

Mark L. Melcher Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

Unfortunately, those who represent society at any particular moment and who are supposed to overflow with a will to service will be found by the realistic observer (insofar at least as they are mere humanitarian crusaders in whom there is no survival of the traditional controls) to be developing, under cover of their altruism, a will to power. On the pretext of social utility they are ready to deprive the individual of every last scrap and vestige of his freedom and finally to subject him to despotic outer control. No one, as Americans of the present day are only too well aware, is more reckless in his attacks on personal liberty than the apostle of "service." He is prone in his furtherance of his schemes of "uplift" not only to ascribe unlimited sovereignty to society as against the individual, but also to look on himself as endowed with a major portion of it, to develop a temper, in short, that is plainly tyrannical...

The time may come again, if indeed it has not come already, when men will be justified in asserting true freedom, even, it may be, at the cost of their lives, against the monstrous encroachments of the materialistic state.

Irving Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 1924.

OBAMA: HE COULD BE WORSE.

Okay, okay, so he's not the Messiah. He's a loose cannon. Who knew? Or, who didn't know would probably be a better question. But the history books are full of examples of leaders of great nations who are a half a bubble off plum. So get over it, already. Or get used to it. As Erasmus said almost 500 years ago, if an occasional loser didn't come along, you wouldn't recognize a winner when one appeared.

And in any case, as leftist leaders go, Barack isn't all that bad. Think, for example, of Nero, one of history's earliest recorded liberals. Aside from fiddling while Rome burned, he tried to have his mother, Agrippina, drowned, and when that failed, he had her beaten to death. He had his first wife Octavia murdered, and he personally kicked to death his second wife, Poppaea, who was in the advance stages of pregnancy. After Poppaea's death, he found a young man named Sporus, who looked like her, had him castrated, and married him in a formal ceremony.

Not a liberal? Well, we report, you decide. For starters, Nero was clearly not much for family values, and he was obviously "sexually enlightened." He was a strong proponent of what philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre calls emotivism, i.e., "the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling." He was not a fan of law and order. He frowned upon religion. And he was big on class warfare, welfare, decadent entertainment, and deficit

In this Issue

Obama: He Could Be Worse.

Shut Up and Listen, Dummy.

Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842
Phone 540.477.9762 Fax 540.477.3359 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

spending. Relative to this final claim, he provided the poor with “bread and circuses,” and confiscated the property of the rich to pay the huge government deficits created by his own profligacy.

But if Nero is not a recent enough example of the horrors attendant to modern day liberalism, consider Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, three of the 20th century left’s most famous leaders. In fact, check out a piece we wrote in 1997 entitled “Homo Homini Lupus,” in which we discussed a book entitled *Death By Government*, written by R. J. Rummel. According to Rummel, Stalin and Lenin were responsible for the murder of nearly 50 million of the citizens over whom they ruled, while Mao was responsible for the deaths of 37.8 million of his countrymen. Mao’s tomb, by the way, still occupies a special place of honor at the ironically named Gate of Heavily Peace (a.k.a. Tiananmen Square).

And then there’s Jimmy Carter. Oh. Okay, we won’t go into the gruesome details about him and his days at the helm of the ship of state. This is, after all, a family newsletter.

Anyway, the fact is that Barack is a peach when compared to most of history’s other great lefties. For one thing, he is grossly incompetent. Think of the mess the nation would be in if this poor damn fool were good at his job. And thank goodness, he’s non-violent, a classic metrosexual if you will. Indeed, to the degree that he has any homicidal urges at all, they appear to be focused exclusively on his own Democratic Party.

Of course, early on in his presidency a great many Americans found themselves wondering if his intentions were more sinister than that, perhaps not of the same sanguinary nature of other left-wing revolutionaries, but with the same goal of obliterating the existing cultural and economic composition of society.

In fact, this fear was so widespread last year that a focus group study, done by left-wing, political consultant James Carville’s organization, claimed

that the entire base of the Republican Party, i.e., self-identifying conservatives, was united behind the belief that Barack is “deliberately and ruthlessly advancing a ‘secret agenda’ to bankrupt our country and dramatically expand government control over all aspects of our daily lives.”

These people, Carville et al. declared “are actively rooting for Obama to fail as president because they believe he is not acting in good faith as the leader of our country.” The study went on to say that “only 6 percent of these conservative Republican base voters say that Obama is on their side, and our groups showed that they explicitly believe he is purposely and ruthlessly executing a hidden agenda to weaken and ultimately destroy the foundations of our country.”

Not surprisingly, Carville et al. claimed that these conservatives were far outside of the bell curve of public opinion, or to use their exact words, “a world apart from the rest of America.” But they made no attempt to ameliorate the fears of these lost souls by offering a plausible, alternative explanation for Barack’s apparent desire to turn the entire U.S. economy into a replica of the Postal Service.

Needless to say, we would have been immensely interested in such an explanation, having admitted several times in these pages since “The One” became president that we have constantly found ourselves entertaining the notion that he’s not digging in the same ditch with the rest of us.

In fact, in April of last year we offered readers a choice between the following two alternative explanations for his behavior. First, we suggested that Barack may be best described as a strange sort of evil genius who is driven by his oft-evidenced resentment and antagonism toward American society to pursue some grand, elaborate plan to destroy the traditional foundations upon which it stands in order to rebuild it based on a socialist blueprint. Our substitute view was that he is simply not intellectually up to the task of being president of the world’s last remaining superpower; that his knowledge of history, economics, sociology, political philosophy, and even human nature

is so limited, his association with the denizens of the radical left so long-lived, and his disdain for American exceptionalism so deeply-seated that he is incapable of seeing the world as it is.

Now we should note that we haven't totally abandoned the first option, despite Carville et al.'s contention that this places us among people who "truly stand apart" from the "continuum leading to the center of the electorate." However, in our defense, we must say that we no longer spend a lot of time worrying about it, having found comfort in the knowledge that Barack's high charisma quotient during the election campaign and early on in his presidency had more to do with what people didn't know about him than what they did. Or to rephrase this, we think his Kool-Aid stand is about to close.

This is not to say that he won't wreak havoc on the nation's economy, on national security, and on America's standing abroad during his remaining three years in office. He will. Count on it. But, as the great 19th century American humorist Bill Nye once said of Richard Wagner's music, it isn't as bad it sounds.

You see, like it or not, and as we've said numerous times in these pages, the good old U.S. of A has been heading toward bankruptcy ever since December 1971 when the so-called "Group of 10" released the federal government from the shackles of a pesky little provision in Article 1, Section 10 of the U.S. Constitution, which stated that "No State shall . . . make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts.

For a short time following this improvident move, a combination of common sense and patriotism acted as a restraint on the nation's elected officials. But most of the politicians who harbored those time-honored but now archaic attributes have since died and been replaced by a group of morally and intellectually stunted baby boomers who lack the character to resist the political temptation attendant to the availability of unlimited cash with which to buy votes and thus satisfy their desire to "do good" without having to break a sweat. The only question that remained to be

answered once Washington's raid on the U.S. Treasury shifted into high gear was how long before the inevitable crash would occur.

In a strange sort of way then, Barack has done the nation a favor by speeding up the process. We explained this notion this way in an early November article entitled "Saving the Frog:"

Think of America as the proverbial frog sitting in a pan of hot water on a stove, destined to die if the temperature is raised so slowly that he doesn't realize the danger it is in until it is too late. Think of John McCain raising the temperature ever so slowly until the frog dies. Then think of Barack turning up the heat so quickly that the frog figures it out and jumps to safety.

To continue the metaphor, while the frog hasn't yet jumped out of the pan, it is beginning to look like he may do so, thanks to Barack's impatience, naiveté, and just plain stupidity. And while the frog may be badly injured when it finally leaves the pan, and certainly will have to go through a long and painful rehab process, it will still be alive. And that's worth a lot.

Moreover, it is possible that Barack's presidency will mark the beginning of the end of that particularly virulent strain of "big bother" liberalism that Marx himself disdainfully characterized as "socialism from above" and Robert Owen described as governing and treating "all society as the most advanced physicians govern and treat their patients in the best arranged lunatic hospitals."

Now we are not basing this observation on the expectation of an intellectually inspired conservative awakening. We are basing it on the belief that Barack's form of Mrs. Jellyby liberalism, in which no good deed goes unfunded by borrowed money, cannot survive in a society that is strapped for funds and has an extremely low credit score. And the United States is certainly going to fit into this category for a very long time. We put this thought this way last August.

The compassionate, liberal state has been financed almost entirely by the accumulation of massive amounts of government debt and by the two largest Ponzi schemes that the world has ever seen, i.e., Social Security and Medicare. And lo, these funding sources are drying up, which means that in the very near future, proponents of continued government largess at the current rate will have to pay for their virtuous inclinations by a combination of higher taxes and cuts in their own access to government handouts. Time will tell how liberals will react when they have skin in the game, but early signs indicate that some are already beginning to question the wisdom of liberalism's legendary generosity.

Finally, conservative Americans can be thankful that the great awakening of the dire fiscal straits that the nation is in came during the term of the most liberal president and liberal Congress in history. Like it or not, this breaking point could just as easily have occurred during a time when Republicans had control of the White House and both Houses of Congress.

As it stands now, when the Republicans regain power -- which they will -- they will be forced, by circumstances beyond their control, to honor their heretofore honored-in-breach-only fiscal conservatism. Indeed, they might even start to believe their own propaganda about being the party of prudence.

In the meantime, the nation is in for a long, painful "Sunday morning coming down," as Kris Kristofferson would put it. It doesn't take a brain surgeon to figure out who will bear the economic brunt of this "adjustment period." As Jean Paul Marat once remarked, "God has always been hard on the poor." But it is worth keeping in mind that a few of the Democratic Party's largest constituency groups are likely to take some big hits too, beginning with the nation's economically outdated and corruptly run labor unions and moving on to the bloated ranks of federal, state, and local government employees.

Relative to this latter group, Barack gave strong evidence last week of how far out of touch with the real world he is when he proposed providing a virtually free college education for every American that agreed to go to work for the government upon graduation. Of course, he said nothing about who would pay the education bill for these budding geniuses or who would meet their payrolls when they went to "work," if you can call it that. "Earth to Barack! Earth to Barack!"

The only lucent thought that Barack seemed to have last week was the notion that populism is about to make a major appearance on the American political stage. The nutty part was that he apparently was entertaining the idea that he could place himself at the front of this parade. This is a guy who has never had a real job in his life and is now shilling for Goldman Sachs. And he's signing up to lead the descamisados in a revolt against the ruling elite, like some sort of modern day Evita Peron? You can't make this stuff up.

But that's enough for now. The bottom line is that the frog is in hot water, but it looks more and more like its going to wake up in time to leap out before it dies. And ironically, as we said earlier, we can probably thank Barack's impatience, naiveté, and just plain stupidity for that singular blessing.

SHUT UP AND LISTEN, DUMMY!

Barack Obama thinks you're stupid. We know it. You know it. And we know you know it, largely because we keep telling you about it, even as recently as last week. What we didn't know until now is just *how* stupid he thinks you (and we) are. But then, we guess that's one of the drawbacks of being this stupid: we just aren't smart enough to grasp how stupid we really are. We'd say that it's kind of a tautology . . . but, then, we're not really comfortable using words with that many syllables.

Lucky for us, then, that Obama is kind and patient enough to explain it to us and that he has taken the opportunities provided by Scott Brown's election to the Senate from Massachusetts and the State of the

Union address to do so. Without him, without his decency and kindness, we might all wander through our lives, never knowing how stupid we really are. And how stupid would we look then?

Less than a week after Brown's victory, the President sat down with ABC News's Diane Sawyer to admit that he was at fault. Okay, not *really* at fault. What he said was that he was at fault for not speaking slowly enough for us dolts to follow, a theme he echoed in his State of the Union speech when he said of healthcare, "This is a complex issue, and the longer it was debated, the more skeptical people became. I take my share of the blame for not explaining it more clearly to the American people."

George Will called this "false contrition," writing that it was Obama's way of saying that he had to revamp his presentation for the "slow learners" who comprise the electorate. Will wrote some other things, of course, but we couldn't really follow him. Reading is hard, you know. The only guy who made any real sense to us was someone named A. Barton Hinkle, a columnist for *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, who, mercifully, spoke our language:

Him right. Him not explain health care good. Use too many big words. Say too many compound-complex sentences. Confuse American people. American people not want that. American people want simple explanation. Simpler the better.

Me feel kind of sorry. It must really get on nerves for man with nice voice and people on his side, like lady on TV and cheerleaders in White House press pool. Why can't lamebrain American people get idea through thick skulls? Them not know how to make choices in own best interests! Need enlightened leaders to make choices for them. (Enlightened = smart. Me look this up in thing called "dictionary." Dictionary good! Try sometime!)

Want example? Take mammogram fight. (Mammogram is thing where doctor squish tender woman part really hard and take picture. Owie!) Last year U.S. Preventive Services Task Force say women not need mammogram until age 50. Say squishing younger women not very clinically effective, so not save many lives. Say sometimes "false positives" scare women. This not good. Smart people must protect silly women, make sure they not get scared!

In all seriousness, Barack Obama has a problem. And his problem is the rabble which comprises his constituency. This rabble is being difficult and is unable or unwilling to accept his glorious magnanimity. They (we, and you) just don't "get it." And he can't understand why. And that really ticks him off.

Yes, Barack Obama thinks we're stupid. And yes, Barack Obama is an openly, unapologetically, and nauseatingly egotistical man, who has a very real problem hiding his disdain for others, who, naturally, are not as brilliant and wonderful as he is. As his party falls apart, he tells its Congressional members not to worry, because, after all, "you've got me." But there's more to it than that.

What really upsets Barack – and much of the rest of the Democratic Party – is the fact that they live in the wrong "Republic." They were expecting Plato's Republic, and instead find themselves in Jefferson's, Madison's, Hamilton's, and Jay's. And this particular republic isn't anywhere near as much fun to "govern" – as the newly angry Barack Obama appears to be learning, much to his dismay.

As we and countless others have noted, Barack Obama's conception of his role in American politics is emblematic of the views of his fellow Democrats and, more broadly, modern American liberalism. More to the point, it is also strikingly reminiscent of Plato's conception of the ideal or "good" city (*Kallipolis*.)

Recall that Plato's *Republic* was governed benevolently by the superbly educated and nearly-omnipotent philosopher kings, who possessed the truth, justice, courage, and temperance to lead the masses (the *demoi*). Recall as well that the philosopher kings maintained both their privileged status and order among the residents of the city by use of "noble lies," which enforced the mythological status of the ruling class.

You may also recall that a great many of the 20th century's greatest minds criticized Plato's conceptions, noting, among other things, that Plato's civic organization lead inevitably to totalitarianism. As Karl Popper put it:

Plato, I have said, followed Socrates in his definition of the philosopher. 'Whom do you call true philosophers? Those who love truth', we read in the *Republic*. But he himself is not truthful when he makes this statement. He does not really believe in it, for he declares in other places rather bluntly that it is one of the royal privileges, of the sovereign to make full use of lies and deceit: 'It is the business of the rulers of the city, if it is anybody's, to tell lies, deceiving both its enemies and its own citizens for the benefit of the city; and no one else must touch this privilege.'

'For the benefit of the city', says Plato. Again we find that the appeal to the principle of collective utility is the ultimate ethical consideration. Totalitarian morality overrules every-thing, even the definition, the Idea, of the philosopher.

Not that such criticism mattered too terribly much in the Progressive Era that marked the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Political thinkers as diverse as Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin agreed that a noble class of the educated should govern the masses (at least temporarily), employing their gifts and their education to promote the common good, immune from the forces of traditional politics. On the surface,

one might question the connection between Wilson's professional managerial class and Lenin's Vanguard Party, but both are, at their very essence, modern manifestations of Plato's philosopher kings, the noble elect whose responsibility is to do for the masses what they are unable to do for themselves.

At the risk of being accused of comparing Obama to Lenin, it is clear that the modern left derives much of its understanding of what it calls "public service" from the ideas of Plato, as passed down and refined by "progressive" advocates of the administrative state. The people should listen to their betters. And if they have a problem with that, then it's okay to "fudge" a little in order to make them understand and to accept their fate. And if, even then, they still can't get it, then it must be explained "more clearly to the American people."

Of course, there are two large problems for the left in its attempt to implement its Platonic vision of governance. First, and perhaps most importantly, Plato's vision of the ideal city was just that, a vision of the *ideal* city – not a commentary on the possibilities extant in the real world. Indeed, that is the defining characteristic of Plato's metaphysics, the archetypal "Forms," which constitute the ultimate reality, which exist independently of the material realm, and which can be sensed but are ultimately unknowable – all of which is to say that Plato's *Republic* is a fantasy, an idealized vision, and *not a guide for practical governance*.

It is unsurprising, given this, that Plato's student, Aristotle, the most learned of the three ancient Greek philosophers, critiqued his mentor's conception of Forms, his conception of reality, and therefore his conception of government. It is also unsurprising that this critique led, almost inexorably, to a notion of greater pluralism in governance and the belief in an ideal type that was, by comparison to Plato's, far more practicable.

Lastly, it is unsurprising therefore that Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle and his own qualified rejection of the Platonism that had dominated

Western philosophy up to that point fostered a new and vital conception of natural rights, natural law, and importance of the individual, which, in turn, led inevitably to the philosophical and political notions that formed the basis for the Declaration of Independence. It doesn't really matter for our purposes if Aquinas was wrong about Aristotle, as the great Harry Jaffa, among others, has argued. All that matters is that Aristotle's rejection of Plato's Republic led to Aquinas's formulation of natural law, which influenced Hooker, who influenced Locke, who was, in many ways, the philosophical godfather of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

All of which is to say that the progressive-liberal embrace of the Platonic civil hierarchy is a rejection of the philosophical traditions enshrined in the Constitution and, as such, represents a severe and irreconcilable break with American tradition of republican governance. The idea that we, as Americans, need an educated class, a class of elites to govern us, for our own and for the common good, is, in other words, inimical to the American conception of governance.

Now, we should note, for the record, that none of this is to say that the traditional American conception of government is necessarily "democratic" in its approach to governance. It is not. But unlike the neo-Platonist progressives who embrace the enlightened elite as the instrument of leavening the passions of the masses, the traditional American system embraces institutions – from the British common law cited in the Declaration to the federal system established in the constitution; from the institutions established as the branches of the federal government to the Constitution itself.

You see, in the material world, men are immeasurably fallible. And while institutions themselves may occasionally fail, the expectation of stability over time is far greater than with material man, no matter how mellifluously he may speak or how stylishly he may carry himself.

Though many on the left apparently found the tenor of the President's State of the Union address cathartic, reveling in his anger and his ginned-up populist cant, the most telling and most important moment of the evening came when Obama, filled with imaginary rage, attacked the Supreme Court of the United States openly and tactlessly.

The significance of this attack was not, as many believe, the questioning of the court or the peculiarity of Justice Samuel Alito's visible response. The significance, rather, could be found in the fact that the President of the United States had willfully used and abused the institution of the Supreme Court not just to further his own political goals, but to place himself above the Court, to call into question the Court's legitimacy, and to suggest that he alone was the defender of the nation's virtue, while the institution of the Court was hopelessly compromised.

Presidents have attacked the Court before, of course, and they will do so again. But never has one attacked so brashly and in so publicly and obvious a manner as to elevate his personal values above those now enshrined by the Court as law of the land. It would appear, then, that those not smart enough to understand the nobility and the prescience of this president would include the justices of the Supreme Court.

Not that anyone should be surprised. It would be hard, we imagine to find anyone who even comes close to being as smart as this president or who understands just how badly this country needs to get over its obsession with individualism and individual rights, and its equally obsessive fear of the encroachment of tyranny upon liberty. Never mind Aristotle. Or Aquinas. Or Locke. Or Jefferson. But most of all, never mind that stupid, ol' Constitution. Or, as Barton Hinkle put it:

Stupid American people have strange mad love for Constitution. Crazy right-wing Tea-Party people always making big fat deal out of it. Want to know where

it say Congress can make people buy insurance. Freaky house speaker think that Constitution business nonsense. "Are you serious?" she want to know. Crazy right-wing Tea-Party people dead serious. Say government that can make you buy insurance can make you do anything, anything at all. Some even ask what crazy right-wing president and Congress with that kind of power might do. Me not like to think about that!

Whole issue make brain hurt. Good thing man with nice voice in charge. Him have right ideas. Just need to try new angle, that all. Talk slower. Talk louder. Use small words. Treat American people like kid who got held back in elementary school. That bound to work eventually.

Copyright 2010. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.