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THEY SAID IT

The capitalist process, by substituting a mere parcel of shares for the walls and the machines in a factory, takes the life out of the idea of property. It loosens the grip that once was so strong - the legal right to do as one pleases with one's own; the grip also in the sense that the holder of the title loses the will to fight for "his" factory and his control over it, to die if necessary on its steps. This evaporation of what we may term the material substance of property - its visible and touchable reality - affects not only the attitude of holders but also that of the workmen and of the public in general. Dematerialized, defunctionalized and absentee ownership does not impress and call forth moral allegiance as the vital form of property did. Eventually, there will be nobody left who cares to stand for it - nobody within and nobody without the precincts of the big concerns.

Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1942.

BURN AFTER READING.

For a variety of reasons, publications like this one seldom get a real political "scoop." The folks who leak big, inside-Washington stories always favor one of the three sisters of American journalistic excellence," The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The National Enquirer. But last week, a friend of ours gave us a document stamped "top secret, burn after reading." We don't know how he got it and we didn't ask questions. Furthermore, we can't be sure of its authenticity. But, on the off chance that it is legitimate, and given that our distribution is smaller than the address book of an agoraphobic recluse, we thought we could share it with our readers without endangering the security of the nation. So here goes.

Since this memo is going to a very small and select group of long-time comrades and fellow travelers, all of you already have a deep understanding of its contents. But, to assure that we are all on the same page as we move forward, I thought it would be helpful to provide an outline of my domestic goals and my proposed means of achieving these goals.

My primary aim as President of the United States is to put the final nail in the coffin of global capitalism. Everything else flows from this objective. As anyone who has paid attention to the world today can see, capitalism results in a grossly unfair distribution of the earth's bounty. As Marx explained in his famous Manifesto, that brilliant and breathtaking distillation of history and economics, capitalism does this by creating a highly complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank.

In ancient Rome, as he noted, they had patricians, knights, plebians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern capitalist society that sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away

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with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of capitalism, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – the rich, powerful, and privileged; and “the rest of us,” the social descamisados.

Modern industry has established the world market. This market has given an immense boost to commerce, to communication, to technology. This development has, in turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, communication, and technology extended, in the same proportion the rich grew richer, increased their capital, and pushed into the background the lower classes, those whom the elite, who run the affairs of this nation and dictate the terms of its culture, are fond of describing condescendingly as “minorities.”

These capitalists have pitilessly torn asunder the normal ties that bind men together and have left no other nexus between people than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, they have substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

This must be stopped. And as President of the United States and titular leader of the world, I will do so.

Our opponents, the smug elite, argue that capitalism created the prosperity that all Americans enjoy to one degree or another. And this is true. Indeed, Marx himself recognized capitalism as a necessary step in human progress. But he understood that it is “transient,” that it creates internal tensions that lead to its own destruction. And lo, we have reached that point today; that point which the economist Natalia Moszkowska described in 1943 as “late capitalism.”

Our task is to properly handle and hasten the inevitable transition to the new order. As I said numerous times during the recent election campaign,

this transition will necessarily involve extensive change. This change will include a transfer of power from the oligarchs to a new class of leaders, people such as us who have been selected and called upon to the high and noble task of creating a just distribution of the earth’s wealth while, at the same time, emancipating the victims of the old order.

As noted by V. I. Lenin, the leader of the great revolution to free the Russian masses from autocratic rule, you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. And we must break a great many eggs to achieve our ends in the time allotted us. We must be brutal and decisive. In our case, the ends are both righteous and important enough to justify whatever means we must employ. The French Jacobins recognized this necessity, and while they are still criticized today by many reactionary historians for executing a small number of individuals who stood in the way of creating a just society, the end result of their actions was a France that was and still is ruled by dedicated, professional administrators trained in the art of government.

Now let me be clear about this. We are against capitalism as it has evolved in the past several hundred years. But we are not against commerce and trade and technology and progress. We believe that progress toward a world that is better for all mankind is too important to be left to the whims of “the marketplace” and to the grasping and scheming of those people who are driven only by greed.

We do not advocate a takeover of the means of production by the government as some reactionaries claim. We envision a merger of government and business, a partnership, in which government is the senior partner. We believe progress toward a better world must be managed by a beneficent leader, a lover of wisdom who understands more deeply than less learned individuals the meaning of justice, a man who cares deeply, as I do, about the needs and wants of every human on earth. My long habit of humility prevents me from using this analogy in public, but it is useful, when considering our ultimate goals, to think in terms of Plato’s “philosopher kings.”

For this reason, it is important to understand and make it clear when you discuss my views with others that I do not subscribe to socialism, communism, fascism, nihilism, anarchism, or any other “ism.” I am my own “ism.” I am here on earth to love and to serve humanity. To borrow a quote from an interview Hillary Clinton once gave to the *Washington Post*, I have “a burning desire to make the world around me--kind of going out in concentric circles--better for everybody.” And with your help, I can do it.

As for patriotism, I neither love America nor hate it. It is what it is. As I have been saying in speeches throughout the world, the United States has been responsible for enormous evil since its founding, indeed, since before its founding when it slaughtered the Red Man and enslaved the Black Man in a blood lust for riches. Justice demands that this fact be widely acknowledged and humbly regretted.

On the other hand, the United States is the perfect platform on which to build a new world order because it is still the most powerful and influential state on earth. It must be preserved for this reason, if for no other. Moreover, it is also the world’s last stronghold of both capitalism and its contemptible companion, that unctuous, self-serving system of “Western morality,” which is nothing more are than the means by which some people control others, or as Nietzsche put it, the outward expressions of will and power.

As such, if we can destroy these twin evils in the United States, they will die everywhere else. This process will be painful for many individuals. But it must be done for the sake of humanity. History demands it. And I have been chosen to lead the fight.

We will begin the process by destroying the dollar. We will take advantage of the greed instilled in the American people by capitalism and the ever present fear among those who live in a highly materialistic society of having unmet material desires. We will convince Americans that the economic pain of attempting to live within their means will be far greater than the pain associated with borrowing vast amounts of money. Eventually, the huge canker of

debt that will slowly materialize will destroy the dollar as a tool of the oligarchs. At this point, the American businesses of all sizes and persuasions, as well as the American people themselves, will happily sacrifice the poisonous “freedom” they claim to love so much on the altar of a government safety net. And I will cast that net.

Public adherence and respect for Judeo-Christian values is already on the decline. As Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer – a useful idiot, to borrow a phrase from Lenin -- put it recently, “traditional values kinds of arguments and a strong foreign policy are over” for America. Indeed, our tactical advantage on this “values” front is so strong that we can now fight the battle head on, relentlessly pushing our war against those archaic traditions, mores, morals, and superstitions that form the fetters of which Rousseau spoke when he noted that “man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”

It is worth noting here that our strategy of openly confronting our enemies on the battleground of traditional morality is already showing signs of great success. The Catholic Church folded like a cheap umbrella in a rainstorm when I reopened the front in the war over abortion and stem cell research in the early days of my presidency. There was, of course, an outcry among many of the Church’s radical reactionaries. But numerous Catholic Bishops, weak in their own faith and fearful of losing their popularity with the masses, have refused to raise a finger to fight on behalf of the principles their church claims to honor. And I can assure you that more will follow when they realize that Rome itself does not have the courage to penalize them or their parishioners. And when Rome finally loses its moral control of the Catholic Church in the United States, we will have won the war here. And the chaos of capitalism will give way to the order of a benevolent state ruled by benevolent professionals.

Our time has come, comrades. History is on our side. We will succeed. But mark down this, mark down this, to paraphrase Lenin, if we fail, we shall slam the door on an empty house.

A SPECTER IS HAUNTING THE GOP. AND IT'S NOT ARLEN.

Times are tough for Republicans in Washington. They are, of course, the minority party, in control of exactly zero of the levers of power in this town. They are constantly squabbling and pointing fingers, as most rump parties do after they've been thrashed by their opponents and told by the voters to go jump in a lake. They have no national leader, and the only guy who even comes close to being a titular leader is a FORMER big shot who pontificates on TV, hasn't held elective office in over a decade, and was forced from that office, in part, for having an affair with a committee staffer while still married to the woman he had an affair with while still married to a woman who was on her death bed at the time. Or something like that. Hard to imagine, given that, that things could get much worse. But last week they did.

What's that you say? Arlen? Arlen who? Never heard of the guy.

In all seriousness, this is probably not what you think. Our grim assessment of the GOP's week has nothing whatsoever to do with the defection of Senator Arlen Specter and the filibuster-proof majority that said defection provides the Democrats (or at least will provide them once Al Franken is finally seated as the washed-up-hack-comedian-turned-Senator from Minnesota). Specter's escape from the GOP provided an occasion for conservative functionaries to stop attacking Barack Obama and to resume blaming one another for the imminent end of civilization. But other than that, it was meaningless.

Specter is, to butcher the old adage, the world's oldest professional politician, which is to say that his wares are for sale. His defection has nothing to do with the Republican Party and its manifold problems and everything to do with Specter and his obsession with political power. The guy was going to get beat – crushed, in fact – in next year's Republican primary. So instead of losing to a loudmouthed, upstart conservative, Specter jumped ship and dramatically

increased his odds of winning the opportunity to “serve” his state and his country until he is at least 86. Lucky us.

No. What concerns us on the GOP's behalf was something far less publicized but, in our estimation, far more ominous than the machinations of a political never-was. You see, last Tuesday, while the rest of the world was concerned with Swine Flu, the government's strong arming of Chrysler's bondholders, and the topics of conversation between Michelle and Barack on their hand-in-hand evening strolls, the New Hampshire state senate passed a bill legalizing gay marriage. Given that the state House had already passed a similar bill, it now appears inevitable that New Hampshire will become the second state to have legalized gay marriage, through the democratic process, which, by definition, means with the tacit approval of the voters.

Now, the instinctive reaction here might be simply to dismiss this, to assume that New Hampshire is a left-wing anomaly like its neighbor Vermont, the only other state to have approved gay marriage through the legislative process. But it's not. New Hampshire is – or at least was – the last bastion of conservatism in New England. It's the Granite State; a state whose motto is “Live Free or Die”; a state that elected both John Sununu. As the *Boston Globe* recently noted, “From 1856 to 1994, Republicans won 63 of 71 races for governor. The same domination held basically true for the state's congressional delegation and state house.” For crying out loud, Mark Steyn lives there.

And yet the state will soon have gay marriage. Clearly, something is amiss. And it's the GOP that is suffering and will continue to do so.

How did this happen? How did the Republican Party manage to squander its historical advantage, not just in New Hampshire, but in much of the rest of the country? And, more to the point, can anything be done about it? Recall that it was less than four-and-a-half years ago that the GOP was the “semi-permanent” majority party, holding all of the levers

of power. And now, it's nothing; it's a joke, a rump party with regional appeal, unable even to manage a filibuster without help.

Fortunately for Republicans and other likeminded voters, Washington's big shot conservative thinkers are on top of this. They're all working diligently to rectify the situation, trying to help the party as it struggles to come to grips with its new, post-Bush identity. Unfortunately, not one of them appears to have even the foggiest idea what he's doing.

As a handful of others have noted, the biggest problem in rebuilding the GOP is that all of the factions battling for supremacy within the party think that everything would be fine if only everyone else would be a little (or a lot) more like them. The social conservatives think that the squishy "moderates" are the problem. The moderates think that the party would be a heckuva lot better off if it ditched the religious nuts and "got over" the abortion issue. The small government, libertarian leaners think that the big spenders killed the party. And the Bush-Huckabee "compassionate" types think that the austerity and "meanness" of the small government folks drives people away in droves. And you know what? They're all right.

The problem is that in a big tent (otherwise known as a "viable political party") such conflicts are going to arise. That's the way it is. And the urge to purge, while understandable, is only going to make things worse.

For example, in the aftermath of last week's announcement by Specter, South Carolina's own Jim DeMint told his Senate colleague essentially, "Don't let the door hit ya where the good Lord split ya." What he actually said was, "I would rather have 30 Republicans in the Senate who really believe in principles of limited government, free markets, free people, than to have 60 that don't have a set of beliefs." That's an understandable sentiment. One that we, on occasion, share. But it's a monumentally stupid way to run a party. A thirty seat minority would be even weaker than the current GOP minority – and

this group really can't do much of anything about anything. Such sentiments, if actually applied, would lead inevitably to political disaster.

On the other side of the debate, those who don't get, never got, and will never get the Religious Right are busy lecturing Senator DeMint for his foolishness, while proposing to do precisely the same thing, only with a less sensible plan (if that's even possible). According to the "moderates" the problem with the party is that it is controlled by religious freaks, right-wing nuts who will accept nothing short of total compliance on cultural matters, most especially, abortion. Apparently, thirty years of the same whine has not exhausted these anti-culture warriors who appear neither to understand recent history nor bother to inform themselves about the beliefs of the electorate. Take former Bush speechwriter and current self-appointed GOP savior David Frum, who last week wrote the following:

Republicans have to find some way to make internal peace on the abortion issue. The GOP is a majority pro-life party, and so naturally the head of the ticket will tend to be pro-life as well. But New England and the mid-Atlantic are regions in which Republican officeholders tend to be pro-choice. Think Rudy Giuliani, George Pataki, Tom Ridge, Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe, Christie Todd Whitman. If we restrict pro-choice candidates from ever being considered for the national ticket, in effect we are placing a ceiling on the careers of Northeastern Republicans.

Don't these people ever get tired of this? We know that we get tired of hearing it.

The fact of the matter is that abortion is not the issue here. Never has been. Never will be. Let us repeat: any problems the GOP is having are completely and incontestably unrelated to abortion. Abortion is not a loser of an issue for the GOP. And those who say it is are ill-informed, trying simply to remake the party in conformity with their own beliefs, or both.

For starters, at the same time that the electorate is moving away from the GOP, it is, nonetheless, moving TOWARD the pro-Life position. For years now, public opinion surveys have shown that the electorate is becoming less and less enamored with the radicalism of the pro-Choice position. This isn't to say that all or even most voters support a ban on abortion. But an overwhelming majority favor considerable restrictions and think that the current "on demand" regime is too radically anti-life. There is a reason, after all, that the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), which Candidate Obama declared would be his first priority, has managed to slip to "not my highest legislative priority" as of last week.

A study released last Thursday by the Pew Research Center bolsters this contention and confirms that support for the current abortion regime is slipping. According to Pew:

Public attitudes on a pair of contentious national issues – gun control and abortion – have moved in a more conservative direction over the past year . . .

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 31-April 21 among 1,521 adults reached on landlines and cell phones, also finds public opinion about abortion more closely divided than it has been in several years. Currently, 46% say abortion should be legal in most...or all cases...; 44% believe that abortion should be illegal in most...or all cases.... Since the mid-1990s, majorities have consistently favored legal abortion . . .

A closer look at the Pew numbers shows that support for unfettered abortion has slipped even among 18-29 year-olds, the much ballyhooed demographic group that is allegedly at the core of the GOP's problems. This too is consistent with previous findings, which show that the current "youth" generation, the cohort that was born and came of age under the current

abortion regime, looks far less favorably on abortion than did/do their Baby Boomer parents. It would seem that there is something disturbing and focusing in the knowledge that one exists simply by the whim of "choice" or that one could have had but doesn't have any number of siblings because of that same whim.

We won't pretend that the current formulation of the GOP's position on the issue is perfect or that it appeals to everyone. The religious undertones of the debate certainly appeal to the overtly religious, but they likely have the opposite effect on others, particularly younger voters. But that doesn't mean that the issue can't be salvaged. It can. And, assuming the GOP wants someday to be the majority party again, it should be.

In our estimation, the key for the Republican Party, on abortion and in general, is to practice what it preaches, namely conservatism. And by this we mean that the GOP could (and probably will) do far worse than to return to the wisdom of the ancients – or at least the wisdom of the Founding Fathers.

This country – as generally distinct from the rest of the West – was founded on two basic and simple premises. The first is that liberty is the ultimate social good, the preeminent virtue in the fabled state of nature. And the second is that it is the government's job to provide the conditions under which liberty can best flourish, to protect the individual's liberty and see that it is not infringed upon unduly. This is, to paint with a very broad brush, John Locke's view of the Social Compact. And it also, in turn, Thomas Jefferson's view, James Madison's, James Monroe's, Alexander Hamilton's, etc. etc.

A Republican embrace of the Founders views and of the concept of liberty in general would likely stave off massive restructuring of the party, given that most of its long-term policy positions favor the cause of liberty anyway. It would also allow the party to shed its generally stuffy image and appeal more to independent voters, who comprise a plurality of the electorate, and to younger voters, who might otherwise never consider the GOP a viable option.

In a recent article, Jim Burkee, a professor of American History at Concordia University Wisconsin, described the “Y-Generation” (a.k.a. The Millennium Generation) as lovers of liberty. “In short,” he wrote, “they love their freedom.” He continued:

The truth is, this generation, which seems not to fit in any neat political category, is more ideologically consistent than either Democrats or Republicans. The conservatism that dominates the Republican Party today is a combination of limited government in some places (taxation and regulation), but bigger and more intrusive government elsewhere (homeland security, military and on social issues). The Democratic Party is just as inconsistent, preferring government to be hands-off on social and civil liberty issues, but large elsewhere in areas like health care and other entitlements.

Gen-Yers see the inconsistency. Weaned on the Internet, they understand what our founders understood and what classical liberals since have preached: that Social Security and the Internal Revenue Service represent big, intrusive government, but so, too, do a massive military, snooping spy agencies and national identification cards. They don't want the government taxing their Internet purchases any more than they want a government agency assigning them a doctor.

It's the classical liberalism of Milton Friedman, who argued that political and economic freedom are deeply interrelated - that one cannot exist without the other. They've grown up with that kind of freedom, and as voting adults, they have come to expect it.

We're not sure that we agree with everything Professor Burkee has to say about the younger generation, about the respective political parties, or about liberty

in general, but his general point is one that the GOP would do well to understand and remember.

One issue where we think that Burkee misses the mark, of course, is on the so-called “social issues.” If, for example, one reads either the Founders or their influences (namely Locke) it is difficult to miss the fact that all of these men considered the protection of “life” to be one of the principal components of the Social Contract. As Thomas Jefferson himself put it: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” What purpose, we wonder, does a government serve if not to protect and preserve the lives of those who are unable to do so themselves? That is, in the classical sense, the very definition of the government's responsibility.

And it should be the core of the GOP's appeal on abortion.

There is, in our estimation, nothing at all wrong with the religious appeal on abortion, except that it is self-limiting. An appeal based in terms of the Social Contract, by contrast, can appeal beyond the bounds of religious denominations and, more to the point, it does not contradict the religious appeal. Indeed, Jefferson's unalienable rights were endowed by the creator. Locke's conception of those rights and of liberty also acknowledged that they were the handiwork of the Almighty. And both, either directly or indirectly, took their cues from Thomas Aquinas, whose theology is also the foundation of the religious case against abortion.

As we have argued in these pages many times, it may be technically correct that the United States is not an overtly Christian nation, but there can be no question at all that its ethos is derived from Christian principles and its founding could not have occurred without the evolution of the Christian concepts of individual worth and free will. An appeal to the Founding would, in our opinion, permit the occasionally self-limiting religious arguments to obtain broader appeal. If

David Frum thinks that GOP needs to make “internal peace” on the issue, this how it should be done.

The same, we think, holds for many other “social issues,” most notably but not exclusively, the right to keep and bear arms. Interestingly, here the GOP has done a pretty decent job of couching its arguments in terms that emulate those of the Founders. And the results have been impressive.

As for the issue that prompted this piece, that which we argued in our introduction poses a serious problem for the GOP, namely gay marriage, here things get a little more complicated. It is difficult to see how a party could manage to support liberty as an overarching principle and yet oppose same-sex unions. This isn’t a subject that can be tied quite as easily to the Founders or to those who influenced them

If we were asked (and we haven’t been), we’d argue that the way to finesse this is to encourage government (at all levels) to abandon the regulation of marriage almost completely. Marriage is a social construct, but it also a religious construct, one to which the state currently provides additional sanction. But if the state were to withdraw its sanction and return the regulation of the issue exclusively to religious institutions, then it could conceivably sidestep the issue while, at the same time, advancing liberty in general.

Right now, the legal case for same-sex marriage rests on the idea of equality under the law. But if the law were not involved, that argument would crumble. Rather than, for example, the state treating married couples and individual differently in terms of taxes, it could treat every one equally, regardless of marital status. With regard to Social Security spousal and survivor benefits, the state could get out of the business of determining and providing those benefits by, instead,

transferring ownership of Social Security “accounts” to the individual and allowing him or her to determine the beneficiary, as with private property in general.

There would have to be general guidelines, of course, with the state enforcing current laws against the marital and/or sexual coercion of minors and bans against polygamy and such.

We know that this solution is far from perfect, but we also know that the GOP has to do something if it wants to avoid an electoral tidal wave driven by an issue that is, in many ways, tangential to the broader interests of political parties and government in general. By advocating a decrease in the state’s role in marriage, the GOP could advance the concept of equality under the law, could advance liberty in general, and, at the same, time, strengthen the nation’s religious institutions by removing from them specter of government interference in the rites and blessings that they consider sacred.

We apologize if this piece has been more pedagogical than our stuff normally is. But the issues involved lent themselves to such a discussion. As things stand today, the Republican Party is in a very bad place. And it will remain there for a very long time unless it figures out how to appeal to a broader audience without excluding any of those whose support it currently enjoys. Those who recommend jettisoning the religious right or the moderates or any other faction of the party are just plain nuts. When a party is down, the last thing it can afford to do is exclude anyone else.

The Tea Party movement, we believe, confirms our belief that a focus on liberty holds tremendous potential for the GOP. And we suspect that this will be the case more and more as the Obama presidency wears on.

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