genetics account for 38 percent of the risk of autism and environmental factors account for 62 percent.¹

Suggesting an environmental and genetic tag team are other studies showing mothers of autistic children and autistic children themselves have a high rate of a genetic deficiency in the production of glutathione, an antioxidant and the body's primary means of detoxifying heavy metals.² High levels of toxic metals in children are strongly correlated with the severity of autism.³ Low levels of glutathione, coupled with high production of another chemical, homocysteine, increase the chance of a mother having an autistic child to one in three, according to Dr. Jim Adams, director of Arizona State University's Autism/Asperger's Research Program. That autism is four times more common among boys than girls is likely related to a defect in the single male X chromosome contributing to antioxidant deficiency. There is no such thing as a genetic disease epidemic because genes don't change that quickly. So, the alarming rise in autism must be the result of increased environmental exposures that exploit these genetic defects.

During the critical first three months of gestation, a human embryo adds 250,000 brain cells per minute, reaching 200 billion by the fifth month. There is no chemical elixir that improves this biological miracle, but thousands of toxic substances can cross the placenta and impair that process, leaving brain cells stressed, inflamed, less well developed, fewer in number and with fewer anatomic connections with each other, all of which diminish brain function. The opportunity to make up for the resulting deficits later on is limited.

The list of autism's environmental suspects is long and comes from many different studies that show higher rates of autism with greater exposure to flame retardants, plasticizers like BPA, pesticides, endocrine disruptors in personal care products, heavy metals in air pollution, mercury and pharmaceuticals like anti-depressants.^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13} (Utah's highest in the nation autism rates are matched by the highest rates of anti-depressant use and the highest mercury levels in the country in the Great Salt Lake.)

Doctors have long advised women during pregnancy to avoid any unnecessary consumption of drugs or chemicals. But as participants in modern society, we are all now exposed to over 83,000 chemicals from the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe and the consumer products we use. Pregnant women and their children are experiencing 100 times more chemical exposures today than people living 50 years ago. The average newborn has over 287 different chemicals and heavy metals contaminating its blood when it takes its first breath.^{14,15} One hundred and fifty-eight of them are known to be toxic to the brain. Little wonder that rates of autism, attention deficit and behavioral disorders are all on the rise.

How does this relate to disappearing bees and your ability to put food on your table? Three new studies show that the rapid rise in the use of insecticides are likely responsible for the mass disappearance of bee populations.^{16,17,18} The world's entire food chain hangs in the balance because 90 percent of native plants require pollinators to survive.

The nervous system of insects is the intended target of these insecticides. They disrupt the bees homing behavior and their ability to return to the hive, kind of like "bee autism." But insects are different than humans, right? Human and insect nerve cells share the same basic biologic infrastructure. Chemicals that interrupt electrical impulses in insect nerves will do the same to humans.

But humans are much bigger than insects and the doses to humans are miniscule, right? During critical first trimester development, a human is no bigger than an insect, so there is every reason to believe that pesticides could wreak havoc with the developing brain of a human embryo. But human embryos aren't out in corn fields being sprayed with insecticides and herbicides, are they? A recent study showed that every human tested had the world's most popular pesticide, Roundup, detectable in their urine at concentrations between five and twenty times the level considered safe for drinking water.

The autism epidemic and the disappearance of bees are just two of many self-imposed disasters from allowing our world, including Utah, to be overwhelmed by environmental toxins. Environmental protection- including the smallest and most vulnerable among us - is human protection.

Footnotes

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¹¹Whyatt RM, Liu X, Rauh VA, Calafat AM, Just AC, Hoepner L, et al. 2011. "Maternal Prenatal Urinary Phthalate Metabolite Concentrations and Child Mental, Psychomotor and Behavioral Development at Age Three Years," Environ Health Perspect.

¹²Holmes AS, Blaxill MF, Haley BE; "Reduced levels of mercury in first baby haircuts of autistic children," Int J Toxicol. 2003 Jul-Aug;22(4):277-85.

¹³Allen J, Shanker G, Tan K, Aschner M. "The Consequences of Methylmercury Exposure on Interactive Functions between Astrocytes and Neurons," Neurotoxicology 23.(2002) 755-759.

¹⁴"Body Burden - The Pollution in Newborns," Environmental Working Group, 2005.

¹⁵Woodruff TJ, Zota AR, Schwartz JM 2011. "Environmental Chemicals in Pregnant Women in the United States: NHANES 2003-2004," Environ Health Perspect 119:878-885.

¹⁶M. Henry et al. "A common pesticide decreases foraging success and survival in honey bees," Science. doi: 10.1126/science.1215039.

¹⁷P.R. Whitehorn et al. "Neonicotinoid pesticide reduces bumble bee colony growth and queen production," Science. doi: 10.1126/science.1215025.

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20120422-01 15:11 SteveG Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send John Boehner a Mutant Shrimp Picture
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from Daily Kos:

Steve, please sign the picture of a mutant Gulf Coast shrimp we are sending to John Boehner, along with a petition telling him to pass legislation mandating that fines paid by BP go toward the clean up and restoration of the Gulf Coast. Click here to sign the picture and the petition.

Two years after the BP oil spill, Gulf Coast fishermen are finding huge amounts of mutated seafood. The devastation this is causing to local fisheries is just one of the many ways Gulf Coast communities are struggling to recover from the spill.

To help out, last month the U.S. Senate passed legislation mandating that 80 percent of all court-ordered fines paid by BP go toward Gulf Coast clean up and restoration. The legislation, known as the RESTORE Act, passed with the support of all Democrats and a majority of Republicans.

However, the RESTORE Act has stalled in the House. While it would easily pass if a vote was held, Speaker John Boehner has not yet held one.

Push him along. Please, add your name to the picture and petition we are sending John Boehner, telling him that fines paid by BP should go toward the clean up and restoration of the Gulf Coast.

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=123

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Daily Kos

20120422-02	23:57	SteveB	"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China"
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Republicans should listen to Jon Huntsman, perhaps the only completely sane man in the GOP leadership. But, of course, most Republicans seem to think he's crazy. LOL!

"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China" by Huffington Post

Apr. 22, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/22/jon-huntsman-gop_n_1444529.html)

Jon Huntsman leveled harsh criticism at his party on Sunday evening, BuzzFeed's Zeke Miller reported, comparing the Republican Party to communist China and questioning the strength of this year's presidential field.

During an event at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, Huntsman spoke candidly about his party's flaws, lamenting the Republican National Committee's decision to rescind an invitation to a major fundraising event after Huntsman called for a third-party candidate to enter the race.

"This is what they do in China on party matters if you talk off script," Huntsman said.

Huntsman, a former Utah governor who dropped out of the GOP primary in January, served as U.S. ambassador to China under President Barack Obama.

He also criticized the Republican candidates' foreign policy stances, particularly in regard to China.

"I don't know what world these people are living in," Huntsman said.

Although Huntsman did not mention any specific candidates, he has criticized Mitt Romney in the past for his "wrong-headed" approach. Huntsman, who endorsed Romney after dropping out of the race, said in February that the former Massachusetts governor should take a more opportunity-minded view to relations with China.

Huntsman also spoke on Sunday about his presidential candidacy, revealing that he was less than impressed by his fellow candidates when he attended his first debate in August.

"Is this the best we could do?" Huntsman said he asked himself.

He also joked that his wife forbade him to pander to the party's far-right contingency ahead of Iowa's caucuses, which likely hurt him with conservative voters in the Hawkeye State.

"She said if you pandered, if you sign any of those damn pledges, I'll leave you," Huntsman said. **"So I had to say I believe in science -- and people on stage look at you quizzically as though you're ... an oddball."**

Huntsman, however, did not actively campaign in Iowa, telling CBS News in December that "they pick corn," not presidents, in that early caucus state.

Since dropping out of the race, Huntsman has remained critical of his former opponents and has remained lukewarm in his backing of Romney.

"Gone are the days when the Republican Party used to put forward big, bold, visionary stuff,"

Huntsman said during the February interview with MSNBC that got him disinvited from the RNC fundraiser. "I think we're going to have problems politically until we get some sort of third-party movement or some alternative voice out there that can put forward new ideas."

And unlike others in his party who have endorsed Romney, Huntsman has refrained from appearing at campaign events on behalf of his party's likely nominee. According to his daughter, Abby Livingston, he won't be joining Romney on the trail anytime soon.

"My dad is not a surrogate for Romney and will not be out stumping for him in the general," she told ABC News earlier this month. "He is enjoying private life."

20120422-03 23:59 SteveB Photo: Earth Day, 2012

<http://www.earthday.org/>

Why Didn't Jesus Tell Us to Take Care of It or Didn't They Listen?



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

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