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## THEY SAID IT

Perhaps you're having a tiny last minute qualm about voting Republican. Take heart. And take the House and the Senate. Yes, there are a few flakes of dander in the fair tresses of the GOP's crowning glory – an isolated isolationist or two, a hint of gold buggery, and Christine O'Donnell announcing that she's not a witch. (I ask you, has Hillary Clinton ever cleared this up?) Fret not over Republican peccadilloes such as the Tea Party finding the single, solitary person in Nevada who couldn't poll ten to one against Harry Reid. Better to have a few cockeyed mutts running the dog pound than Michael Vick.

I take it back. Using the metaphor of Michael Vick for the Democratic party leadership implies they are people with a capacity for moral redemption who want to call good plays on the legislative gridiron. They aren't. They don't. The reason is simple. They hate our guts.

They don't just hate our Republican, conservative, libertarian, strict constructionist, family values guts. They hate everybody's guts. And they hate everybody who has any. Democrats hate men, women, blacks, whites, Hispanics, gays, straights, the rich, the poor, and the middle class....

This is not an election on November 2. This is a restraining order. Power has been trapped, abused and exploited by Democrats. Go to the ballot box and put an end to this abusive relationship. And let's not hear any nonsense about letting the Democrats off if they promise to get counseling.

P.J. O'Rourke, "They Hate Our Guts," *The Weekly Standard*, November 1, 2010.

## ELECTION 2010: THE REVENGE OF THE VIOLENT, RACIST, IGNORANT HILLBILLIES.

Well, tomorrow is election day. And not just any ordinary election day, but a day on which Americans appear intent on undoing what they did four years ago, when they made Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid the leaders of the Congressional majority party. More to the point, we suppose, voters appear intent on undoing – or at least mitigating – what they did two years ago, when they installed an inexperienced leftist ideologue in the Oval Office, in the vain hope that he would keep his promises to heal the divided nation and soothe its gaping wounds.

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Given the probability of a “wave election,” in which the Republicans will pick up more seats in the House than either party has picked up in more than half-a-century, the Democratic leaders – said inexperienced leftist ideologue and his allies – spent this past week stumping furiously and desperately, hoping to hit on a theme that just might have an impact on tomorrow’s vote. And, after much reflection, field-testing, and focus-grouping, they finally came up with an argument they seemed sure would carry the day. To wit:

“Hey, you! Voter! You’re stupid. Or Crazy. Now, vote for us!”

Sounds like a winner, eh?

Not that anyone should be surprised by this. After all, this has been the left’s go to argument for at least the last year-and-a-half. Americans are dumb. Tea Partiers are stupid. Voters are ungrateful. And anyone who opposes us or, worse yet, is having buyer’s remorse about giving us all of the levers of power in Washington is just plain cuckoonutso.

This theme is, we think, probably the most important and most overlooked factor in this election. A great deal of time and energy has been expended on the part of the press, the pundits, and various politicians attempting to explain the Democrats’ dramatic fall from grace and the Republicans’ equally dramatic resurrection. It’s all about taxes. Or spending. Or the economy. It’s all about the failed stimulus. Or the overreaching health care bill. Or the temporarily shelved, but never dead Cap’n Trade bill. It’s all about misreading the mandate and governing a center-right nation from the far left. Or about the obstruction and destruction practiced by the “party of NO.” It’s all about bailouts. Or TARP. Or the “takeover” of GM. It’s all about, well, policy.

Certainly, there are grains of truth in all of these analyses (except, perhaps, the one that blames Republicans for blocking as much of Obama’s agenda as they could). But none is a sufficient explanation in and of itself. All provide clues to the source of voter outrage, but it’s only when taken in their cumulative

form that the true source of the problem can be understood.

This election is not about policy. It is not about any specific decision that the president took or did not take. It’s not about any policy proposition that was shepherded through the Congress by Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid and translated into law. It is not about any of the traditional factors that are generally suspected to motivate voters to punish the majority party.

No, this election is about all of those policies cumulatively, and, more important, about the single common factor that binds them all together. This election is, in short, about the will of the people and the ruling party’s contempt for that will. As the sub-head on the pollster Scott Rasmussen’s final pre-election analysis put it: “Voters don’t want to be governed from the left, right or center. They want Washington to recognize that Americans want to govern themselves.”

Take a look, if you will, at the policies noted above: TARP, the bank bailouts, the auto bailouts, Cap’n Trade, the stimulus, health care reform. Some of these are Bush-era policies continued by the Obama administration. Some are Obama initiatives. Some are longstanding leftist fantasies. All sprang from different sources with different purposes and different champions. Yet all are remarkably similar in that they were all overwhelmingly and vocally opposed by a majority of Americans. Each, in and of itself, might have been fine. Each might have had some semblance of justification as a stand-alone policy. But taken together, they are a disaster, a disaster born of contempt for the people. Taken together, they suggest a rampant and unrepentant belief that the voters are, by and large, irrelevant; a belief that voters, like children, should be seen and not heard and should do what their “betters” tell them to do.

Pat Caddell, the erstwhile wunderkind pollster and strategist who helped put Jimmy Carter in the White House, declared three months ago that this election would be like a “tidal wave” washing over Washington and that it would revolve around the question of

sovereignty. “Who, Caddell asked, “is sovereign? The people or the political class? . . . Who decides in America? The people, as the books claim? Or the elite, as common practice seems to have it?”

More recently, the inimitable Mark Steyn put it this way:

In the Nineties, the “culture wars” were over “God, guns and gays”. The overreach of the statists has added a fourth G: Government itself is now a front in the culture war, and a battle of the most primal kind. Is the United States a republic of limited government with a presumption in favor of individual liberty? Or is it just like any other western nation in which a permanent political class knows what’s best for its subjects?

Several years ago, when we were still working for the now-defunct brokerage house subsidiary of a big insurance company, we wrote a piece that we thought was kind of cute, but which almost got us in a little hot water. (Imagine that!) The piece was a parody, detailing the contents of some documents we had “found” in a dumpster outside the Chinese embassy in Washington.

According to the “documents,” the powers that be in Washington – the president (Clinton) and the leaders of both parties in Congress – had conspired to convince the public that they were bitter enemies, fighting to the death over radically different ideologies and policy positions, when in truth none of them really cared very much about anything but power and maintaining the illusion of partisan rancor.

The lessons we learned that day were twofold. First, in order for parody to be successful, it has to reflect reality but still be distinguishable from it, which is to say that a parody must be delicately balanced, suggesting authenticity while nonetheless maintaining sufficient hyperbolism. Second, modern Washington

is nearly impossible to parody because it is almost impossible to create anything preposterous enough to eclipse reality.

These are lessons that we wish we had had the opportunity to share with the blogger and political humorist Frank J. Fleming, who, just a couple of weeks ago, summed up the Democratic Party’s near-impossible collapse into ridiculousness, describing the “accomplishments” of the Obama administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress thusly:

AMERICANS: “So, the economy is pretty bad and there’s high employment. You think you can do something about that?”

DEMOCRATS AND OBAMA: “We can spend a trillion dollars we don’t have on pork and stuff.”

AMERICANS: “No . . . that’s not what we want. We’d really like you not to do that.”

DEMOCRATS: “You’re stupid. We’re doing it anyway.”

AMERICANS: “That’s not going to help us get jobs!”

DEMOCRATS: “Sure it will; millions of them . . . though they may be invisible. You’ll have to trust us they exist. And guess what else we’ll do: We’ll create a giant new government program to take over health care.”

AMERICANS: “That has nothing to do with jobs!”

DEMOCRATS: “We don’t care about that anymore. We really want a giant new health care program. We’re sure you’ll love it.”

AMERICANS: “Don’t pass that bill. You hear me? Absolutely do not pass that bill.”

DEMOCRATS: “Believe me; you’ll love it. It has . . . well, I don’t know what exactly is in the bill, but we’re sure it’s great.”

AMERICANS: “Listen to me: DO. NOT. PASS. THAT. BILL.”

DEMOCRATS: “You’re not the boss of me! We’re doing it anyway!”

AMERICANS: “Look what you did! Now the economy is way worse, we’re even deeper in debt, and we have a bunch of new laws we don’t want!”

DEMOCRATS: “You’re racist.”

AMERICANS: “Wha . . . How is that racist?”

DEMOCRATS: “Now you’re getting violent! Stop being violent and racist, you ignorant hillbillies! And remember to vote Democrat in November.”

Now, we guess that this is a parody and not an actual transcript of one of those much ballyhooed “national conversations” about policy. But we really can’t say for sure. Sounds plausible enough to us.

Whatever the case, the ruling class in general and the Democratic Party in particular spent virtually the entirety of the last two years calling their constituents violent, racist hillbillies. And, on the off chance that sufficient numbers of independents remained unconvinced that this is really what their ruling class thinks of them, the Democrats went out this past week, apparently with the express intent of reminding voters of their contempt one last time before election day.

So whether you heard the senior Senator from Massachusetts and former presidential nominee calling voters “know-nothings”; or saw the President of the United States make his last plea for votes on a smug, left-wing comedy show; or saw the host of that same comedy show – and the most influential “pundit” on the left today – hosting a rally on the national mall, essentially calling anyone who had the temerity to be upset by the course of events in the country “crazy”; what you witnessed over the last seven days was the final attempt by the ruling party to salvage this election.

The irony, of course, is that this final push is not only unlikely to have helped the Democrats, but is far more likely to have hurt them. Partisan voters, naturally, made up their minds about whether and for whom to vote a long time ago, which is to say that this election, like all elections, will hinge on turn out and the preferences of the large and growing group of independents. And it is simply bizarre to think that calling anyone who disagrees with you stupid and/or crazy is going to help your side. It’s not. It is only going to reinforce the frustration and sense of political alienation among those who are unsure of the government’s dedication to the principles of self government.

This past week was, in other words, a disaster for the smug, self-absorbed Democrats. If anything, it will exacerbate the thumping they are due to receive.

And with that, we move on to our predictions, such as they are.

*Prediction #1: The Republican gains in the House will be larger than most prognosticators expect.*

Generally, the numbers we’ve seen have suggested that the GOP will pick-up somewhere between 50 and 55 seats in the House. That’s too low, in our estimation. We expect 60 to 65, with 62 being our best guess.

Either way, say hello to Speaker of the House John Boehner.

*Prediction #2: The Republicans will fall just short in the Senate.*

Obviously, a handful of races remain fluid and difficult to call. Still, we see the GOP having a very good day. The problem, as we see it, is that the Republicans cannot attain a majority without taking Democratic seats in some very, very blue states – e.g. California, Illinois, Washington. And while they will manage to do the improbable and pick up some that seem unlikely, they will not get them all. Worse yet, we expect that a great many dead and otherwise dubious voters will pull the lever for the Democratic candidates in the ethical cesspools of Nevada and Illinois.

Against all odds, Harry Reid will, we think, be reelected, though he'll be the leader of a much-diminished majority. Final total: GOP +8; Democrats maintain their majority, 51-49.

*Prediction #3: The GOP will also have a nice day at the state level.*

Republicans will lose the most populous state in the union, unfortunately, with Californians deciding to go back to the future and re-elect Governor Moonbeam. But the rest of the country will take a hard turn to the right. Republicans will pickup a net total of 8 governorships.

*Prediction #4 – The most shocking results will be found in Massachusetts.*

The only state in the union delusional enough to vote for George McGovern in 1972 will continue the political evolution begun last January with the election of Senator Scott Brown. In the most shocking result of the day, liberal icon Barney Frank will be retired by the good people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As the analyst and author Joel Kotkin has noted, suburbs matter. And Democrats like Frank have completely alienated and insulted suburban voters. Obviously, this “prediction” is a stretch, but don't be as shocked as the media types are if Marine veteran Sean Beilat pulls an upset.

All things considered then, if you're a Democrat, please accept our condolences. If you're a Republican, enjoy your day, but don't get too comfortable. If you're an independent, get used to being the center of attention and to being frustrated. Over the next two years, expect both parties to make you and your vote the focus of their political operations. And expect both to get it completely wrong.

## THE END OF THE REPUBLICAN ERA?

Roughly a decade-and-a-half ago, Theodore Lowi, perhaps the best known and most respected political scientist in the country, published a sequel of sorts to his classic *The End of Liberalism*. This follow-up, *The End of the Republican Era*, came out, ironically enough, just after the Republicans had taken control of Congress and secured their first majority in four decades.

Now, this book was complicated and the message of its title was meant to be vague, though most of its admirers chose to ignore that fact. In it, Lowi not only predicted the collapse of the Republican political coalition, but also suggested that the rise of moral and religious dogmatism in politics threatened the very nature of this nation's experiment in self-government.

Given its timing, the book fed the optimism of America's liberals, who had tired of the Reagan coalition, were frightened of the Gingrich coalition, and shared Lowi's apparent fear of the moral absolutists in the religious factions of the Republican Party. “This too shall pass,” was the message of the book, and the American left eagerly awaited said passing.

But what the lefties never quite grasped is the fact that their post-modern absolutists were, in Lowi's opinion, equally threatening to the republic and were, in fact, the very cause of the religious right's accession. You see, it turns out that Lowi is a far better political historian and analyst than he is prognosticator. Indeed, the historical sections of both *the Republican Era* and *The End of Liberalism* provide explicit and

accurate detail on the rise of the New Liberalism and the perversion by this monstrosity of the core traditional liberal values, those articulated by the likes of Adam Smith, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson. This narrative goes as follows.

The totalitarian and centralization-obsessed New Liberals enhanced the power of the federal state continuously from at least 1932 onward. And their overreach and lack of concern for core liberal values, such as individual liberty and self-sufficiency, eventually gave rise to a backlash, one that capitalized on the conservative traditions in American culture.

The irony in Lowi's analysis and forecasting is that he, the man who was the loudest and the most articulate challenger of the all-powerful federal state, as well as the chronicler of New Liberalism's perversion of American governance, would so drastically and dramatically underestimate the perverting influence of the Leviathan and so radically miss the implications of that influence.

Lowi faithfully recounted the alliance of convenience between those whom he called the "old liberals" – those concerned principally with individual liberty – and the religious conservatives. But he entirely overlooked how the massive and near-totalitarian federal state constructed by the New Liberals would pervert even the values of this conservative coalition, rendering all else insignificant in the face of centralized federal power.

What Lowi didn't understand, in other words, is that the power of the Leviathan would not be harnessed by the theoretically illiberal conservatives, but would, in fact, subsume those conservatives in much the same way it had subsumed earlier generations of liberals. The beast created by New Liberalism was too big, too powerful, and too seductive for even the conservatives to resist, which is to say that by the end of the Bush presidency all those who were concerned with traditional American values – liberty, self-sufficiency, decency, integrity, free markets, and competition – would be shut out of the political process altogether.

The upshot of all of this is, as we detail above, a government that believes in its own sovereignty and views its people as subjects rather than full participants in the civic life of the nation. The Tea Party movement and tomorrow's electoral tidal wave are both direct and powerful reactions to the ongoing centralization and expansion of power in this country. And the Republican majority elected in the House tomorrow will serve as a strong rebuke to those who believe that the federal government can and should continue to accumulate power.

The real question now is whether the conservative coalition elected this time will be able to resist the siren's song of federal power. Will this Republican majority remain faithful to the values that its supporters so desperately hope to see incorporated into federal governance? Or will they too be corrupted by power, stifled by myopia, and tempted into believing that a central federal authority can and should be all things to all people?

Anyone who has read our work for more than a couple of weeks undoubtedly knows that we are dubious about the ability of this collection of Republicans to remain faithful to its constituents and their animating values. We fully expect that the powers that be in the Republican establishment will work long and hard to do the wrong thing and to further alienate both the public at large and the remaining few conservatives in Congress. There may be considerable new blood in the Republican Party this year, and it may mix well with that small percentage of old blood that remains dedicated to liberty. But the fact remains that the leaders of the party and the entrenched elites are still those who are more concerned with the exercise of power than with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Sadly, we are not alone in expecting the GOP to have its problems as the new majority party. Certainly, the theme of the day among liberal commentators is that the Republicans will fail to please the Tea Party types because the Tea Party types are irrational and therefore cannot be pleased. But more importantly, there are those on the right – Rush Limbaugh, Sarah

Palin, Senator Jim DeMint – who worry that the new Republican majority will be too much like the old Republican majority and the Democratic majorities that both preceded and succeeded it. All three of these people are wildly influential in Tea Party circles, and all three have warned the GOP to expect a third-party challenge in 2012 if it does not get its act together and deliver on the promises it has made to rein in federal spending and power.

For our part, we think that the development of a third party is a little far-fetched. The federal system established by the Founders tends to make two the ideal number of parties. In a presidential year, in particular, a third-party challenge would all but certainly lead to unpleasant outcomes.

That said, we think that there is all but certainly going to be a challenge to the Republican establishment and to its dominance of the national party. But the critical word in that construction is “national.” The party itself will survive, but the animating energy of the party will shift away from federal authority as it realizes that that battle is already lost.

In a piece last July, we described the following consequences of increased federal overreach; consequences that we had predicted over a period of years in numerous pieces describing what we called then the “new political paradigm,”

As the federal government continues to grow and to expand its reach, the states and local communities that disagree with the feds’ purpose, principles, and methods, will begin to move inexorably away from blind adherence to the will of the ruling class. And they will use the Constitution as their justification. Federal mandates for this, for that, and for the other thing will, in the not too distant future, rankle enough members of the “country class” to move them to action under the principle that the federal government has radically and treacherously overstepped its constitutional bounds.

The immediate outcome of the on-going fed-state clash will likely depend on how much of the federal judiciary still believes in the Constitution, a sense of which we will get when the courts rule on the “Commerce Clause” justification for the individual mandate in the health care bill.

Ultimately, though, we suspect that atomization process will be the result of the federal government’s profligacy and eventual fiscal straightjacket. The government will, someday, run out of other people’s money to spend, which will help to cut the tie that binds states and municipalities to their federal patrons.

These expectations, we believe, jibe rather nicely with similar predictions offered this week by the conservative columnist Mark Steyn:

What prevents the “state popular” from declining into a “state despotic”? As Tocqueville saw it, what mattered was the strength of the intermediary institutions between the sovereign and the individual. In France, the revolution abolished everything, and subordinated all institutions to the rule of central authority. The New World was more fortunate: “The principle and lifeblood of American liberty” was, according to Tocqueville, municipal independence.

Does that distinction still hold? In the 20th century the intermediary institutions were belatedly hacked away—not just self-government at town, county, and state level, but other independent pillars: church, civic associations, and not least (as the demographic profile of Dillon indicates) the basic building block of functioning society, the family. After the diminution of every intervening

institution, very little stands between the central authority and the individual, which is why the former now assumes the right to insert himself into every aspect of daily life and why schoolgirls in Dillon, South Carolina think it entirely normal to beseech the Sovereign in Barackingham Palace to do something about classroom maintenance . . .

In its debased contemporary sense, liberalism is a universalist creed. It's why the left dislikes federalism. Federalism means borders, and borders mean there's always somewhere else to go: the next town, the next county, the next state. I'm pro-choice and I vote - with my feet. Universal liberalism would rather deny you that choice. America has dramatically expanded not just government generally, but nowhere-else-to-go government in particular. As Milton Friedman wrote in 1979:

*From the founding of the Republic to 1929, spending by governments at all levels, federal, state, and local, never exceeded 12 percent of the national income except in time of major war, and two-thirds of that was state and local spending. Federal spending typically amounted to 3 percent or less of the national income. Since 1933 government spending has never been less than 20 percent of national income and is now over 40 percent, and two-thirds of that is spending by the federal government . . . By this measure the role of the federal government in the economy has multiplied roughly tenfold in the past half-century.*

Even surviving local institutions aren't as local as they used to be. The nearly 120,000 school boards of America in 1940 have been consolidated into a mere 15,000 today, leaving them ever more to the mercies of the professional "educator" class . . . The object is

to reduce and eventually eliminate alternatives – to subsume everything within the Big Government monopoly. Statists prefer national one-size-fits-all – and ultimately planet-wide one-size-fits-all. Borders create the nearest thing to a free market in government – as the elite well understand when they seek to avoid the burdens they impose on you. John Kerry, a Big Tax senator from a Big Tax state, preferred to register his yacht in Rhode Island to avoid half-a-million bucks in cockamamie Massachusetts "boat sales and use" tax. Howard Metzenbaum, the pro-Death Tax senator from Ohio, adjusted his legal residency just before he died from Ohio to Florida, because the former had an estate tax and the latter didn't. This is federalism at work: States compete, and, when they get as rapacious as Massachusetts, even their own pro-tax princelings start looking for the workarounds.

Bazillionaire senators will always have workarounds – for their land, for their yachts, for their health care. You won't . . . A restoration of federalism offers America the possibility of a future. Further centralization will ultimately pull it apart.

If the national Republican Party has any hope at all of remaining the "national" Republican party in any recognizable sense, then its sole goal in the next Congress will be attempting to shrink the Leviathan and restore liberty to the states, municipalities, and the people. If it does otherwise; if, instead, it sees its "mandate" as one of compromise or "moderation" or liberalism only less, then the GOP will collapse as a national party, as its supporters look inward and toward their local communities for a reassertion of authority and protection from the lumbering beast in Washington.

The conclusion of Lowi's *The End of the Republican Era* suggests that the solution to a political world in which liberalism and conservatism both serve parochial and unproductive ends is a return to "rule by law," in which legislators take responsibility for their actions and write laws that are clear, concise, and not particularly open to manipulation by the bureaucracy or the judiciary.

That sounds nice. But it's not going to happen.

The real solution – the only solution – is for the people, the states, communities, and civic institutions to reassert their constitutional and natural rights to provide a counterweight to the power of the federal government. If the new Republican majority seeks to facilitate this end, then it will remain in the majority for a long, long time. But if it does not, the national party will suffer the wrath of the voters, much the same way the Democratic Party will tomorrow.

Tomorrow is the Republican's day, a day for conservatives to cheer. Whether it will be the GOP's last hurrah remains to be seen.

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