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## THEY SAID IT

St Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it. Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. When the age for reflective thought comes, the pupil who has been thus trained in 'ordinate affections' or 'just sentiments' will easily find the first principles in Ethics; but to the corrupt man they will never be visible at all and he can make no progress in that science. Plato before him had said the same. The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting and hateful. In the *Republic*, the well-nurtured youth is one 'who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart. All this before he is of an age to reason; so that when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her.'

*The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis, 1943.

## GOD BLESS TEXAS.

As you may have noticed, the world these days is not all that much fun. Europe is collapsing. North Korea has committed an act of war against South Korea, which even the South Koreans have now conceded. Iran continues to march resolutely toward the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Israel continues to march irreversibly toward stopping Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The Obama-surge in Afghanistan is failing badly. The Mexican-American border is inflamed, even as the Mexican government is losing a civil war to its nation's drug cartels. American fiscal policy is a disaster, with deficits ballooning and the in-power party promising more spending to come. The world, in short, is a truly unhappy, un-fun place.

Which is why we are so tickled by the one fun story we've seen of late. Not only is this a feel-good triumph, one that makes all the right people happy and all the rest wildly unhappy, but it also strongly reaffirms some of the most important points about American politics that we have, over the last several years, tried repeatedly to make.

As you may have heard, the Texas Board of Education has ruffled more than a few feathers with its decision to adopt new social sciences standards for the state's schools. The new standards are, apparently, too Christian-y and too conservative for many of the Education Board's critics. And, as a result, the critics

### In this Issue

God Bless Texas.

Same Old Same Old.

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have taken to stomping their feet and hollering and screaming about the “takeover” of the Texas public school system by radical Evangelical right-wingers and the damage that these nutty religious types will do the curriculum and, by extension, to the students of the Texas public schools.

This is, needless to say, high-larious.

For starters, the changes proposed to the Texas curriculum are interesting and noteworthy, but they are hardly the earth-shattering convulsions of Christianist evangelism that their opponents would have us believe. Most of the criticism about the new standards is carefully worded and couched in vague yet ominous terms. For example, ABC News reports that “Critics charge that the standards are a blatant attempt to insert an ideological and political agenda into Texas classrooms,” and that “Some academics say there’s too much ideological slant in the standards and not enough emphasis on problem solving and analytical thinking.” This is gobbledegook, to put it lightly. These “critics” are expressing personal political opposition to what they perceive or have been told the standards include. But not one of them is attacking anything specific.

The reason for this, of course, is that the specifics are, contrary to the shrieking and ranting of the critics, not all that radical. Again, ABC News reports that:

The new standards call for a greater focus on the Biblical and Christian traditions of the founding fathers. It also calls for the teaching of free market principles, how government taxation and regulation can serve as restrictions to private enterprise, and emphasizes the achievements of Republican leaders, including former President Ronald Reagan and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

The new curriculum also states that the system of the U.S. government be called

a “Constitutional Republic” rather than a “Democratic society.”

Oh dear, Lord! A “constitutional republic?” The HORROR! Catch us when we faint!

Of course, even these descriptions are vague and potentially unreliable. As the blogger, libertarian-progressive Obama voter, and University of Wisconsin law professor Ann Althouse demonstrates, in many cases, the specifics are hardly as dangerous as the vagaries employed by opponents might lead one to believe:

*The Washington Post* writes:

*The Texas state school board gave final approval Friday to controversial social studies standards . . . The new standards say that the McCarthyism of the 1950s was later vindicated -- something most historians deny -- . . .*

The students are required to “describe how McCarthyism, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the arms race, and the space race increased Cold War tensions and how the latter release of the Venona Papers confirmed suspicions of communist infiltration in U.S. government . . .” The word “vindicated” is inflammatory and unfair. What is the *Washington Post* saying historians deny? One can be informed of the reality of what the Venona Papers revealed about communist infiltration into the U.S. government and still understand and deplore the excesses of “McCarthyism.”

*. . . draw an equivalency between Jefferson Davis’s and Abraham Lincoln’s inaugural addresses . . .*

Students are required to “analyze the ideas contained in Jefferson Davis’ inaugural address and Abraham Lincoln’s

ideas about liberty, equality, union, and government as contained in his first and second inaugural addresses and the Gettysburg Address.” The word “equivalency” is uncalled for. The requirement is to *analyze*, not to be indoctrinated that the ideas are the same.

*. . . say that international institutions such as the United Nations imperil American sovereignty...*

What I’m seeing is “explain the significance of the League of Nations and the United Nations” and “analyze the human and physical factors that influence the power to control territory, create conflict/war, and impact international political relations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), or the control of resources.” Where is the language that can be paraphrased “imperil American sovereignty”?

*. . . and include a long list of Confederate officials about whom students must learn.*

Students are required to “explain the roles played by significant individuals and heroes during the Civil War, including Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Abraham Lincoln, and congressional Medal of Honor recipients William Carney and Philip Bazaar.” Only Davis and Lee were Confederate officials! There is also this: “describe the role of individuals such as governors George Wallace, Orval Faubus, and Lester Maddox and groups, including the Congressional bloc of southern Democrats, that sought to maintain the status quo [in the Civil Rights Era].” That’s obviously not from the Civil War, but I can see why it’s annoying to Democrats.

*They also removed references to capitalism and replaced them with the term “free-enterprise system.”*

The document on economics does use the term “free enterprise system” throughout, but students are required to “understand that the terms free enterprise, free market, and capitalism are synonymous terms to describe the U.S. economic system,” so what is the problem?

Virtually everything cited in the article to make the curriculum seem controversial is misstated!

Again, the HORROR! How dare those damnable Texans!

Of course, the reason that the left has its knickers in a twist over these standards is because they vary, ever so slightly, from what the left believes should be the cultural norm. The left has a specific idea about the teaching of the social sciences and wants only that view sanctioned as legitimate. They know what they want taught. And they want it taught for a reason.

Indeed, the very idea of the left getting preachy and upset about the alleged politicization of education texts and standards is simply too precious. These people practically invented the politicization of education, and they worked their magic on the nation’s collective curricula for decades, almost without a word in opposition. Those who did find the education establishment’s leftish “standards” offensive just opted out of the system, choosing to focus on private, religious education or home schooling. That the left would be unhappy now and would shriek about “politicization” is all the evidence anyone might need to prove that this move by the Texas Board of Education hits far too close to home.

As we have noted countless times in these pages, whether it did so intentionally or not, the political left in this country gave up the idea of explicit, violent

revolution and opted instead to work within the existing system to achieve its ends. Heeding the words of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, the left opted to make “the long march through the institutions” and thereby to incite revolution from inside the system.

Gramsci, as we have noted countless times, argued that the consciousness of the people had to be changed before revolution could be consummated. The bourgeoisie had controlled public consciousness for too long, imposing cultural hegemony, and any successful revolution would first need to reverse that consciousness and impose its own hegemony. In short, then, in order to foment revolution, the left would first have to control the institutions of learning, entertainment, and information and use those instruments to effect a change in consciousness.

The American left has worked for decades to accomplish this goal, particularly through control of the education system.

And now, with one stroke of a pen, a bunch of backward, redneck, Christianist freaks have undone all their hard work – at least in one of the biggest and most important states in the union. The progressives thought they had this one particular institution all wrapped up and taken care of. And now, it’s gone, just like that. Their version of the acceptable societal norms has been challenged. And it doesn’t matter how slight the challenge might be; it’s the challenge itself that matters and that destroys their cultural hegemony. And in so doing, it denies the possibility of revolution.

And this brings us to the second major point we wish to emphasize about the actions of the Texas School Board, namely the fact that Washington may be the most visible and most oft discussed game in town, but it is not necessarily the most important.

We have always believed and argued in these pages that Washington is not where most of the real, truly important decisions about the nation’s future take place. It is, rather, merely where the score is kept.

Washington matters a great deal, to be sure. But what matter even more are the states, the municipalities, the neighborhoods, the churches, and the families. What matter are the libraries, the television shows, the books, and the schools. And on this scorecard, the political right has won a significant victory.

It is far too easy, we think, to look at the politicization of the country’s institutions, the growth of government, the demolition of federalism, and the imposition of national standards and to grow discouraged. On all these counts, the left appears to be winning and winning handily.

But appearances can be deceiving. Between this move by the Texas Board of Education and the much-discussed immigration law recently enacted by Arizona, it is possible that the states are beginning to break out of their post-Civil Rights fog.

Contra Ron and Rand Paul and the rest of the paleo-libertarians, for roughly a century – from 1861 to 1964 – the federal government *rightly* expanded its jurisdiction to impose basic moral standards on the nation; standards that are obligatory in a moral, modern democratic republic; standards that ensure that the bedrock principle of equality under the law can be achieved and that seek to eradicate the moral stain of institutional slavery.

But in the four-and-half decades since the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the federal government has continued to expand its jurisdiction, and it has done so most often without the moral imperative and the righteousness that drove Lincoln, Johnson and a great many others in between. And it has done so, in large part, in service of the imposition of cultural hegemony, in an effort to “nationalize standards.”

Regardless of the specific merits of the respective acts, the immigration law in Arizona and the social studies standards in Texas are important as acts of rebellion against this imposition of hegemony.

At least in principle, states and municipalities still matter a great deal in the governance of this nation.

If nothing else, Texas and Arizona are now attempting to find out just how much they matter.

In Texas in particular, the actions of the Board of Education are critical in that they defy the imposition of left-wing cultural supremacy; they reassert the significance of the states; they drive the left nuts, which adds a little fun to an otherwise frightening and dreary world; and, most importantly for our purposes, they, like the tea party movement, provide a ray of hope that Obama's tin ear for American exceptionalism may be the last best hope for mankind.

It's not often that we find cause to thank the current president, but in this sense, he's alright by us. Thank you, Barack Obama, for the wake-up call.

## **SAME OLD SAME OLD.**

When Barack Obama is attacked as a "radical" who wants to "transform" American society, his defenders bristle perceptibly, even as they inevitably point to the items on his agenda, insisting that they are anything but radical and are, in fact, better described as progressive/ mainstream. Obama, they claim, is hardly a revolutionary and is, instead, precisely what he claimed to be during the 2008 presidential campaign: a conventional, center-left Democrat whose agenda, while ambitious, focuses on incremental change and time-tested solutions to specific and pressing issues.

Now, much of this is simply disingenuous political posturing. That much is a given. Obama is anything but "mainstream." He was the most liberal member of the Senate and he is the most liberal president in at least four decades, if not longer.

Moreover, this defense is intentionally deceptive, in that it papers over the fact that incremental and transformative are not mutually exclusive. Yes, Obama's plans may involve only incremental changes, but a great many of those changes are, have been, or will be truly transformative to American society in the long run.

In this sense, the health care reform experience is instructive. The law signed by the President contains only a few of the most radical reform items initially proposed. But it is nevertheless transformative. By altering the relationship between government and citizen, the law is destined to forever "transform" the nature of the Republic.

But of all the critiques of this "Obama is just a regular guy" defense, by far the most damning is the concession that he really is just an ordinary politician, with ordinary expectations, who embraces ordinary policy positions; that nothing he has proposed has been either unique or even very interesting. All of what he wants is little more than old-fashioned, squishy-lefty stuff that has been oft-tested in practice and – and this is the critical point – has failed every time.

Nearly a year-and-a-half ago, the newly inaugurated President Obama gave his first address to a joint session of Congress, his pre-State of the Union, if you will. In the modern presidential tradition, the address – if that's what you'd call it – was little more than a laundry list of goodies that Obama intended for the government to deliver to us, the grateful and eager electorate. And nearly everything he promised was a hopeless, stale repackaging of failed policy. As the inimitable Charles Murray put it:

I know the speech was supposed to be upbeat and not for policy wonks.

But I'm worried that it's not just a matter of what he chooses to put in speeches, but what he knows. It looks very much as if the president is oblivious to everything we've learned about social programs and educational reforms in the last 40 years – and by "we" I include policy analysts on the left as well as right. The guy never indicates that he is aware that we've tried a whole bunch of the same stuff he wants to try and evaluated it repeatedly and – read my lips – it doesn't work.

Like any presidential aspirant, Barack Obama made a number of promises during his run for the White House, only some of which have been kept. One of the most prominent of those dealt with tax policy and focused specifically on the tax burdens of families making “less than \$250,000 a year,” whom he promised would not see their taxes raised by even a penny. Now, the corollary to this, of course, was the promise that those who make more than \$250,000 will see their taxes raised.

In any case, only the corollary promise – to raise taxes – has been kept. The Bush tax cuts for top brackets will expire at the end of the year and will not be renewed, thereby raising taxes by some \$1 trillion. As for the non-wealthy, the President wants an increase in both capital gains taxes and taxes on dividends. Moreover, the newly-passed health care reform bill contains some \$250 billion in additional tax hikes and surcharges.

And what, pray tell, will the effect of these tax hikes be? Well, judging by experience, they will be incredibly damaging to the economy, shrinking revenue streams (already dramatically shrunken by the recession) and promoting tax avoidance. How do we know this? Well, the most comprehensive data base on government tax policy since the Great Depression demonstrates conclusively that tax hikes are a net negative for the economy. To wit:

In short, tax increases appear to have a very large, sustained, and highly significant negative impact on output . . . The resulting estimates indicate that tax increases are highly contractionary. The effects are strongly significant, highly robust, and much larger than those obtained using broader measures of tax changes. The large effect stems in considerable part from a powerful negative effect of tax increases on investment.

The authors of this passage, as many of you may already have deduced, are the economists Christina Romer and David Romer, a husband and wife team,

the former of whom currently serves as President Obama’s chairwoman of the Council of Economic Advisors. What that means, therefore, is that Barack Obama has chosen, for whatever reason, to ignore common sense, the detailed historical record, and, most notably, the conclusions reached and advanced by his own in-house economist.

During the year-long debate over the health care bill, opponents of the legislation most often cited the crumbling health care infrastructure in Great Britain or the lack of customer service, cutting edge treatments, and new technology in places like Canada to sound cautionary notes about the effects of deeper government involvement in the business of health services. As it turns out, though, one need not cross any national borders to find an appropriate and even compelling comparison for the bill that President Obama eventually signed into law. One need only look to Massachusetts.

Obamacare is, in nearly all its critical components, a national-level version of the program put into place by then-Governor Mitt Romney in Massachusetts. Or, as Jonathan Gruber, an MIT health care economist and health care advisor to both Romney and Obama, put it, “If any one person in the world deserves credit for where we are now, it’s Mitt Romney . . . He designed the structure of the federal bill.”

And how is Romneycare working out? In a word, “expensively.” In another word, “poorly.” Health care costs in Massachusetts are now rising faster than they were before Romneycare. Wait times for care are increasing significantly. And all of the newly insured are placing considerable strain on the state’s health care system, particularly since they are consuming more health care services per capita than were being consumed previously. Business start-ups and expansions are down, relative to neighboring states, and health insurance premiums are skyrocketing. State costs (on subsidies for health insurance) have far exceeded expectations and have doubled in just four years.

With costs of Obamacare already surpassing the official estimates (and surpassing \$1 trillion), before

the plan has even been implemented, Romneycare offers a glimpse of the future. And that future is bleak. And expensive.

For decades now, the “smart” progressives and liberals in this country have entertained grand visions of emulating Europe, of expanding the social welfare state, of, to paraphrase then-candidate Obama, spreading the wealth around. And while Obama has never explicitly promised a more Europeanized United States, that goal has always been implicit in his promises, his actions, and the imaginings he articulates. Like most Democrats, Obama admires the European social democracies and sees no reason why the United States cannot or should not use them as models with regard to health care, unemployment insurance, child care, and a host of other social welfare programs.

Given the news of late regarding Greece and the euro-zone, only a fool would believe that the prototypical European state is any longer one to be emulated. Massive deficits, early and generous pensions, deathbed demographics, and stagnant economic growth lead eventually to economic collapse. There simply are not enough workers in Europe any more to support the state. And those who remain are overtaxed, unhappy, and growing unhappier.

On the off chance that there is still someone out there who hasn't heard the news, here's a bit from yesterday's *New York Times*, liberal America's newspaper of record:

With low growth, low birthrates and longer life expectancies, Europe can no longer afford its comfortable lifestyle, at least not without a period of austerity and significant changes. The countries are trying to reassure investors by cutting salaries, raising legal retirement ages, increasing work hours and reducing health benefits and pensions.

“We're now in rescue mode,” said Carl Bildt, Sweden's foreign minister. “But we need to transition to the reform mode

very soon. The ‘reform deficit’ is the real problem,” he said, pointing to the need for structural change . . . .

According to the European Commission, by 2050 the percentage of Europeans older than 65 will nearly double. In the 1950s there were seven workers for every retiree in advanced economies. By 2050, the ratio in the European Union will drop to 1.3 to 1.

“The easy days are over for countries like Greece, Portugal and Spain, but for us, too,” said Laurent Cohen-Tanugi, a French lawyer who did a study of Europe in the global economy for the French government. “A lot of Europeans would not like the issue cast in these terms, but that is the storm we're facing. We can no longer afford the old social model, and there is a real need for structural reform.”

Tax increases on the “wealthy,” health care reform, and social welfare programs are all critical components of the Obama agenda. Still, the outline wouldn't be complete without energy reform/global climate change reform and a focus on the green “jobs of the future.” Obama, we'll concede is not Al Gore. But you wouldn't know that from his performance in office.

In the face of a recession, Obama pushed for “cap-and-trade” schemes that would have made energy more expensive. He also used stimulus money to fund “green jobs” of a dubious nature. And despite the failures of both, he has promised more of the same. As he claimed while unveiling his green jobs initiative last January, reforms in energy are necessary and his proposed plans will constitute positive steps to “help close the clean energy gap between America and other nations.”

Among others, the “green jobs” plan implemented by the Spanish government has been a model for Obama, who has cited the Spanish nearly a dozen times as

people he'd like to emulate. This should hardly surprise anyone, given the news out of Spain last week. As the Competitive Enterprise's Christopher Horner predicted, Spain's green jobs program has been a disaster and has, at long last, been declared so by both the government and its media watchdogs.

Last week, Horner wrote that "I'd say 'I hate to say I told you so,' but I revel in it," in response to the following, which is drawn from the Spanish newspaper *La Gaceta* and was published under the headline "Spain admits that the green energy as sold to Obama is a disaster":

The president of the United States, Barack Obama, doesn't seem to have chosen the right model to copy for his "green economy," Spain. After the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero demonized a study of different experts about the fatal economic consequences of renewable energies, an internal document from the Spanish cabinet that it is even more negative has just been leaked.

The internal report of the Spanish administration admits that the price of electricity has gone up, as well as the debt, due to the extra costs of solar and wind energy. Even the government numbers indicate that each green job created costs more than 2.2 traditional jobs, as was shown in the report of the Juan de Mariana Institute. Besides that, the official document is almost a copy point by point of the one that led to Calzada being denounced [lit. "vetoed"] by the Spanish Embassy in an act in the U.S. Congress.

The presentation recognizes explicitly that "the increase of the electric bill is principally due to the cost of renewable

energies." In fact, the increase in the extra costs of this industry explains more than 120% of the variation in the bill and has prevented the reduction in the costs of conventional electricity production to be reflected on the bills of the citizens . . . .

The paper continues by noting that the Spanish government appears to understand what this green jobs initiative has cost the country and that it therefore intends to stop subsidizing "this sector." Would that we could say the same about the Obama administration.

Unfortunately, Spain's failure will not deter Obama. And why should it? No failure deters Obama.

Our super-duper smart hopeychangeey president strikes us as something of a dud. What he promised is untenable, but that won't stop him from trying his damndest to deliver it. We were told by his supporters to expect brilliance and innovation. Instead we've seen nothing banality and imitation.

Obama reminds us more than a bit of the archetypical leftist graduate student, who tries to defend Communism by insisting that the problem with Marx's theories isn't that they are goofy and dangerous, but that they simply haven't been implemented properly yet. Likewise, the problem with the stale policy failures to which Obama clings isn't that they're stupid, contrary to human nature, and therefore doomed to fizzle; it's that they haven't yet been done right. That is, they haven't yet been done by Obama, who, as he will gladly tell you, is no mere mortal man. All of which means that the only effective mechanism for stopping this man and his programs is failure. And that's a hell of a way to run a government.

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