



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #299 — DEC. 28, 2012

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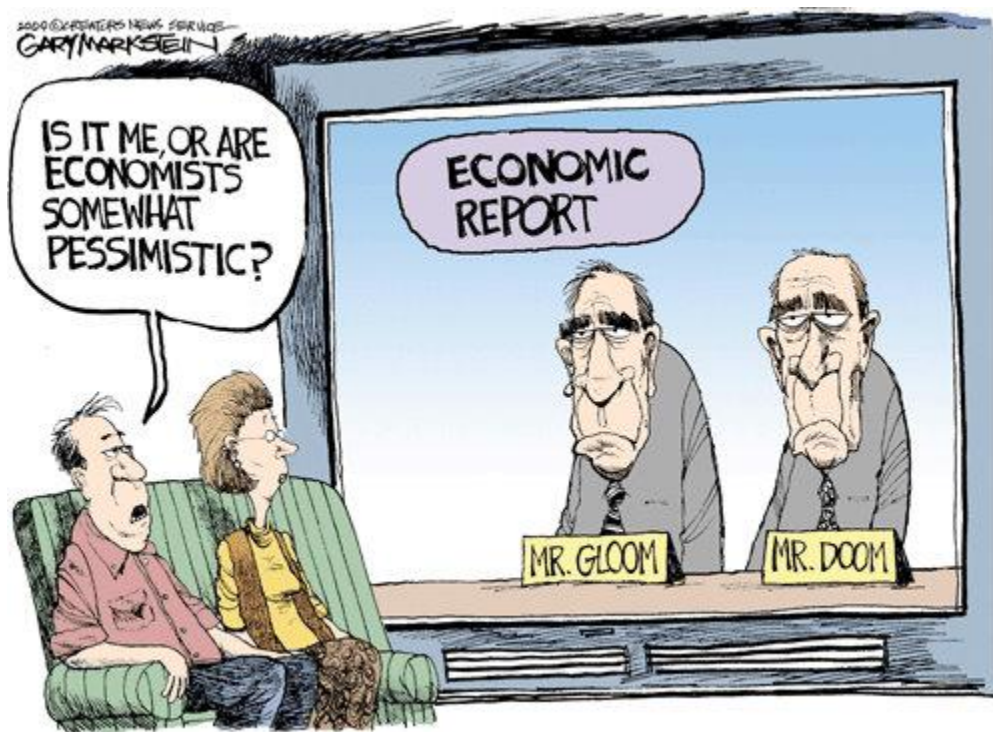
Gloom and Doom (for Profit)

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 28, 2012)

When something big goes wrong, you simply have to ask yourself, "Who makes money off that?"

"When Prophecy Fails" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*

Dec. 23, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/24/opinion/krugman-when-prophecy-fails.html?ref=opinion&r=1&>)



Back in the 1950s three social psychologists joined a cult that was predicting the imminent end of the world. Their purpose was to observe the cultists' response when the world did not, in fact, end on schedule. What they discovered, and described in their classic book, "When Prophecy Fails," is that the irrefutable failure of a prophecy does not cause true believers — people who have committed themselves to a belief both emotionally and by their life choices — to reconsider. On the contrary, they become even more fervent, and proselytize even harder.

This insight seems highly relevant as 2012 draws to a close. After all, a lot of people came to believe that we were on the brink of catastrophe — and these views were given extraordinary reach by the mass media. As it turned out, of course, the predicted catastrophe failed to materialize. But we can be sure that the cultists won't admit to having been wrong. No, the people who told us that a fiscal crisis was imminent will just keep at it, more convinced than ever.

Oh, wait a second — did you think I was talking about the Mayan calendar thing?

Seriously, at every stage of our ongoing economic crisis — and in particular, every time anyone has suggested actually trying to do something about mass unemployment — a chorus of voices has warned that unless we bring down budget deficits now now now, financial markets will turn on America, driving interest rates sky-high. And these prophecies of doom have had a powerful effect on our economic discourse.

Thus, back in May 2009 the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page seized on an uptick in long-term interest rates to declare that the “bond vigilantes,” the “disciplinarians of U.S. policy makers,” had arrived, and would push rates inexorably higher if big budget deficits continued. As it happened, rates soon went back down. But that didn't stop *The Journal's* news section from rolling out the same story the next time rates rose: “Debt fears send rates up,” blared a headline in March 2010; the debt continued to grow, but the rates went down again.

At this point the yield on the benchmark 10-year bond is less than half what it was when that 2009 editorial was published. But don't expect any rethinking on *The Journal's* part.

Now, you could say that *The Journal's* editors didn't give a specific date for the fiscal apocalypse, although I doubt that any of their readers imagined that they were talking about an event at least three years and seven months in the future.

In any case, some of the most prominent deficit scolds have indeed been willing to talk about dates, or at least time horizons. In early 2011 Erskine Bowles confidently declared that we would face a fiscal crisis within around two years unless something like the Bowles-Simpson deficit plan was enacted, and Alan Simpson chimed in to say that it would be less than two years. I guess he has about 10 weeks left. But again, don't expect either Mr. Simpson or Mr. Bowles to admit that there might have been something fundamentally wrong with their analysis.

No, very few of the prophets of fiscal doom have acknowledged the failure of their prophecies to come true so far. And those who have admitted surprise seem more annoyed than chastened. For example, back in 2010 Alan Greenspan — who is, for some reason, still treated as an authority figure — conceded that despite large budget deficits, “inflation and long-term interest rates, the typical symptoms of fiscal excess, have remained remarkably subdued.” But he went on to declare, “This is regrettable, because it is fostering a sense of complacency.” How dare reality not validate my fears!

Regular readers know that I and other economists argued from the beginning that these dire warnings of fiscal catastrophe were all wrong, that budget deficits won't cause soaring interest rates as long as the economy is depressed — and that the biggest risk to the economy is that we might try to slash the deficit too soon. And surely that point of view has been strongly validated by events.

The key thing we need to understand, however, is that the prophets of fiscal disaster, no matter how respectable they may seem, are at this point effectively members of a doomsday cult. They are emotionally and professionally committed to the belief that fiscal crisis lurks just around the corner, and they will hold to their belief no matter how many corners we turn without encountering that crisis.

So we cannot and will not persuade these people to reconsider their views in the light of the evidence. All we can do is stop paying attention. It's going to be difficult, because many members of the deficit cult seem highly respectable. But they've been hugely, absurdly wrong for years on end, and it's time to stop taking them seriously.

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20121227-01	10:28	Pam	Re: 'Yes, We Have No Bananas' (reply to SteveB, FotM newsletter #298)
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The article on bananas is most enlightening, and it gives me one more reason to question the whole premise of capitalism. It's such a mixed bag. On the one hand, it creates a motive for invention and progress, raises the standard of living, and generates opportunity for individual and corporate growth. On the other, it is by its nature exploitative and amoral. I didn't know that was the origin of "banana republic," and I know other foods have been similarly manipulated, apples for one. We're down to just a few basic types in the stores, so another shortcoming of capitalism is the very thing that makes it work: standardization. I'm beginning to think the reason homo sapiens rule is because we eliminated our gentler, kinder relatives. Force always wins, whether it's a question of economics or territory or religion. Does this mean we're doomed as a species to ultimately destroy everything, maybe not in 100 years but perhaps in 1000? Will there be a 3001 for human beings? Or is there another option besides totalitarianism, capitalism, or despotism?

20121227-02	14:13	Dennis	"There Is No American Left"
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Gore Vidal stated several years ago that America had one political party with two right wings—Right-wing America. He was prescient!

"There Is No American Left" by Salvatore Babones, Truthout/*Australian Options*

Dec. 27, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/13567-there-is-no-american-left>)

In September 2012 Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel attempted to break the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) with a bid to privatize Chicago's public schools. The mayor's proposal was based on a plan to subject teachers (and schools) to performance measurement based on students' standardized test scores.

Teachers whose students scored poorly would be fired. Schools whose students scored poorly would be closed. The students would then be farmed out to so-called "charter schools" - for the most part, for-profit institutions run by corporations like Edison Schools, Rocketship, Victory Schools, and Educational Services of America.

The CTU went out on strike with the goal of maintaining public education in Chicago, America's third largest city. Schools in Philadelphia, America's fifth largest city, have already been largely privatized, and the state of Texas is currently in the process of privatizing its local public school systems.

Under threat of a court injunction that might force them to return to work without a contract, the CTU ended its strike after just six business days. The negotiated settlement terms included a longer working day (for the same pay), teacher evaluations based 30% on student test scores, and complete mayoral discretion over teacher hiring and firing.

As Reuters reported on September 18, "those were major goals for Emanuel and positive outcomes for any Emanuel financial backers associated with the national education reform movement." The outcome, however, was widely viewed in the United States as a victory for the teachers, since (amazingly, to most Americans) they retained their pre-strike jobs, salaries, and health insurance benefits.

Rahm Emanuel, mayor of Chicago, is a Democrat.

The Obama administration: Center-right Democrats

Rahm Emanuel is not just any Democrat. He was Barack Obama's first chief of staff, responsible for hiring many of the Obama administration's key personnel. One of Obama's appointees, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, is a former "Chief Executive Officer" of the Chicago public school system. In Chicago he had promoted the expansion of for-profit charter schools.

In Washington, Secretary Duncan developed the \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" program to encourage states to privatize their schools. The funding was structured as a competition. All 50 states adopted the Race to the Top program in hopes of receiving scarce federal funding during a severe recession; only 12 actually received any grants. The tournament format was designed to ensure maximum institutional impact for the smallest possible investment.

It's not just in education policy that the Obama administration has pursued a broadly neoliberal, center-right agenda. For example, President Obama has taken no action to improve minimum wages or working conditions. The US federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, with no guaranteed sick days, holidays, or vacation time. The last increase was in 2009, under a law passed by the Bush administration in 2007. President Bush actually supported the increase - in combination with business tax cuts.

The federal minimum wage for restaurant staff (and others who might be expected to receive customer tips) is just \$2.13 an hour, against which the value of meals provided by the employer can be deducted.

But of course President Obama's signature program is health care reform. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 is proudly or derisively (depending which side you're on) known as Obamacare. America has long been the only rich country without universal health insurance. Obamacare is intended to extend health insurance coverage to all Americans.

What is Obamacare really? At its heart is a requirement that all Americans will have to buy health insurance, mainly from private, for-profit insurance companies. Insurance premiums will remain largely unregulated, subject to the single requirement that insurance companies will have to accept all applicants and not be allowed to turn away those with pre-existing conditions.

People who refuse to buy health insurance will be forced to pay a \$695 penalty. Given that the cost of the most basic private health insurance in the United States is far greater than this, many people are likely to remain uninsured even after Obamacare is fully implemented in 2014.

What's more, starting in 2017 states will essentially be able to opt out of Obamacare if they present an alternative plan that is approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. This requires no further action by Congress. So if the next US president is a Republican, expect every Republican-controlled state to opt out of universal healthcare as soon as that president is inaugurated.

And then there's foreign policy. The Obama administration foreign policy is slightly to the left of ... Dick Cheney. The Obama administration embraces targeted assassination and maintains a kill list - sorry, "disposition matrix" - of people it considers fair game for drone attacks. The Obama administration embraces the use of torture on people in US custody (with the sole specific exclusion of waterboarding). The Obama administration embraces the infliction of national collective punishment to induce civilian populations to overthrow their governments.

The Obama administration maintains a gulag archipelago of secret CIA prisons around the world, and automatically as a matter of policy classifies as "enemy combatants" any adolescent or adult male civilians who are killed in its military operations on the logic that if they were killed, they must have been combatants.

Non-Americans who applaud the Obama administration on the very limited basis that it hasn't invaded any other countries (yet) might consider these facts before forming their opinions. For a balanced view of the American foreign policy consensus, one need only listen to the October 22, 2012 third US presidential debate. Democrats are no doves.

And Then There Are the Republicans

If Democrats are no doves, Republicans are virtual velociraptors - and proud of it. Mitt Romney was considered a "moderate" Republican and easily the least right wing of the major contenders for the Republican nomination. In fact, his "moderateness" was the main charge made against him in the Republican primaries.

Nonetheless, Romney's official electoral platform called for a trade war with China, the privatization of old age pensions, the elimination of inheritance taxes, further expansion in US military spending, and of course the de-unionization of public employees.

Romney planned to create 12 million jobs by building oil pipelines, expanding offshore oil drilling, and working to "eliminate regulations destroying the coal industry." Offshore oil drilling alone would supposedly employ an additional 1.2 million Americans - the population of Dallas - in some New Atlantis floated on oil. In the immortal words of former Alaska governor Sarah Palin: "Drill, baby, drill."

The official Republican party platform for the 2012 elections called for a return to the gold standard, the complete outlawing of all abortions, the disenfranchisement of the (mainly black) residents of the District of Columbia, the vitiation of food and drug regulation, "consumer choice" in education, a flat income tax, and the building of a nationwide missile defence system. It had an entire 26-point section on "American Exceptionalism" based on "the conviction that our country holds a unique place and role in human history."

The most loathsome of Republican policies, however, is not listed on any party platform. It is the wholesale use of voter suppression as a strategy for electoral victory. Far from being mandatory, in the US, voting is a minority activity, governed by state-by-state rules and procedures. Less than 60% of the adult population votes in presidential elections, far less in congressional and local elections. Every American government is a minority government.

With its pro-rich tax policies, demonization of Spanish-speaking immigrants, opposition to all things feminist, anti-idealism that turns off young voters, and outright racism, the Republican Party simply can't win a fair national election. There just aren't enough rich middle-aged white male racists to win a majority. So it tries to suppress the vote of everyone else.

Republicans have made proof of citizenship (and, more importantly, mailing address) a major campaign issue, despite the fact that only 10 (yes, ten) cases of in-person voter fraud have been identified over the five federal elections between 2000 and 2010. The real purpose of these Republican-sponsored voter ID laws is to disenfranchise those who move frequently or have no fixed address: the young, the homeless, the very old, and the poor. In other words, Democrats.

Even more frightening, Republican state administrations around the country have vigorously pursued the installation of computerized voting machines made by companies that are controlled by activist Republican campaign contributors. These are not machines made by IBM or Apple or some other monolithic multinational firm (scary as that might be). These are voting machines made by - among others - companies in which the Romney family are investors.

In 2003 Diebold CEO (and major Bush fundraiser) Walden O'Dell infamously declared, "I am committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president next year." In 2004 Ohio's Republican government duly reported a

late-evening change in voting patterns that swung Ohio (and the presidency) from John Kerry to George Bush. Ohio used Diebold voting machines.

In a country where voting is voluntary, however, it doesn't take a computer conspiracy to swing the vote. The Ohio state government overstaffed voting stations in Republican areas and understaffed them in Democratic ones. As a result, white suburbanites could vote in two minutes while some black inner-city dwellers waited in line for up to 10 hours. Waits of 2-3 hours or more were reported as commonplace in black districts.

Sadly, in the democratic United States of America such shenanigans aren't even illegal. For the Republican Party, they're just part of the game. Voter suppression works. Where suppression isn't enough, outright fraud is possible. It may be happening already. With unencrypted, paperless electronic voting machines that can't be audited and a lack of exit polling to verify results, we'll never know.

The End, or at Least the Ending

Why are the only two choices in US politics the responsible center-right and the barbarian nationalist extreme? It wasn't always this way. Though social scientists have long investigated / bemoaned the non-existence of a socialist alternative in the United States, the Democratic party of the 1930s - 1960s was at least as progressive as any social democratic party in Western Europe. Even the 1950s Republican party of Dwight Eisenhower maintained Roosevelt's New Deal reforms, including a 90% top marginal tax rate.

In fact, the Republican Party once had a liberal (i.e., left) faction. No more. In 1996, arch-conservative Barry Goldwater reportedly wondered in amazement that he and presidential candidate Bob Dole were by then on the left of the Republican party. Goldwater died in 1998; both parties have since moved much farther to the right. Today, Goldwater would be considered left even for a Democrat.

Over the past forty years, America has become much more politically correct with regard to gender and sexuality. Men do not openly display calendars featuring topless models on their office walls, and public gay bashing is now considered inappropriate, even in Republican circles. But gender and sexuality are issues that transcend social class. Even rich, powerful men have gay children - or may be gay themselves. Even rich, powerful men have wives.

On every other issue, America - or at least American politics - has swung violently to the right. The more social class is involved, the further to the right America has swung. Poverty was once a social disease to be cured; it is now an individual crime to be punished. Put it down to individualism, conservatism, neoliberalism, or whatever -ism you want, America is now the world's greatest reactionary force.

Unfortunately, all the evidence is that the rest of the world is following America down the road to perdition. Nowhere are national health insurance schemes, access to free education, and old age pensions being expanded. Nowhere is the world moving forward. Everywhere the social gains of the twentieth century are either being eroded, or destroyed.

The mid-late twentieth century may or may not turn out to have been the highpoint of human civilization. Progress may yet return. But if it does, it will not be led by the United States. It will be resisted by the United States. It's up to the rest of the world to provide the hope for the future that once emanated from Washington, New York, and California. Otherwise you will become just like us.

[Yes, things really are this bad in the U.S. Let's keep doing something about it! -SteveB]

Wish you'd said THAT?

"The Year in Politics – in Quotes" by Domenico Montanaro, NBC News

Dec. 27, 2012, (<http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/12/27/16191484-the-year-in-politics-in-quotes?lite>)

JANUARY

Mitt Romney: "I like being able to fire people who provide services to me." (Jan. 9)

Rick Perry: "There is a real difference between a venture capitalist and a vulture capitalist." (Jan. 10)

Gingrich: "No... [applause], but I will. I think the destructive, negative, vicious nature of much of the news media makes it harder to govern this country, harder to attract decent people to run for public office, and I am appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that." -- Asked during a CNN debate if he'd like to respond to allegations by an ex-wife that he wanted an open marriage. (Jan. 19)

Gingrich: "By the end of my second term, we will have the first permanent base on the moon, and it will be American." (Jan. 25)

FEBRUARY

Romney: "I'm not concerned about the very poor." (Feb. 1)

Romney: "There are some things that you just can't imagine happening in your life. Uh, this is one of them." [Laughter] – on Donald Trump's endorsement. (Feb. 2)

Romney: "I was a severely conservative Republican governor." (Feb. 10)

Foster Friess (Santorum supporter): "You know, back in my days, they used Bayer aspirin for contraception. The gals put it between their knees, and it wasn't that costly." (Feb. 16)

Romney: "It seems right here, the trees are the right height. I like seeing the lakes. I love the lakes." (Feb. 17)

Romney: "Ann drives a couple of Cadillacs actually." (Feb. 24)

Rick Santorum: "President Obama once said he wants everybody in America to go to college. What a snob!" (Feb. 25)

Romney: "I have some friends who are NASCAR team owners." (Feb. 26)

Romney: "I like those fancy raincoats you bought, really sprung for the big bucks." (Feb. 26)

MARCH

Romney: "The best thing I can do for you is to tell you to shop around." (March 5)

Romney: "I've got a lot of good friends — the owner of the Miami Dolphins and the New York Jets — both owners are friends of mine." (March 12)

Eric Fehrnstrom (Romney adviser): "Everything changes. It's almost like an Etch A Sketch. You can kind of shake it up and restart all over again." (March 21)

Romney: "Russia, this is, without question, our number one geopolitical foe." (March 26)

President Barack Obama: "This is my last election. After my election I have more flexibility." – to Russian President Medvedev. (March 26)

APRIL

Ann Romney: "Well, you know, I guess we better unzip him and let the real Mitt Romney out because he is not!" – Asked by a radio host about the criticism that her husband "comes off stiff." (April 2)

Hilary Rosen (Democratic strategist): "Guess what? His wife has actually never worked a day in her life." (April 11)

Romney: "I'm not sure about these cookies. They don't look like you made them. Did you make them? You didn't, did you? They came from the local 7-11, bakery, or wherever." (April 17)

Biden: "I promise you, the president has a big stick. I promise you." (April 2012)

MAY

Ann Romney: "Stiff, he's not, he's funny... There's a wild and crazy man inside there." (May 1)

Vice President Joe Biden: "I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men, women marrying women, and heterosexual men and women marrying another are entitled to the same exact rights, all the civil rights, all the civil liberties." (May 9 on Meet the Press)

Obama: "He probably got out a little bit over his skis, but out of generosity of spirit. ... Would I have preferred to have done this in my own way, in my own terms, without, I think, there being a lot of notice of everybody? Of course. But all's well that ends well." (May 10)

JUNE

Romney: "I met a guy yesterday, seven feet tall. Yeah, handsome, great big guy, seven feet tall! Name is Rick Miller—Portland, Oregon. And he started a business. Of course you know it was in basketball. But it wasn't in basketball! I mean, I, figured he had to be in sport, but he wasn't in sport." (June 6)

Obama: "The private sector is doing fine." (June 8)

Obama: "The highest Court in the land has now spoken. We will continue to implement this law. And we'll work together to improve on it where we can. But what we won't do -- what the country can't afford to do -- is refight the political battles of two years ago, or go back to the way things were." – on the health-care law being upheld, 5-4, by the Supreme Court with Chief Justice Roberts being the deciding vote. (June 28)

JULY

Romney: "Lemon. Wet. Good." -- asked how his lemonade was. (July 4)

House Speaker Boehner: "The American people probably aren't going to fall in love with Mitt Romney." (July 7)

Obama: "If you've got a business – you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen." (July 14)

Romney: "There are a few things that were disconcerting." – Romney on the London Olympics security preparations. (July 26)

David Cameron: "Of course it's easier if you hold an Olympic games in the middle of nowhere." (July 26)

Romney: "Culture makes all the difference. Culture makes all the difference." – on why the Palestinian economy is worse than Israel's. (July 30)

AUGUST

Romney: "I'm not a business." – on why he's not releasing his taxes. (Aug. 9)

Romney: "Join me in welcoming the next president of the United States, Paul Ryan." – introducing Ryan as his vice presidential pick. Romney came back on stage: "Every now and then I'm known to make a mistake. I did not make a mistake with this guy. But I can tell you this. He's going to be the next vice president of the United States." (Aug. 11)

Paul Ryan: "I got a new bow last year. ... Oh, I got a new chainsaw. It was nice. It's a Stihl." -- asked by People magazine what his last splurge was. (Aug. 12)

Biden: "They gonna put y'all back in chains." (Aug. 14)

Romney: "The fascination with taxes I paid I find to be very small minded." – at a news conference he arranged on Medicare using a white board. (Aug. 16)

Todd Akin: "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down." (Aug. 19)

Ryan: "I'm a Catholic deer hunter. I am happy to be clinging to my guns and to my religion." (Aug. 21)

Biden: "I've got a little bumper sticker for you: Osama bin Laden is dead and General Motors is alive." (Aug. 21)

Ann Romney: "I love you womeeen!!!!" (Aug. 28)

Ann Romney: "Tonight, I want to talk to you about love." (Aug. 28)

Chris Christie: "Tonight, we're going to choose respect over love." (Aug. 28)

Neil Newhouse (Romney pollster): "We're not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact-checkers." (Aug. 28)

Romney: "Four years from the excitement of the last election, for the first time, the majority of Americans now doubt that our children will have a better future. It is not what we were promised." – Romney acceptance speech. (Aug. 30)

Clint Eastwood: "What? What do you want me to tell Romney? I can't tell him to do that. That. He can't do that to himself." (Aug. 30)

SEPTEMBER

Bill Clinton: "Listen to me, now. No president — no president, not me, not any of my predecessors, no one could have fully repaired all the damage that he found in just four years." And: "It takes some brass to attack a guy for doing what you did." – DNC convention speech. (Sept. 5)

Jennifer Granholm: "Well, in Romney's world, the cars get the elevator; the workers get the shaft." (Sept. 5)

Obama: "America, I never said this journey would be easy, and I won't promise that now. Yes, our path is harder, but it leads to a better place." – convention speech (Sept. 6)

Romney: "It's disgraceful that the Obama administration's first response was not to condemn attacks on our diplomatic missions, but to sympathize with those who waged the attacks." (Sept. 12)

Romney: "I think the best answer is as little as possible." -- when asked what he wears to bed at night. (Sept. 14)

Romney: "Middle income is \$200... 250,000 or less." (Sept. 14)

Romney: "There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it." (Sept. 17 – when the video was first unveiled)

Benjamin Netanyahu: "Where should a red line be drawn? A red line should be drawn right here." – speaking before the U.N. talking about Iran's capability for a nuclear weapon and using a red marker to draw a red line on a diagram of a bomb. (Sept. 27)

OCTOBER

Romney: "And congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your anniversary. I'm sure this was the most romantic place you could imagine — here with me!" -- first presidential debate. (Oct. 3)

Romney: "Look, I've got five boys. I'm used to people saying something that's not always true, but just keep on repeating it and ultimately hoping I will believe it." – first presidential debate. (Oct. 3)

Romney: "I like PBS, I love Big Bird. I actually like you, too." -- to moderator Jim Lehrer of PBS in the first presidential debate. (Oct. 3)

Obama: "Well, Jim, I want to thank you, and I want to thank Governor Romney, because I think was a terrific debate." (Oct. 3)

Biden: "With all due respect, that's a bunch of malarkey." (Oct. 11)

Brad Sherman: "Do you want to get into this?" -- to fellow Democrat Howard Berman with whom he was competing for a redistricted congressional seat. (Oct. 11)

Romney: "I went to a number of women's groups and said: 'Can you help us find folks,' and they brought us whole binders full of women." (Oct. 16)

Obama: "Please proceed, governor." (Oct. 16)

Tagg Romney: "You want to jump out of your seat and rush down to the debate stage and take a swing at him." – said of President Obama after a debate in which the two candidates exchanged verbal barbs and got in each other's space. (Oct. 18)

Obama: "Obviously, I had an off-night." – to Jon Stewart in reference to his first debate performance. (Oct. 19)

Obama: "Well, governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets." (Oct. 22)

Richard Mourdock: "Life is that gift from God. And even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen." (Oct. 23)

Obama: "If you say you love American cars in the debate, but you wrote an article called 'Let Detroit Go Bankrupt,' you might have Romnesia." (Oct. 23)

Obama: "The second thing I'm confident we'll get done next year is immigration reform. And since this is off the record, I will just be very blunt. Should I win a second term, a big reason I will win a second term is because the Republican nominee and the Republican Party have so alienated the fastest-growing demographic group in the country, the Latino community." (Oct. 24)

Romney: "The President's campaign has a slogan: it is 'forward.' But to the 23 million Americans struggling to find a good job, these last four years feel a lot more like 'backward.' We cannot afford four more years like the last four years." – Romney economic speech (Oct. 26)

Christie: "The president has been all over this and he deserves great credit" – on the response to Hurricane Sandy (Oct. 31)

NOVEMBER

Obama: "Don't boo. Vote! Voting is the best revenge." (Nov. 4)

Romney: "I pray that the president will be successful in guiding our nation." – Romney concession speech (Nov. 6-7)

Obama: "Tonight, in this election, you, the American people, reminded us that while our road has been hard, while our journey has been long, we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back, and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America the best is yet to come." – Obama victory speech (Nov.6-7)

Romney: "The president's campaign focused on giving targeted groups a big gift — so he made a big effort on small things. ... You can imagine for somebody making \$25,000 or \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year, being told you're now going to get free health care, particularly if you don't have it, getting free health care worth, what, \$10,000 per family, in perpetuity, I mean, this is huge." (Nov. 14)

Stu Stevens: "[H]e was a charismatic African American president with a billion dollars [who did not demonstrate that he despises common citizens, –SteveB], no primary, and media that often felt morally conflicted about being critical [of Republicans! –SteveB]." (Nov. 28)

DECEMBER

Tagg Romney: "He [Mitt Romney] wanted to be president less than anyone I've met in my life. He had no desire to...run." (Dec. 22)

20121227-04 16:44 SteveB Graphic: How to Tell If You're Too Progressive



1 month ago

sometimes i cry while chopping carrots cause i dont want onions to think theyre ugly or something

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20121227-05

23:57

SteveB

Photo: Cats Imitating Art #10 (Guido Reni, *Repentance Of St. Peter*, 1635)



20121227-06

23:58

Jim

Photo: Snow Quilts #3



<http://www.staplenews.com/home/2010/5/8/solar-city-tower-with-urban-waterfall-for-2016-rio-olympics.html>



THIS WORLD IS A FUNNY WORLD INDEED
AND PEOPLE ARE HARD TO SUIT
THE MAN WHO PLAYS THE PICOLLO
IS A BORE TO THE MAN WITH THE FLUTE
AND OFTEN TO MYSELF I'VE THOUGHT HOW LOVELY IT WOULD BE
IF EVERY PERSON I EVER MET WOULD SIMPLY AGREE WITH ME

BUT SINCE THEY WONT
I THINK THE WAY TO MAKE THE WHOLE WORLD BRIGHT
IS NEVER TO MIND WHAT OTHERS SAY
AND DO WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT



The 3% and the 97%. They think they're so hot!



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

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