



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #53 — JAN. 17, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Rupert Murdoch Craves Big Government Intervention: \$\$\$

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 17, 2012)

Sometimes the hypocrisy becomes too much, doesn't it? As we have stated in these pages often before, it is not so much that Republicans want small government and Democrats want BIG government. It is simply a matter of whom that government serves. I won't speak of other Republicans, but for Rupert Murdoch, it all has to do with the money. Freedom and the Constitution be damned! If the lives of those from whom the money is taken are diminished in the process, to hell with them!

\$\$\$\$!!!!

"Rupert Murdoch Attacks Google, Obama in Pro-SOPA Twitter Rant" by Alana Horowitz, Huffington Post

Jan. 15, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/15/ruPERT-murdoch-sopa-twitter-google-obama_n_1207615.html?ir=Politics)

Rupert Murdoch sounded off on Saturday about the White House's rejection of SOPA and PIPA, the controversial anti-piracy bills currently being debated in Congress.

"So Obama has thrown in his lot with Silicon Valley paymasters who threaten all software creators with piracy, plain thievery," he wrote on Twitter. "Piracy leader is Google who streams movies free, sells ads around them. No wonder pouring millions into lobbying."

Murdoch has lobbied aggressively for the bills, which many critics call web censorship. On Saturday, the White House announced that it would not support the legislation.

Supporters of the legislation--including Murdoch's News Corp, which owns 20th Century Fox films and various successful TV shows--argue that the bills would help protect copyright.

Google is one of the most vocal opponents of SOPA and PIPA. Co-founder Sergey Brin has said that the bills "give the U.S. government and copyright holders extraordinary powers including the ability to hijack DNS and censor search results (and this is even without so much as a proper court trial)."

FotM NEWSLETTER #53 (Jan. 17, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120117-00		SteveB	Rupert Murdoch Craves Big Government Intervention: \$\$\$ by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Rupert Murdoch Attacks Google, Obama in Pro-SOPA Twitter Rant")
20120116-01	13:35	JP	"Possible Deception Revealed in the Ratification of the 27th Amendment"
20120116-02	14:50	SteveG	"Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?"
20120116-03	17:43	Bill	Re: "Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120116-05	17:52	SteveG	Re: "Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?" (reply to Bill, above)
20120116-04	17:50	SteveG	"Is This Land Made for 'You & Me'—or for the Super Rich?"
20120116-06	18:49	Dennis	"A Voters' Rights Amendment as a Focus for Dissent"
20120116-07	23:33	SteveG	"U.S. Ranks 27th in Social Justice"
20120116-08	23:40	Larry	'Can We Then Add That Bit of Essence...'
20120116-09	23:49	SteveB	Re: 'Can We Then Add That Bit of Essence...' (reply to Larry, above)

20120116-01	13:35	JP	"Possible Deception Revealed in the Ratification of the 27th Amendment"
-----------------------------	-------	----	---

You might like this for your conspiracy category. It speaks to the issue of our generation: the purchase of our government.

"Possible Deception Revealed in the Ratification of the 27th Amendment" by jpspfr, Political Finance Reform

May 2, 2011, (<http://politicalfinancereform.org/ten-point-plan/the-27th-amendment.html>)

20120116-02	14:50	SteveG	"Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?" by NPR Staff

Jan. 15, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/15/145271755/will-the-real-ronald-reagan-please-stand-up>)

It's no secret who the most popular Republican is in this year's GOP presidential race. In just one single debate last year, GOP candidates mentioned the former President Ronald Reagan 24 times.

Right now, each candidate is vying for the mantle of Reagan conservatism. Yet some historians, and even some of the folks who worked for Ronald Reagan, are now wondering whether Reagan himself was enough of a Reagan conservative — at least the way it is defined today.

So what exactly is a Reagan conservative anyway? If he were alive, could Reagan get the GOP nod?

Reagan biographer Craig Shirley tells weekends on All Things Considered host Guy Raz that it was against backdrop of the 1970s that Reagan first ran for president.

"You had rampant inflation [and] high interest rates; we were losing [the] Cold War," Shirley says. "Americans had become rampant cheap consumers of the '70s – disco music or pet rocks or leisure suits – all of those things that really summed up what was really a very bad time for the American people."

A young former Nixon aide named John Sears convinced Reagan he should run for president against the incumbent Gerald Ford in 1976. Against huge odds, Reagan actually came close to winning that year and would eventually go on to win in 1980.

Reagan had a cultural appeal with the New-Deal, blue-collar, urban-ethnic, lunch-bucket voters that other Republicans didn't, Shirley says.

"Nixon had a little bit, but not the way Reagan did. So this was the beginning of his reorganization of the two parties," he says.

The man who became the most important American conservative icon in the 20th century was, in many ways, a moderate, says Shirley.

In 1978, Reagan campaigned against a referendum in California called Proposition 6 that would have banned gays and lesbians, and possibly anyone who supported gay rights, from working in the state's public schools.

The bill was supported by the Christian right and sponsored by state legislator John Briggs. The measure failed, and Briggs later said it was solely because of Reagan.

In recent years, Sen. Lindsey Graham, former Gov. Mike Huckabee and Rep. Duncan Hunter Jr. — all Republicans — have suggested Reagan would have a tough time winning the GOP nomination today.

Reporter Walter Shapiro is covering his ninth presidential campaign, now for Yahoo! News and The New Republic. He tells NPR's Raz that there were plenty of Reagan-era policies that wouldn't sit well with the GOP today — like raising taxes.

In the early '80s there was a deficit problem, and after massively lowering taxes there was an adjustment upward. Reagan's tax reform of 1986, which basically eliminated a number of deductions in order to lower rates, would be attacked today, Shapiro says.

"In an attack ad today," he adds, "you'd say, 'Whose side is he on?'"

Also in 1986, Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act granted amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants who entered the U.S. prior to Jan. 1, 1982.

"This is the immigration bill that the Republicans are railing against when they say, 'No more amnesties' — and this was Ronald Reagan," he says.

Many of the GOP candidates running for president have repeatedly pointed out that many — mostly poor — Americans don't pay federal income taxes. But in his 1985 State of the Union address, Reagan said he'd propose the exemption of federal income taxes to those living at or below the poverty line.

"This is, again, the problem with this plaster-saint iconography," Shapiro says.

There are many ways in which Reagan was a genuine conservative, Shapiro says, but he wasn't consistent. If Reagan were running today, Shapiro can imagine superPAC ads referring to him as a "former liberal-Democrat" or "tax-raiser Ronald Reagan."

"The truth is that political figures, particularly when viewed from the lens of history, are far more complicated creatures than they are when they're viewed through the lens of bumper stickers," Shapiro says.

So how does Ronald Reagan compare to the modern definition of a Reagan conservative? David Stockman, Reagan's former budget director, tells Raz that he doesn't think Reagan quite matches up.

"Even though he was highly negative about the role of government ... he was also enough of a pragmatist to recognize facts," Stockman says.

The modern interpretation of who Reagan was is based on two things, Stockman says: a selective reading of history and a full-bore adoption of Reagan rhetoric.

"What the history books are going to show, I believe, is that the Reagan revolution never happened. It was a campaign slogan," he says. "Government wasn't reduced; taxes were cut marginally, but the basic functions of the federal government didn't change."

What is left, Stockman says, is a lot of slogans and campaign speeches that the current crop of Republican politicians like to repeat over and over.

Ultimately, Stockman says, it does matter that the Republican Party of today is so very different from the Republican Party of Reagan's era. He says in any democracy you can't have fiscal stability or discipline unless you have one party that advocates discipline.

"The Republican Party has given up the role that the conservative party needs to play in a democracy," he says. "As a result of surrendering that role, we're in a very difficult and I think dangerous position."

This year, Stockman is backing Ron Paul.

20120116-03	17:43	Bill	Re: "Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?" (reply to SteveG, above)
-----------------------------	-------	------	---

Dave Stockman, a principal informant for this story, may have coined, or at least publicly used, the phrase "voodoo economics," when Reagan was drunk on supply-side economics. Stockman, then the budget director, was consequently, in his own words, "taken to the woodshed" for doctrinal deviation. I don't know how much longer after that episode it was that he resigned, but not a great stretch of time. Anyway, he was a candid guy and once again has given an accurate picture here. He represented a Michigan congressional district adjacent to where I lived in Indiana, and, in my newspaper role, I would talk to him now and then, especially during campaigns. He always impressed me as a very decent soul—and one usually willing to tell the truth.

20120116-05	17:52	SteveG	Re: "Will the Real Ronald Reagan Please Stand Up?" (reply to Bill, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Had forgotten the "voodoo economics" phrase, thank you for the reminder. Brought out a little chuckle.

20120116-04	17:50	SteveG	"Is This Land Made for 'You & Me'—or for the Super Rich?"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"Is This Land Made for 'You and Me'—or for the Super Rich?" by Bill Moyers, NationofChange

Jan. 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/land-made-you-and-me-or-super-rich-1326724787>)

The traveling medicine show known as the race for the Republican presidential nomination has moved on from Iowa and New Hampshire, and all eyes are now on South Carolina. Well, not exactly all. At the moment, our eyes are fixed on some big news from the great state of Oklahoma, home of the legendary American folk singer Woody Guthrie, whose 100th birthday will be celebrated later this year.

Woody saw the ravages of the Dust Bowl and the Depression firsthand; his own family came unraveled in the worst hard times. And he wrote tough yet lyrical stories about the men and women who struggled to survive, enduring the indignity of living life at the bone, with nothing to eat and no place to sleep. He traveled from town to town, hitchhiking and stealing rides in railroad boxcars, singing his songs for spare change or a ham sandwich. What professional success he had during his own lifetime, singing in concerts and on the radio, was often undone by politics and the restless urge to keep moving on. "So long, it's been good to know you," he sang, and off he would go.

What he wrote and sang about caused the oil potentates and preachers who ran Oklahoma to consider him radical and disreputable. For many years he was the state's prodigal son, but times change, and that's the big news.

Woody Guthrie has been rediscovered, even though Oklahoma's more conservative than ever – one of the reddest of our red states with a governor who's a favorite of the Tea Party.

The George Kaiser Family Foundation has bought Guthrie's archives – his manuscripts, letters and journals. A center is being built in Tulsa that will make them available to scholars and visitors from all over the world.

Among its treasures is the original, handwritten copy of this song, Woody Guthrie's most famous – This Land Is Your Land. The song extols the beauty of the country Guthrie traveled across again and again; its endless skyways and golden valleys, the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts. Yet his eye was clear, unclouded, and unobstructed by sentimentality, for he also wrote in its lyrics:

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

"Is this land made for you and me?" A mighty good question. The biggest domestic story of our time is the collapse of the middle class, a sharp increase in the poor, and the huge transfer of wealth to the already rich.

In an era of gross inequality there's both irony and relevance in Woody Guthrie's song. That "ribbon of highway" he made famous? It's faded and fraying in disrepair, the nation's infrastructure of roads and bridges, once one of our glories, now a shambles because fixing them would require spending money, raising taxes, and pulling together.

This land is mostly owned not by you and me but by the winner-take-all super rich who have bought up open spaces, built mega-mansions, turned vast acres into private vistas, and distanced themselves as far as they can from the common lot of working people – the people Woody wrote and sang about.

True, Barack Obama asked Bruce Springsteen and Woody Guthrie's longtime friend Pete Seeger to sing This Land is Your Land at that big, pre-inaugural concert the Sunday before he was sworn in. And sing they did, in the spirit of hope and change that President Obama had spun as the heart of his campaign rhetoric.

Today, whatever was real about that spirit has been bludgeoned by severe economic hardship for everyday Americans and by the cynical expedience of politicians who wear the red-white-and-blue in their lapels and sing "America the Beautiful" while serving the interests of crony capitalists stuffing SuperPACs with millions of dollars harvested from the gross inequality destroying us from within.

But maybe – just maybe – the news that Woody Guthrie, once a pariah in his home state, has become a local hero is the harbinger of things to come, and that all the people who still believe this land is our land will begin to take it back.

comment by Michael Marowitz

First and foremost, a functioning democracy is but a sham when one voice shouts and drowns out all others. For over 30 years, the middle class has been losing wealth to the upper class because we've been conditioned to worship a form of capitalism that sounds good but delivers only middle class impoverishment. Whether you call it Reaganomics or "supply side economics" or "neoliberalism" or "Milton Friedman's laissez faire capitalism," or "austere capitalism," we deregulated our way into a world economic crises, we privatized hundreds of government activities to award private contracts to Republican campaign contributors, and we lowered taxes to supposedly spur economic investment, which the rich refuse to invest, at least until they've driven Obama from office.

And now, after defeating the Labor Movement, they're shrinking government to change us to a Third World country. The avalanche of disinformation appealing to our worst fears and prejudices will only increase unless we regain the ability to engage in campaign finance reform. And we can't do that until 2/3 of the states ratify a new constitutional amendment overriding Citizens United.

Nothing will dramatically change unless that happens.

20120116-06	18:49	Dennis	"A Voters' Rights Amendment as a Focus for Dissent"
-------------	-------	--------	---

Suing Obama and uniting with the Tea Party. Has opposing corporate fascism come to this? [I believe there is no path forward except amending the Constitution. But I don't believe this amendment, as stated, is quite what I would want, but still better than what we have. Unfortunately, it doesn't even address campaign finance reform except maybe to get rid of *Citizens United*. -SteveB]

<http://www.truth-out.org/why-im-suing-barack-obama/1326735002>

"A Voters' Rights Amendment as a Focus for Dissent" by William John Cox and Helen Werner Cox, Truthout

Jan. 16, 2012, (<http://www.truth-out.org/voters-rights-amendment-unify-occupiers-and-tea-partiers/1325876815>)

Unification of the Tea Party and Occupy movements for a common goal - a Voters' Rights Amendment - will re-establish the United States as a democratic republic and will restore control of its government to the voters. The sort of cooperation I will suggest here is possible only to the extent that there is not more opinion-manufacturing or co-optation by political parties or private interests.

Although the corporate and wealthy elite is doing everything in its power - primarily through its mouthpiece, the mainstream media - to convince Occupiers and Tea Partiers that each is an enemy of the other, it is becoming increasingly clear that the two groups have much in common.

Not only do both groups march under the "Don't Tread on Me" flag, they both very strongly believe that corporations should not enjoy the constitutional rights of individuals, regardless of what the US Supreme Court may have ruled. Moreover, both groups believe that their government ignores their most critical concerns, including jobs, personal freedom, and the health, nutrition and well-being of their families, as their elected representatives feed at the trough slopped by the corporate and wealthy elite.

The time is ripe for an open consideration of unity between the two groups. The extensive media coverage amounting to the propaganda-style coverage and pandering of the Tea Party's far smaller demonstrations has given way to acknowledgment of the Occupy movement in the face of police brutality and that movement's staying power.

Support for the Tea Party is lagging with the nonaligned public, as it is increasingly evident that the populist movement has been and is being manipulated by Republican operatives. At the same time, the Occupiers are fighting off attempts by establishment progressives to co-opt their movement.

It is essential that both groups identify their common interests and take collective actions to unify their efforts, instead of attacking each other over other issues about which they may have an honest difference of opinion. Uniting with the increasingly large block of independent voters, Tea Partiers and Occupiers will organize a more effective defense of both of their basic principles, rather than those offered by either the Republican or Democratic party, both of which subvert the rights and interests of workers and small-business owners in favor of wealthy donors and corporate supporters.

The most basic issue that Occupiers and Tea Partiers may perhaps readily agree upon is a Voters' Rights Amendment to the Constitution that ensures that the future of the United States is decided by its voters rather than by the corporate and wealthy elite, which currently manipulates and controls the voters' representatives. The Voters' Rights Amendment provides that only natural persons are protected by the Constitution, establishes a national paid voters' holiday and calls for a national paper ballot, which includes a national policy referendum on critical policy questions and an alternative write-in vote.

[The Voters' Rights Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America](#)

Section 1: Only natural persons shall be protected by this Constitution and entitled to the rights and freedoms it guarantees, including the freedoms of religion, speech, assembly, petition and privacy.

Section 2: Prior to the end of the calendar year preceding a presidential election, Congress shall adopt a joint resolution setting forth the 12 most critical policy questions that should be addressed by the next president and Congress. Failure of Congress to adopt a joint resolution prior to the end of the calendar year shall result in the disqualification of all sitting members of Congress to be eligible for re-election.

Section 3: Federal elections conducted every second year for senators and representatives shall be held on a national voters' holiday, with full pay for all voters who cast a ballot. Federal elections shall be conducted on uniform, hand-countable paper ballots and, for the presidential election, ballots shall include the 12 most critical policy questions identified by Congress, each to be answered yes or no by voters. Paper ballots shall provide space for voters to handwrite in their choice for all elective federal offices, if they choose, and all such votes shall be counted.

Section 4: In balancing the public benefit of maximum voter participation with the prevention of voting fraud, Congress and the states shall not impose any restriction on voting by citizens except for the most compelling reasons. The intentional suppression of voting in national elections is hereby prohibited and, in addition to any other penalty imposed by law, any person convicted of the intentional suppression of voting shall be ineligible for federal office for a period of five years.

Section 5: The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 6: This article shall become operative once it has been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several states as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the states by the Congress. [This should not be part of the amendment itself. -SteveB]

20120116-07	23:33	SteveG	"U.S. Ranks 27th in Social Justice"
-------------	-------	--------	-------------------------------------

"U.S. Ranks 27th in Social Justice" by: Jim Hightower, Other Words Blog

Jan. 16, 2012 (<http://www.truth-out.org/us-ranks-27th-social-justice/1326737822>)

(Being at the bottom of the heap in terms of social justice confirms the reality of both economic and political inequality that the Occupy movement is protesting.)

"USA: We're No. 1!"

Oh, wait — Iceland is No. 1. But we did beat out Poland and Slovakia, right? Uh...no. But go on down the rankings and there we are! No. 27, fifth from the bottom. So our new national chant is, "USA: At Least We're Not Last!"

A foundation in Germany has analyzed the social justice records of all 31 members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ranking each nation in such categories as health care, income inequality, pre-school education, and child poverty. The overall performance by the United States — which boasts of being an egalitarian society — outranks only Greece, Chile, Mexico, and Turkey. Actually, three of those countries performed better than ours in the education of pre-schoolers, and Greece did better than the United States on the prevention of poverty.

Our bottom-of-the-heap ranking in social justice confirms the economic and political inequality that the Occupy movement is protesting. It also helps explain why this grassroots uprising in America has spread so rapidly to more than 600 communities and has generated such broad public support. After all, our nation is fabulously rich, ranking well ahead of nearly every other OECD member in national wealth, so there's no excuse for us sitting at the bottom of the list in education, health care, poverty, and other measures of a democratic and egalitarian society.

Bluntly put, We the People have let today's elites abandon America's founding principles of fairness, justice, and equal opportunity for all.

These privileged few have purchased our government, stolen the wealth and economic future of working families, and reduced America to a plastic imitation of the country we thought we had. The Occupy rebellion is long overdue and on target.

[20120116-08](#) 23:40 Larry 'Can We Then Add That Bit of Essence...'

I have enjoyed the entries in this post very much, and I don't know that I have much to add to it. Perhaps one way we try to understand difficult things is to categorize them, at least I do. I am sure that within each group (liberal Christians, conservative Christians etc.) there are a great number of opinions, and no one will be just like us. (Thank God.)

I found out a long time ago that it takes too much energy to hate people, so I try to be as accepting as I can be. I have known "Christians" whom I could hardly stand, and I have known people of great faith who didn't show it in any way until some spark of incredibly bright gentleness seeped from their "aura", and you knew. And when you knew, you kept it to yourself and you added that bit of essence to your own claim to a deity that you didn't even have to identify.

We all have to carry some baggage of pain from the past. We can't get away from it. If we have some gentle friends, in time maybe the burden will get a little easier to handle. Can we then add that bit of essence to the deity we don't have to identify?

Just asking.

[20120116-09](#) 23:49 SteveB Re: 'Can We Then Add That Bit of Essence...' (reply to Larry, above)

What a world you weave in so few short words! Thank you. I feel like I am back in the magical presence of my Zen teacher from so far and long ago. This is truly a beautiful thing you have crafted.

You speak to me of goodness as a gift and as a responsibility. When it comes from within us...well, that is a mystery, is it not? When we encounter goodness in others, we can see the power of its tiny, gentle light. But simply to see it is not enough, we need to make that spark our own.

And these sparks we gather and hold within us like the sacrament in open, gentle hands become the pathway to what cannot be known until we arrive at the end of the journey.

May I arrive at that distant destination (even if tomorrow) with just a tiny bit of the light I see in your words, my friend.

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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

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.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved