



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #159 — JUNE 13, 2012

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

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He Didn't Win the Nobel Prize for Nothin'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 13, 2012)

Just when you might have been thinking that you're the only sane person on the planet, I present to you one economist who is anything but crazy, though Republicans sure love to claim he is.

"Paul Krugman's 13 Best GOP Zingers" by Politico

June 11, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/gallery/2012/06/krugmans-13-best-gop-zingers/000196-002352.html>)

Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman blasted President Barack Obama on Monday for having "screwed up the line" by saying the private sector is "doing fine," but the *New York Times* columnist saves his sharpest barbs for Republicans.

1. "Sometimes you do wonder if these guys are moles, Manchurian candidates for I don't know who, if their real job is to bring down America because they really are doing the best they can." — May 18, 2012, on CNN's "Martin Bashir," speaking about House Speaker John Boehner's and other Republican leaders' economic policies.
2. "I have a structural hypothesis here. You have a Republican ideology, which Mitt Romney obviously doesn't believe in. He just oozes insincerity, that's just so obvious. But all of the others are fools and clowns. And there is a question here, my hypothesis is that maybe this is an ideology that only fools and clowns can actually believe in, and that's the Republican problem." — Nov. 20, 2011, on ABC's "This Week," speaking about the 2012 Republican presidential contenders.
3. "All he does is make scary noises about the deficit, with mood music, with organ music in the background about how ominous it is, and then propose a plan that would in fact increase the deficit." — May 3, 2012, speaking with TPM about Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI)
4. "Just how stupid does Mitt Romney think we are? If you've been following his campaign from the beginning, that's a question you have probably asked many times." — April 22, 2012, in a column titled "The Amnesia Candidate"
5. "What happened after 9/11 — and I think even people on the right know this, whether they admit it or not — was deeply shameful. The atrocity should have been a unifying event, but instead it became a wedge

issue. Fake heroes like Bernie Kerik, Rudy Giuliani, and, yes, George W. Bush raced to cash in on the horror.” — Sept. 11, 2011, in a blog post titled “The Years of Shame”

6. “If you don’t know multiple people who are suffering, then you must be living in a very rarefied environment. You must be maybe a member of the Romney clan, or something.” — June 9, 2012, speaking at the Netroots Nation conference

7. “It was his time, the Republican base does not want Romney and they keep on looking for an alternative, and Newt — although somebody said ‘he’s a stupid man’s idea of what a smart person sounds like,’ but he is more plausible than the other guys that they’ve been pushing up.” — Nov. 20, 2011, on ABC’s “This Week,” speaking about Newt Gingrich’s surge in the 2012 race

8. “You know that Republicans will yell about the evils of partisanship whenever anyone tries to make a connection between the rhetoric of Beck, Limbaugh, etc. and the violence I fear we’re going to see in the months and years ahead. But violent acts are what happen when you create a climate of hate. And it’s long past time for the GOP’s leaders to take a stand against the hate-mongers.” — Jan. 8, 2011, blogging about the shooting of Rep. Gabby Giffords

9. “According to the prediction market Intrade, there’s a 45 percent chance that a real-life Gordon Gekko will be the next Republican presidential nominee.” — Dec. 8, 2011, referring to Mitt Romney in a column titled “All the GOP’s Gekkos.”

10. “The odds are that one of these years the world’s greatest nation will find itself ruled by a party that is aggressively anti-science, indeed anti-knowledge. And, in a time of severe challenges — environmental, economic, and more — that’s a terrifying prospect.” — Aug. 28, 2011, in a column titled “Republicans Against Science”

11. “Stop, hey, what’s that sound? Actually, it’s the noise a great political party makes when it loses what’s left of its mind. And it happened — where else? — on Fox News on Sunday, when Mitt Romney bought fully into the claim that gas prices are high thanks to an Obama administration plot.” — March 22, 2012, in a column titled “Paranoia Strikes Deeper”

12. “If Ron Paul got on TV and said ‘Gah gah goo goo debasement! theft!’ — which is a rough summary of what he actually did say — his supporters would say that he won the debate hands down.” — May 1, 2012, blogging “On the Uselessness of Debates.”

13. “In fact, all four significant Republican presidential candidates still standing are fiscal phonies. They issue apocalyptic warnings about the dangers of government debt and, in the name of deficit reduction, demand savage cuts in programs that protect the middle class and the poor. But then they propose squandering all the money thereby saved — and much, much more — on tax cuts for the rich.” — March 1, 2012, in a column, “Four Fiscal Phonies,” about Romney’s warning of a “Greece-style collapse” under Obama.

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| 20120612-01 | 07:00 | MarthaH | "Wellesley (MA) High Teacher to Graduating Seniors: 'Get Over Yourselves.'" |
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This commencement speech is the one we all want to make. It's by the author's son, and he has made a big splash.

The speech by Wellesley High teacher David McCullough has sparked a bit of controversy.

See "20120610-01" in FotM Newsletter #157 or <http://www.universalhub.com/2012/wellesley-high-teacher-graduating-seniors-get-over>.

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| 20120612-02 | 08:55 | Pam | Re: "Wellesley (MA) High Teacher to Graduating Seniors: 'Get Over Yourselves.'" (reply to MarthaH, above) |
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I wondered if he were a relation of the historian. Cool. I like the message too. Martha, I think I remember your saying our generation was spoiled by "the greatest generation," and there may be some truth to that, so maybe we started the spoiling trend. I'm not sure I know what spoiling is though. I don't think it's just about how much stuff you have, though that can be part of it for sure. I think a kid is spoiled when he feels entitled, superior, and is ill-mannered. I don't think my 7-yr. old grandson is spoiled, but he can be all of these things. He's also sweet, smart, full of energy, and out-going. Unlike his brother, he never met a stranger. I think all kids display evidence of spoiling--if they come from normal families--but as I sit here trying to think of spoiled adults I know, I can't think of any. My best friend readily admits that she was spoiled as a child. Her father was a surgeon, and her mother had lost a daughter before my friend was born, so there were means and motive for spoiling. She isn't spoiled now though. She's generous, unpretentious, funny, and has a million friends. She did have a childhood where she felt loved and secure, as did I. We agree that we were lucky, some might say we were spoiled, but that beginning gave us a strong foundation that has helped us deal with the demands and crises of adulthood. My definition of spoiling? Doing things for a kid (of any age, up to and including 30) that he could and should do for himself. Independence is maybe the greatest gift a parent can give a child, but sometimes it's so hard to let them go.

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| 20120612-03 | 10:08 | Art | Re: "Wellesley (MA) High Teacher to Graduating Seniors: 'Get Over Yourselves.'" (reply to MarthaH, above) |
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Made national news. Seems OK to me.

[20120612-04](#) 10:18 Pam Re: "Wellesley (MA) High Teacher to Graduating Seniors: 'Get Over Yourselves.'" (reply to Art & MarthaH, above)

Back in the 19th c. if a young girl wrote in her diary, she was likely to say things like, I hope to be a better person, or I will be kinder to my mother. It was about growth of character. Nowadays a girl is likely to worry about being fat, how she looks, what boys are cute, and why her mom won't buy her yet another pair of jeans. There was a time when all people were admonished to be better morally, as the assumption (Christian or not) was that human beings are all flawed creatures. Now no one is responsible for anything, and it's always somebody else's fault. Ah, the good old day. Just think. We'll be the good old days years hence. Thanks you guys for putting up with my ramblings. I'm meeting my son for the first time in July, and I'm going a little crazy. Writing keeps me occupied. :-)

[20120612-05](#) 11:36 Art Re: China: 'Business Friendly' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #158)

Interesting article on China. Only part I don't know if I agree with is the implication there is some plan on the part of China. I think it is just greed, same as us. In time Chinese labor will awake and strike and maybe jobs will come back. Will be a while though.

Have you read *Why the West Rules—For Now* by Ian Harris? Good read.

[20120612-06](#) 14:59 Jim "Be a Super PAC Watchdog"

Here is a story from the newest AARP newspaper.

It points out some things I did not know.

First is that TV stations get to charge Super PACs more for ads than they can charge candidates who are entitled to a discount.

Second that a station normally cannot refuse to take ads from candidates BUT they can refuse ads from SuperPACS (or political parties) if they have reason to believe that they make false statements.

So you can call your stations and complain if you can prove that they are lying!

"Be a Super PAC Watchdog" by Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *AARP Bulletin*

June, 2012, (http://pubs.aarp.org/aarpbulletin/201206_DC?folio=38#article_id=172483)

(You can do something about misleading political advertising.)

"When the fire broke out, there wasn't a moment to spare," said 78-year-old Ohioan Marlene Quinn in a Web video last October. "If not for the firefighters, we wouldn't have our [great-granddaughter] Zoey today. That's why it's so important to vote no on Issue 2." Within days, her video had been repurposed by a group favoring the Ohio ballot initiative to make it appear she supported the law that she wanted repealed. "She's right," said the deceptively edited ad. "By voting no on Issue 2, our safety will be threatened."

What happened next is a tale of the system working. Because that misleading ad was made not by a candidate but by a third-party group, a category that includes political parties, interest groups and super PACs, Ohio TV stations had a right to refuse it. When they learned about the duplicitous editing, a number of them did exactly that. Their

actions remind us that although, with few exceptions, broadcast stations have to air ads sponsored by federal candidates, they can reject outside groups' ads or, if they choose to air them, insist that they stick to the facts.

This year has seen an unprecedented amount of third-party advertising. By May 10, 534 groups organized as super PACs reported receiving \$204,323,416 and spending \$99,803,597 in the 2012 cycle, according to OpenSecrets.org. The level of inaccuracy in the third-party presidential ads has been high. As an Annenberg Public Policy Center study shows, from the Iowa caucuses through the Wisconsin primary, almost 57 percent of the \$41.1 million deployed by the four highest-spending third-party groups was devoted to 19 ads containing misleading claims.

The deceptions were of the sort that shift votes. Imagine a potential supporter of Mitt Romney accepting at face value the false implication in an American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees ad that he engaged in Medicare fraud at a company owned by his Bain Capital firm. Or imagine a person who opposes abortion mistakenly believing a pro-Romney super PAC's false allegation that former House Speaker Newt Gingrich supported legislation facilitating abortion in China.

It's not hard to imagine a voter, misled by such claims, rejecting a candidate she would otherwise support.

Because they can charge more for third-party ads than for those by federal candidates, stations earn a windfall airing them. As CBS President Les Moonves told an entertainment law conference in March, "Super PACs may be bad for America but they're very good for CBS." But by taking seriously their right to insist on the accuracy of third-party ads and regularly debunking deceptive political ad content, stations can translate some of those profits into protection for the public served by their stations. That is what a new campaign by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania is asking them to do.

Go to the "Stand by Your Ad" page at APPC's FlackCheck.org and email your local station managers. Encourage them to protect their viewers from air pollution. The process takes less than two minutes. More than 900 of the 1,047 station managers have already heard from their viewers. Please make your voice heard now.

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| 20120612-07 15:23 SteveB "New York to London in an Hour—by Train" |
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"New York to London in an Hour—by Train" by Mark Halper, SmartPlanet

June 4, 2012, (<http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/intelligent-energy/new-york-to-london-in-an-hour-by-train/16456?tag=nl.e550>)

A giant sucking sound might one day help whisk passengers from New York to Beijing in 2 hours. Above, a mockup of the inside of an ET3 vacuum train.

You could call it a pipe dream.

That's how the BBC refers to it on its website (<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20120601-high-speed-pipedreams>), where a feature story reports that one day soon, trains traveling through vacuum tunnels could whisk passengers from New York to London in an hour, hitting speeds of up 2,500 mph.

Reverse the journey, and you could leave the UK at noon and arrive in Manhattan at 8 a.m. the same day.

The key is in the vacuum. Suck the air out of a transatlantic tunnel, and you eliminate resistance to the vehicle. In the oceanic version, engineers would tether the tunnel at a fixed depth.

The "vacetrain" is not a new concept. Robert Goddard, who created the first liquid fuel rocket, designed a prototype over 100 years ago, with the idea of zipping people around between U.S. cities. But they haven't been economically feasible, or even fast enough.

Now, the latest concept in vactrains could make the difference. It combines the technology with magnetic levitation, in theory supporting speeds of up to 2500 mph according to the BBC. That's an order of magnitude faster than today's high speed rail, which tends to travel at just under 200 mph.

American engineer Daryl Oster has designed a 6-person capsule traveling through a 1.5 meter (5 feet) diameter vacuum tube. He has sold 60 licenses for his patented evacuated tube transport (ETT) technology, including 12 to China.

Oster likes to refer to it as "space travel on Earth." The website for his Crystal River, Fl. company ET3 (it describes itself as an "open consortium"), boasts possible speeds of up to 4,000 mph, faster even than the 2,500 mph reported by the BBC.

It claims that it could "provide 50 times more transportation per kWh (kilowatt hour) than electric cars or trains," that construction would cost a tenth of high-speed rail and a quarter of freeways, and that a New York-to-Beijing trip would take 2 hours.

"New York to L.A. in 45 minutes," it states.

In the BBC story, Oster says the train could be ready in less than 10 years. The most ideal implementations would be between cities separated by dry, flat unpopulated terrain that doesn't freeze, he notes, adding that China and India hold the most promise.

Another vactrain developer, Dr. James Powell - the co-inventor of Maglev transportation technology and also a nuclear inventor - has proposed a system called Startram that would launch objects into orbit from a cannon-like tunnel.

The idea has plenty of supporters, including MIT's Ernst G. Frankel, emeritus professor of mechanical engineering and ocean engineering, who experimented with "evacuated tubes" in the 1990s. Frankel proposed a Boston-to-New York vactrain that would take 40 minutes, compared to the normal 4 hours. But it would not have outperformed existing bullet train technologies from Japan and China.

MIT's Frankel says the time is now right.

"Our rail technology is almost 100 years old," he tells the BBC. "Our airways are becoming terribly congested, and getting to, from and through airports is very time consuming."

Vactrains certainly have been a fixture of science fiction.

"Vacuum trains do feature in movies like *Star Trek* and *Logan's Run*," notes the BBC. "Whilst in the dystopian future of *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury describes a 'silent air-propelled train' that 'slid soundlessly down its lubricated flue in the earth'."

Is this the last step before teleporting? While "beam me up Scotty" isn't around the corner, perhaps "Hoover me up" is. Vactrains may one day give a whole new, positive, meaning to H. Ross Perot's old derogatory "giant sucking sound" phrase.

ET3 website: <http://www.et3.com/>.

In the 1870s a similar system, based on pneumatics, ran under New York City for a few years. It ran in tubes - the first high-speed rail circa 1870: <http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/business-brains/it-runs-in-tubes-the-first-high-speed-rail-circa-1870/5491>.

"Hubris as the Evil Force in History" by Paul Craig Roberts, OpEdNews

June 12, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Hubris-as-the-Evil-Force-i-by-Paul-Craig-Roberts-120612-557.html>)



(http://philbancients.blogspot.com/2012/03/famous-battles-you-should-know-all_27.html)

I have always been intrigued by the Battle of Bull Run, the opening battle of the US Civil War, known to southerners as the War of Northern Aggression. Extreme hubris characterized both sides, the North before the battle and the South afterwards.

Republican politicians and their ladies in their finery rode out to Manassas, the Virginia town through which the stream, Bull Run, flowed, in carriages to watch the Union Army end the "Southern Rebellion" in one fell swoop. What they witnessed instead was the Union Army fleeing back to Washington with its tail between its legs. The flight of the northern troops promoted some southern wags to name the battle, the Battle of Yankee Run.

The outcome of the battle left the South infected with the hubris that had so abruptly departed the North. The southerners concluded that they had nothing to fear from cowards who ran away from a fight. "We have nothing to worry about from them," decided the South. It was precisely at this point that hubris defeated the South.

Historians report that the flight back to Washington left the Union Army and the US capital in a state of disorganization for three weeks, during which time even a small army could have taken the capital. Historians inclined not to see the battle as a victory for the South claim that the southerners were exhausted by the effort it took to put the yankees to flight and simply hadn't the energy to pursue them, take Washington, hang the traitor Lincoln and all the Republicans, and end the war.

Exhausted troops or not, if Napoleon had been the southern general, the still organized southern army would have been in Washington as fast as the disorganized Union. Possibly the southerners would have engaged in ethnic cleansing by enslaving the yankees and selling them to Africans, thus ejecting from the country the greed-driven northern imperialists who, in the southern view, did not know how to behave either in private or in public.

It was not southern exhaustion that saved the day for the North. It was southern hubris. The Battle of Bull Run convinced the South that the citified northerners simply could not fight and were not a military threat.

Perhaps the South was right about the North. However, the Irish immigrants, who were met at the docks and sent straight to the front, could fight. The South was dramatically outnumbered and had no supply of immigrants to fill the ranks vacated by casualties. Moreover, the South had no industry and no navy. And, of course, the South was demonized because of slavery, although the slaves never revolted even when all southern men were at the front. When the South failed to take advantage of its victory at Bull Run and occupy Washington, the South lost the war.

An examination of hubris casts a great deal of light on wars, their causes and outcomes. Napoleon undid himself, as Hitler was to do later, by marching off into Russia. British hubris caused both world wars. The second world war began when the British, incomprehensibly gave a "guarantee" to the Polish colonels, who were on the verge of returning that part of Germany that Poland had acquired from the Versailles Treaty. The colonels, not understanding that the British had no way of making the guarantee good, gave Hitler the finger, an act of defiance that was too much for Hitler who had declared Germans to be the exceptional people.

Hitler smacked Poland, and the British and French declared war.

Hitler made short work of the French and British armies. But the British in their hubris, hiding behind the English channel, wouldn't surrender or even agree to a favorable peace settlement. Hitler concluded that the British were counting on Russia to enter the war on their side. Hitler decided that if he knocked off Russia, the British hope would evaporate and they would come to peace terms. So Hitler turned on his Russian partner with whom he had just dismembered Poland. Stalin, in his own hubris, had recently purged almost every officer in the Red Army, thus making Hitler's decision easy.

The outcome of all this hubris was the rise of the US military/security complex and more than four decades of cold war and the threat of nuclear destruction, a period that lasted from the end of world war two until Reagan and Gorbachev, two leaders not consumed by hubris, agreed to end the cold war.

Alas, hubris returned to America with the neoconservative ascendancy. Americans have become "the indispensable people." Like the Jacobins of the French Revolution who intended to impose "liberty, equality, fraternity" upon all of Europe, Washington asserts the superiority of the American way and the right to impose it on the rest of the world. Hubris is in full flower despite its defeats. The "three week" Iraq war lasted eight years, and after 11 years the Taliban control more of Afghanistan than the "world's only superpower."

Sooner or later American hubris is going to run up against Russia and China, neither of which will give way. Either the US, like Napoleon and Hitler, will have its Russian (or Chinese) moment, or the world will go up in thermonuclear smoke.

The only solution for humanity is to immediately impeach and imprison warmongers when first sighted before their hubris leads us yet again into the death and destruction of war.

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| 20120612-09 | 22:35 | SteveG | Fw: Public Citizen Action: Help Improve Government Transparency! |
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from Public Citizen:

Here we go again.

Recently, I wrote to you about the crazy "Keeping Politics Out of Federal Contracting Act" (KPOFCA), which would keep secret political spending by federal contractors like Northrop Grumman and Academi (formerly Blackwater) in the dark.

Now Congressional Republicans are fighting transparency on another front. On a party-line vote, the House GOP stuck language in a must-pass appropriations bill that, unless the Senate takes it out, will block significant new transparency requirements for political ads.

Don't let corporate cronies block political spending transparency.

Urge your senators to remove the House GOP's dark money language and to oppose KPOFCA (S. 1100):

http://action.citizen.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=10608.

What are the transparency requirements that corporations are so afraid of?

Well, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently created a new rule that requires TV stations to make the information they collect about political ad spending available on the Internet.

This is information the TV stations are already collecting, and the data is already public. However, right now it's only accessible by physically going to a TV station and requesting the files.

The new rule is just a modernizing update to how things work in the 21st Century. If the data is truly public, it should be posted online.

The House GOP's anti-disclosure language in the appropriations bill specifically strips the FCC's funding to implement the rule.

Tell your senators to support the FCC rule and to oppose secret political spending by federal contractors.

KPOFCA, meanwhile, has already passed out of the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

Backed by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), whose top campaign contributor is General Dynamics (a military contractor that makes fighter jets) and Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) whose top contributor is Northrop Grumman (another military contractor), KPOFCA would prevent the government from requiring federal contractors to disclose money they're spending to influence elections.

According to proponents of the bill, keeping political spending by government contractors secret somehow protects the integrity of the contracting process. If this information is not public, their "logic" goes, then politicians won't know if a corporation receiving government funds for contracts helped get them elected.

Here's how things work in the real world: If a federal contractor's CEO pours millions into electing a candidate the CEO thinks will reward the corporation with government contracts, then the CEO will find a way to make sure that the candidate knows.

All KPOFCA does is keep the public, not politicians, in the dark.

Tell your senators to oppose this bill that would keep secret political spending by federal contractors in the dark and to support the FCC's transparency update.

Thanks for all you do, Rick Claypool, Public Citizen's Online Action Team



<http://www.godofstyle.com/the-importance-of-play/>



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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