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THEY SAID IT

We find ourselves, then, met with the same difference that eternally exists between the fool and the man of sense. The latter is constantly catching himself within an inch of being a fool; hence he makes an effort to escape from the imminent folly, and in that effort lies his intelligence. The fool, on the other hand, does not suspect himself; he thinks himself the most prudent of men, hence the enviable tranquility with which the fool settles down and installs himself in his own folly. Like those insects which it is impossible to extract from the orifice they inhabit, there is no way of dislodging the fool from his folly, to take him away for a while from his blind state and to force him to contrast his own dull vision with other keener forms of sight. The fool is a fool for life; he is devoid of pores. This is why Anatole France said that the fool is much worse than the knave, for the knave does take a rest sometimes, the fool never.

José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 1930.

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FECKLESS MIDDLE EAST POLICY PORTENDS BIG TROUBLE.

By now, the tale of Barack Obama's extraordinary inability to turn promise into reality is well worn. We have mentioned countless times in these pages the damage that Obama has done to his own presidency by ridiculously overpromising and then predictably and almost comically under-delivering. Failure to temper expectations is the cardinal sin among big time political players, and Obama has failed here like almost no other public figure in memory.

For the most part, we have rather enjoyed this particular aspect of the Obama presidency. Certainly, we find the man and his wildly over-inflated sense of self to be tiresome. But we find the karmic justice meted out in response to his narcissism infinitely satisfying and entertaining. Moreover, when he promises to create jobs with the wave of his hand or part the seas with a tap of his staff, he reminds us of Mel Brooks' hilarious portrayal of the supercilious Louis XVI in "History of the World, Part I" -- "It's good to be the king"

Unfortunately, this stuff ceases to be funny when the clown starts taking his fly-blown rhetoric seriously. Throughout his campaign for the presidency, for example, Obama repeatedly promised the international community that he would "restore" America's place in the world, mend bruised and battered relationships, practice "smart diplomacy," and, most of all, right all of the wrongs inflicted upon the poor, innocent world by that lesser mortal, George Bush. In his much ballyhooed, much derided address in Berlin, for example, candidate Obama took the opportunity to apologize for his country, with specific emphasis on its then-current president:

Will we acknowledge that there is no more powerful example than the one each of our nations projects to the world? Will we reject torture and stand for the rule of law? Will we welcome immigrants from different lands, and shun discrimination against those who don't look like us or worship like we do, and keep the promise of equality and opportunity for all of our people?

People of Berlin – people of the world – this is our moment. This is our time.

I know my country has not perfected itself. At times, we've struggled to keep the promise of liberty and equality for all of our people. We've made our share of mistakes, and there are times when our actions around the world have not lived up to our best intentions.

He also took the time to promise that which neither he nor any mere mortal could ever deliver:

This is the moment when we must renew the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The two superpowers that faced each other across the wall of this city came too close too often to destroying all we have built and all that we love. With that wall gone, we need not stand idly by and watch the further spread of the deadly atom. It is time to secure all loose nuclear materials; to stop the spread of nuclear weapons; and to reduce the arsenals from another era. This is the moment to begin the work of seeking the peace of a world without nuclear weapons . . .

This is the moment we must help answer the call for a new dawn in the Middle East. My country must stand with yours and with Europe in sending a direct message to Iran that it must abandon

its nuclear ambitions. We must support the Lebanese who have marched and bled for democracy, and the Israelis and Palestinians who seek a secure and lasting peace. And despite past differences, this is the moment when the world should support the millions of Iraqis who seek to rebuild their lives, even as we pass responsibility to the Iraqi government and finally bring this war to a close.

This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands.

Now, most Americans who witnessed this address and others like it almost certainly presumed that Obama was merely engaging in political theater. After all, the guy was running for president as a specific kind of candidate, and, as bizarre as it might sound, this type of America-bashing self-absorption was an intrinsic part his campaign. Indeed, even the Europeans undoubtedly thought that what he said in Berlin was directed not at Berliners, or Germans, or even “the world,” as he proclaimed, but at a U.S. audience, eager to see their man openly and aggressively denounce an American “cowboy” president in a speech before nearly a quarter-million foreigners.

Unfortunately, they were wrong. As it turned out, this was no campaign shtick. Obama really believed this nonsense. This was Obama unleashed, expressing who he was, what he believed, and what he thought that he, an American who didn't “look like the Americans who've previously spoken in this great city,” could accomplish. And he reaffirmed his seriousness to this end less than a year later, when he gave his first major foreign address as president to the students and faculty at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. “I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world,” Obama declared, one that he believed was possible

only because of his “own experience,” which made him different – and more capable – than anyone who had ever held the position before him. He explained:

I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.

Now everything might have been fine if the Muslim world had not taken him seriously and if he had been sufficiently self-aware to know that actually setting a “new beginning between the United States and the Muslim’s around the world” was unlikely when a large number of very determined Muslims were bent on the task blowing the hell out of the United States in the name of Islam. But, like Don Quixote before him, Barack Hussein Obama ventured forth to remake the world. And, again like Don Quixote, he partnered up with a group of people who were just as daffy as he was.

And if this is a bit on overreach, we’ll put it this way. Whereas Bush selected as his Vice President a man who had served several terms in Congress and had done a stint as a war-time Defense Secretary and was well versed in the nuances of foreign affairs, Obama selected a careerist laughingstock, best known as a plagiarist with hair plugs and bad caps on his teeth who was plagued with perpetual foot-in-mouth disease. Whereas Bush selected as the head of his diplomatic corps (i.e. Secretary of State) a retired 4-star general and former war-time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Obama selected a fellow Senate newbie, whose principal professional accomplishments included making her law firm billing records magically reappear after disappearing for several years and who was best known for her selection of a spouse.

Yet, perhaps the most telling and most damaging choice was the appointment Obama made two days after his inauguration, when he named former Senate

Majority Leader George Mitchell as his “Special Envoy for Middle East Peace.” Unlike many others in the administration – including the President himself – Mitchell was eminently qualified for his new job, having served for years in the Senate and in a variety of domestic and international positions, including as the Special Envoy for Northern Ireland during the Clinton Administration. Unfortunately, Mitchell was also unlike anyone else in the new Obama team in that he was officially on record positing moral equivalence between the terrorists in the PLO and those who fought them in the Israeli Defense Forces. Mitchell had penned the American “fact”-finding report on the Al-Aqsa Intifada and had been solicitously even-handed, which is to say that he had blamed the Israelis equally for not having the good sense to die peaceably when attacked by Palestinian terrorists responding to fabricated insults, in this case a visit by Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount.

Mitchell, who is of Lebanese descent, is widely considered – both at home and abroad – to be an assertive Arabist, which is to say that his appointment was met with great anticipation in the Arab capitals and equally great consternation in Tel Aviv. The appointment, in concert with Obama’s own emphasis on personal history and heritage and his own promises to right all wrongs for the world’s beleaguered and misunderstood Muslims, created ridiculously false hopes in the Arab world, both for the prospects of American dissociation from Israel and for an Arab-Muslim revival.

This past May, Mitchell’s role in advocating for the Palestinians, against the Israelis was made explicit in a story designed by the *New York Times* and unnamed Obama administration “insiders” to discredit Middle East adviser Dennis Ross, who was described by the paper as “Israel’s friend in the Obama White House”:

George J. Mitchell, who was Mr. Obama’s special envoy to the Middle East, backed by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, argued in favor of a comprehensive American proposal that would include borders, security and the

fate of Jerusalem and refugees. But Mr. Ross balked, administration officials said, arguing that it was unwise for the United States to look as if it were publicly breaking with Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu and Israel's backers in the United States view Mr. Ross as a key to holding at bay what they see as pro-Palestinian sympathies expressed by Mr. Mitchell; Mr. Obama's first national security adviser, Gen. James L. Jones; and even the president himself . . .

In April, Mr. Mitchell, who, one Arab official said, often held up the specter of Mr. Ross to the Palestinians as an example of whom they would end up with if he left, sent Mr. Obama a letter of resignation. By some accounts, one reason was his inability to see eye to eye with Mr. Ross.

"Mitchell wanted something broader and more forward-leaning, and Dennis seems to be taking a more traditional stance," said David J. Rothkopf, a former Clinton administration official who has written about the National Security Council.

But, Mr. Rothkopf said, Mr. Obama must now take into account the emerging realities in the Arab world, including a new populism brought by the democratic movement that may make even governments that were not hostile to Israel, like Egypt and Jordan, more insistent on pushing the case of the Palestinians.

"Experience can be helpful, but it can also be an impediment to viewing things in a new way," he said.

Mitchell has, indeed, resigned his position, and presumably because that damnable Dennis Ross kept screwing things up for him. But then, Mitchell is

not the only one who has been disappointed by the disconnect between Barack Obama's rhetoric and his ability to deliver on the promises contained in that rhetoric.

As you all undoubtedly know, last week, the Palestinian Authority formally requested recognition of statehood from the United Nations. The Obama administration has officially declared its intentions to veto the declaration, but it's hard to imagine that any of this would have happened had the Palestinians – and the rest of the Arab world, for that matter – not believed that they were due to get theirs long before now. And while it may appear on the surface that Obama will save face by vetoing Palestinian statehood, this is hopelessly naïve at best, something, we're afraid, that only a political neophyte being advised by the former First Lady could actually believe. Even so, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former head of Saudi intelligence and a former Saudi ambassador to the United States, should have disabused them of that notion earlier this month, when he wrote in an op-ed for the *New York Times* that:

The United States must support the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations this month or risk losing the little credibility it has in the Arab world. If it does not, American influence will decline further, Israeli security will be undermined and Iran will be empowered, increasing the chances of another war in the region.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia would no longer be able to cooperate with America in the same way it historically has. With most of the Arab world in upheaval, the "special relationship" between Saudi Arabia and the United States would increasingly be seen as toxic by the vast majority of Arabs and Muslims, who demand justice for the Palestinian people.

Saudi leaders would be forced by domestic and regional pressures to adopt a far more independent and assertive

foreign policy. Like our recent military support for Bahrain's monarchy, which America opposed, Saudi Arabia would pursue other policies at odds with those of the United States, including opposing the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in Iraq and refusing to open an embassy there despite American pressure to do so. The Saudi government might part ways with Washington in Afghanistan and Yemen as well.

Oh dear. To paraphrase Sarah Palin, "Hey Turki? How's that hopey-changey stuff workin' out for you?"

To be perfectly honest with you, we have no particular use for Turki al-Faisal. Nor do we have any particular affection for the House of Saud. At the same time, what we have here is the perfect distillation of what Obama's ignorance, arrogance, and churlishness have wrought. Just over two years ago, Obama bragged to the Muslim world that he, a man with the middle name of the Prophet's grandson, would reset Muslim-American relations. Today, the Obama administration is less popular in the Middle East than was the much-derided and mocked Bush administration. The Palestinians don't trust Obama. The Saudis detest him, both for rolling over Egypt's Mubarak and for the Palestinian mess. Israel and its American allies are convinced that he would sell them out in a heartbeat. The Iraqis think his policy toward their country is guided by domestic political concerns. The Afghan President undoubtedly blames him for the murder of his own brother. The new Egyptian regime thinks he's a pushover. The new Libyan regime likely does too. And, of course, the Iranians don't care one wit that he doesn't want them to have the weapon necessary to blow Israel off the face of the globe.

And sadly, all of this may be just the start of his – *and America's* – problems.

Over the weekend, Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar issued a statement that read very much as if it could have been written by the aforementioned Turki al-Faisal, except that in this case the issue isn't

the Palestinians, but the indiscretion of some Obama officials in discussing Pakistani problems with Islamist militancy. As Reuters reported:

Pakistan warned the United States it risked losing an ally if it kept accusing Islamabad of playing a double game in the war against militancy, escalating the crisis in relations between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar was responding to comments by Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, who said Pakistan's top spy agency supported attacks on the U.S. Embassy and other targets by the Haqqani network, the most violent and effective faction among Islamist Taliban militants in Afghanistan.

It is the most serious allegation leveled by the United States against nuclear-armed, Muslim-majority Pakistan since they began an alliance in the "war on terrorism" a decade ago.

"You will lose an ally," Khar told Geo TV in New York in remarks broadcast on Friday. "You cannot afford to alienate Pakistan, you cannot afford to alienate the Pakistani people."

As with Prince Turki, it's hard to feel much sympathy here for the aggrieved Pakis, who haven't *yet* mustered the courage to sabotage American supply lines through the country. Still, to be called out and threatened in public for your administration's own public comments, hardly strikes us as the "smart diplomacy" we were promised by Team Obama. Moreover, we hardly recall the issuance of similar threats during the allegedly disastrous Bush presidency.

Lastly, and perhaps most ominously, there is the matter of Turkey and its currently emboldened, angered, and perhaps crazy Prime Minister, the Islamist Recep

Tayyip Erdogan. Erdogan, for those of you who don't know, has taken the lead of late in the Palestinian cause, supporting and, indeed, fashioning the "flotilla" strategy for breaking the Israeli blockade of Hamas and Gaza. He also just returned from what the liberal publisher of the left-wing journal *The New Republic*, Martin Peretz, calls, "a conqueror's march through Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, evoking the old empire's rule in North Africa not so long ago."

The columnist and Middle East expert David Warren has called Ergodoan "the man who could trigger a world war." We're rather inclined to agree with David P. Goldman (aka "Spengler) that this is a bit "alarmist." But at the same time, Erdogan is definitely both capable and seemingly willing to create as much trouble on as many fronts as possible. He is vocally and perhaps violently angry with Europe for its plans to elevate Cyprus to the presidency of the EU next year. He is unhappy and unsure of how to proceed with relations with Iraq and Syria, given that his country will soon have a majority Kurdish, rather than Turkish, population. And, as Goldman has noted, he is increasingly facing economic disaster and expansionist demands that will undoubtedly add to the instability in the region. And all of this is in addition to his previously mentioned ambitions in North Africa and the Palestinians territories.

Whom or what can we blame for encouraging Erdogan's aggression? Well, according to the leftie Martin Peretz, the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of the arrogant and overpromising foreign policy of Barack Obama:

Obama's first personal excursions into the Middle East as president were to Turkey and Egypt. Recep Tayyip Erdogan welcomed his visit. Indeed, the president's journey set the framework for the Ottomanization of modern Turkey's foreign policy. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne formally abrogated the empire's previous rights in North Africa, these being the rights it had lost in the First World War. From then

on, the country was content to make trouble only for the Kurds across its borders and for Greece. A member of NATO, with more than 600,000 troops under arms (omitting more than half a million reservists and paramilitary), it certainly played a role in deflecting Soviet ambitions in the Mediterranean. Now, with the Russian threat (temporarily?) deferred, the military still faces minor annoyance from Georgia, Armenia, Iraq. But since Obama communed with Erdogan—by all accounts, it was love at first sight—the prime minister has been taking on new projects . . .

Turkey has now added its serious mischief to the scenario. Erdogan himself will now unravel Cairo's peace with Jerusalem, as Erdogan has already locked the PA into phantom international politics.

Poor Barack Obama. His adoring view of Erdogan has stimulated the Turkish regime to be a force not for stability in Cairo or reason in Ramallah.

Oh well. Perhaps Obama will disappoint Erdogan too. Perhaps he will tell the meddlesome Turk to mind his own business and to stop damaging the prospects for stability and quietude the region. And perhaps Erdogan will listen. We wouldn't bet on it. But we suppose there's always a chance.

In the meantime, we can only reiterate that which we have iterated and reiterated time and time again, namely that the best policy with regard to planning for the future of the Middle East, particularly under the Obama administration, is to expect the worst. Sadly, with the passage of every week, we become less and less sure that this is possible. How, after all, can one expect the worst, when each week it gets worse than even we could have expected?

ELIZABETH WARREN AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.

This may shock some of you, but we think we may have a new favorite politician. The reason you may be surprised, naturally, is because our new darling is a creature of the far left. And moreover, she is a “consumer advocate” and one of the former overseers of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), which is to say that she is about as anti-business and as anti-capitalist as an American political figure can generally get and still be considered politically viable. She was, after all, nominated by Barack Obama to head his new consumer agency, but was considered too far left even for this administration.

The politician about whom we speak here is, of course, Elizabeth Warren, who is also a Harvard law professor and is now a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Senate in Massachusetts. She intends to challenge the famous/infamous Senator Scott Brown, the Republican who won the special election to fill the seat vacated when Teddy Kennedy died and whose victory in late 2009 foreshadowed the Republican wave that broke over Washington in the 2010 midterm.

And why do we like her so much, you ask? Because despite her obvious leftism and her deep and abiding desire to destroy what’s left of our economy, she is, at least, honest about who she is and what she believes, which is a characteristic that is exceptionally rare among politicians today.

You see, last week, the fringe-left pressure group MoveOn.org started promoting a quote from Ms. Warren in which she expresses her deep dissatisfaction with those who accuse President Obama of class warfare. And in so doing, she explains her beliefs about the nature of government, about the responsibilities of individuals to government, and thus about the implied “social contract” that exists between the governed and their government. Indeed, she actually uses the term social contract, which is something we have come to expect most of our politicians not to know much about, much less to be willing to discuss.

What Warren presented us was the opportunity to witness an educated and presumably erudite politician in action, a “freak” by today’s standards. She appears to be a politician who is willing to debate the proper place of government, and, more to the point, is willing to do so by actually addressing First Principles and discussing the conflict over those principles that defines the foundational differences between the political right and left in Western civilization. What could be better? This is the kind of stuff we live for. And frankly, it’s the kind of debate that has been far too rare in our political culture for the last . . . say . . . nine decades.

This is, to say the least, a remarkable development. There have been other intellectuals or wannabe-intellectuals among our political class over the last several decades, but there have not been many on the left. The last *bona fide* intellectual Democrat to serve in the Congress was the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. But even Moynihan was a questionable “leftist.” Truth be told, he was a classic “neo-conservative,” and his critiques of government and the bureaucratic state were among the most effective ever committed to paper. Warren, by contrast, presents something new and heretofore unique, a progressive/liberal intellectual who is unafraid to address the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of her ideology.

Now, please don’t get us wrong. Just because Ms. Warren presumes to be an intellectual doesn’t mean that we think she’s actually terribly bright or has a very firm grasp on reality. Indeed, like most on the far left, her connection to reality is a bit questionable, we think. Read the now-famous quote in its entirety and see if you don’t agree:

There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there – good for you!

But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for [sic]. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe

in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for (sic). You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory. . . .

Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific, or a great idea – God bless! Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.

Dear lord. What a load of . . . ummm . . . piffle.

For starters, this is just absolute, absurd garbage. You used roads to get rich, so you have to give back! Heavens. Is this woman really so ignorant that she thinks that roads are “paid for” solely by “the rest of us,” i.e., those who don't use them? Does she really not know that the guy who builds the factory or opens the restaurant or starts a clothing company already pays dozens upon dozens of fees, taxes, and permits that more than cover his “share” of the costs of the roads and the schools and the police and fire departments? Is she really that stupid? *The Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto published a letter from a reader, Brent Amos, which addressed this matter in detail:

People who build factories pay a variety of fees that also pay for roads, schools and many other things. Just a few fees in my locale are Building Plan Check and Permit Fee, Transportation Impact Fee, Parks Development Fee, School Impact Fee, Service Impact Fee (for police and fire), Treatment Plant Connection Capacity Charge, Trunk Line Capacity Charge, and any number of special fees depending on the nature of the building. These aren't fees for a factory necessarily, these are fees to build anything. Then for the life of the building there will be ongoing assessments (taxes) by the city and county that will be used to pay for city and county services and roads. The fee schedule for my city alone is 28 pages long . . .

Yes, almost everyone pays for roads, police and fire, but a developer has paid far more for such things than the average citizen . . .

Warren's rant is tiresome, standard leftist misdirection and hyperbole. Conservatives hate government, they say, so they should never, ever use government, and if they do they are nothing but hypocrites! Ugh. You see this type of argument/accusation all the time when there are disasters of any sort. A conservative governor rails against the evils of excessive government, his state is ravaged by wildfires, and he is forced to enlist the help of the federal government in fighting those fires. A hypocrite? Well . . . no.

We'd offer to speak slowly here, so that people like Warren could follow along, but we doubt it would matter, since most of the people who say such stupid things either know better or *should* know better already. In any case, conservatives are just that, conservatives. They aren't anarchists. They don't resent and oppose *all* government, just *excessive* government. And even the most ardent and aggressive libertarians in the Republican party (think Ron Paul) are more than willing to concede that roads, schools, police, fire fighters, etc. are legitimate functions of government. No one objects to these. No one. And no one seriously objects to paying for them. What conservatives find offensive is the rest of the progressive agenda, the stuff Ms. Warren fails to mention.

As countless commentators have noted, if the government agreed to confine its actions to those areas which Ms. Warren identifies, this nation would be a libertarian paradise. But that isn't the case. In fact, the overwhelming majority of what government – local, state, and federal – does in this country has nothing whatsoever to do with the type of common goods Ms. Warren describes. The fact that she would even pretend otherwise shows either that she is stupid or, just as likely, that she thinks we are.

Nonetheless, despite all of this, the fact of the matter is that Warren was willing to discuss the social contract, which means that she was willing to discuss

the nature of government and therefore the limitations that should or should not be placed on government. And for this, we should be grateful, because this discussion is, indeed, one that desperately needs to be had right now.

In brief, the “social contract” has its roots in the works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It serves as an explanation for why individual men and women would give up the complete and perfect autonomy of solitary life to form social bodies and, ultimately, governments. The social contract, in its essence, explains the responsibility of government to the collected individuals in exchange for the forfeiture of some of the autonomy these individuals erstwhile possessed in the state of nature. The social contract defines legitimate government as that which enjoys the consent of the governed and offers the governed something tangible in return for that consent.

In Western civilization, the most prominent notions of the social contract are those advanced by Locke and by Rousseau, serving as the foundations for the understanding of government by the political right and left, respectively. Locke’s formulation relies heavily on the notion of natural rights that are endowed upon man by the Creator and which are inalienable and therefore must be respected by any legitimate authority. Locke’s social contract is derived in large part from Thomas Aquinas’s conceptions of natural law and, in turn, formed the foundation for the notions of government that inspired the American Founding Fathers, particularly Thomas Jefferson.

As for Rousseau, the intellectual progenitor of the political left, his social contract rests on the idea that the state exists to guarantee liberty and that true liberty can only be expressed and understood in the will of the people, which is to say the “collective will.” Rousseau was, at least superficially, the quintessential anti-republican, favoring both direct, popular sovereignty and the authority of the state to enforce the will of the people upon every individual. Whereas Locke (and the American Founders) saw the role of the state as

protecting the individual’s inalienable rights, Rousseau saw the state as a mechanism whereby “true” liberty could be achieved through the expression of and conformation to the collective will.

In her rant, Elizabeth Warren declares that someone who makes something, who has an idea and turns that idea into something that makes him rich, has an obligation to society to then take portion of that and distribute it to those less fortunate. “Part of the underlying social contract,” she says, “is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.” Now, one can argue here that Warren is overstepping her bounds as a politician and thus as a representative of government. There is, as far as we know, no popular consensus that says that rich should be taxed exorbitantly in return for being allowed to become rich, and therefore Warren’s insistence that the rich are indeed obliged to pay such taxes represents *her* will, not the common will. She thinks taxing the rich excessively will benefit the common good, which to her is good enough, regardless of the collective will. It would seem that she is contradicting Rousseau’s notion of the common will and popular sovereignty. But she is not.

As it turns out, Rousseau understood that getting people to accede to the “proper” common will is a little like herding cats. It’s impossible. But rather than dismiss or revise his notion of the social contract, as one might expect a normal person to do when faced with an inherent contradiction such as this, Rousseau pressed on, and granted the forces of government the power and the indeed the responsibility to enforce its vision of the common will, even to the point of death:

While the state can compel no one to believe, it can banish not for impiety, but as an antisocial being, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing, if needed, his life to his duty. If, after having publicly recognized these dogmas, a person acts as if he does not believe them, he should be put to death.

From Robespierre to Lenin to Hitler; from Mao to Pol Pot, and beyond, one characteristic that links the left's most aggressive "collectivists" is their utter and complete disdain for the people that comprise the collective. The people, you see, are a pain in their backside. They have their own ideas about what they want, and those ideas almost never conform to what the collectivists want for them. And so to make that omelet, the collectivists must break some eggs. They must impose their will on the people. And while that may appear to be a coercive or even violent violation of the collective will and of popular sovereignty, to Rousseau and to those who embrace his collectivist social contract, that is hardly the case. The sad, stupid people will be better off in the end if the smarties help them overcome their "false consciousness" and just tell them what they *really* want, even if it kills them.

Now, none of this is to say that Elizabeth Warren wants to kill anybody. But she does wish to employ the Rousseauian conception of the social contract to American governance, which is to say that she wants to turn the state into a tool of moral action. If you read her rant carefully, it is clear not only that she is making a moral argument, but that she is implying, rather strongly, that the state itself is and should be the ultimate arbiter of moral behavior. She is, in essence, substituting the state for the Church or, worse yet, for God. This is hardly a coincidence. Indeed, it is precisely what Rousseau had in mind.

In his great little book, *Explaining Postmodernism*, Stephen Hicks, a professor of philosophy at Rockford College, explains Rousseau's post-social contract society thusly and, in so doing, captures the essence of what Warren is after:

When individuals come together to form the new society, "the individual particularly of each contracting party is surrendered to a new moral and collective body which has its own self, life, body, and will." The will of each individual is no longer that individual's own, but becomes common or general, and under the direction of the spokesmen for the whole. In moral society, one "coalesces with all, [and] in this

each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of society's leaders."

In the new society, the leadership expresses the "general will" and enacts policies that are best for the whole, thus enabling all individuals to achieve their true interests and their true freedom. The requirements of the "general will" absolutely override all other considerations, so a "citizen should render to the state all the services he can as soon as the sovereign demands them."

Yet there is something about human nature, corrupted as it is now by reason and individualism, that militates and always will militate against the general will. Individuals rarely see their individual wills as being in harmony with the general will' consequently the "private will acts constantly against the general will." And so to counteract these socially destructive individualistic tendencies, the state is justified in using compulsion: "whoever refuses to obey the general will, will be forced to do so by the entire body; this means merely that he will be forced to be free."

This is powerful stuff. And it is indeed a social contract, the sort of which will compel anyone who makes anything to "pay forward" whatever arbitrary share of what they have made that people like Elizabeth Warren – the sovereign – have decided they should pay forward. And bravo to Elizabeth Warren for having the guts to say it aloud. We don't expect that any other leftie politician will have the guts to do so anytime in the near future. In fact, we'll be surprised, despite the accolades she's earned from her fellow lefties for doing so the first time, if even Elizabeth Warren ever mentions the concept again.

The problem for Warren, for Paul Krugman (who cited her social contract bit approvingly), and for the political left in general is that they simply cannot be honest about what they believe and about what they

think about the nature of government. Not only was their view of the social contract explicitly and overtly rejected by the American Founders, who, as we noted, opted for Locke's near opposite conception instead, but the Rousseauian social contract is anathema to American voters still today. If anything, the closer the left gets to making this version of the social contract a reality, the angrier and more rebellious the voters get. The voters may not know specifically that this is why they are angry – not because they are stupid, mind you, but because the left is dishonest about its true nature – but they know that they are angry and are uncomfortable with the left's conception of government.

Rousseau's vision is, in a very real sense, anti-American. It not only contradicts the founding principles and documents but is absolutely contrary to the spirit of American liberty. Once more, we congratulate and appreciate Elizabeth Warren for having the guts to talk honestly about this. But we don't expect her to do it again anytime soon.

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