

**Stephen R. Soukup** Publisher  
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

**Mark L. Melcher** Editor  
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

## THEY SAID IT

Take, for example, the complaints of the young Americans currently “occupying” Wall Street. Many protesters have told sympathetic reporters that “it’s our Arab Spring.” Put aside the differences between brutal totalitarian dictatorships and a republic of biennial elections, and simply consider it in economic terms: At the “Occupy” demonstrations, not-so-young college students are demanding that their tuition debt be forgiven. In Egypt, half the population lives in poverty; the country imports more wheat than any other nation on the planet, and the funds to do that will dry up in a couple months’ time. They’re worrying about starvation, not how to fund half a decade of Whatever Studies at Complacency U.

One sympathizes. When college tuition is \$50,000 a year, you can’t “work your way through college” — because, after all, an 18-year-old who can earn 50-grand a year wouldn’t need to go to college, would he? Nevertheless, his situation is not the same as some guy halfway up the Nile living on \$2 a day: One is a crisis of the economy, the other is a crisis of decadence. And, generally, the former are far easier to solve.

Mark Steyn, “Crisis of Decadence,” October 15, 2010.

## OCCUPY WALL STREET, REDUX.

If the organizers and supporters of the Occupy Wall Street movement are to be believed, then the principal force motivating their actions and underpinning their dissatisfaction with present-day America is the growing bifurcation of the nation into radically unequal camps: one that is massive in terms of size but poor in terms of monetary wealth; and the other, which is the inverse, sparsely populated yet wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice. Too few people control too much wealth, they insist, which is unfair, immoral, scandalous, and damaging to the fabric of society. The *New York Times* columnist and Occupy Wall Street groupie Nicholas Kristof explains:

My interviews with protesters in Manhattan’s Zuccotti Park seemed to rhyme with my interviews in Tahrir earlier this year. There’s a parallel sense that the political/economic system is tilted against the 99 percent. Al Gore, who supports the Wall Street protests, described them perfectly as a “primal scream of democracy.”

The frustration in America isn’t so much with inequality in the political and legal worlds, as it was in Arab countries, although those are concerns too. Here the critical issue is economic inequity. According to the C.I.A.’s own ranking of countries by income inequality, the United States is more unequal a society than either Tunisia or Egypt.

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Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842  
Phone 540.477.2696 Fax 540.477.2696 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

Three factoids underscore that inequality:

¶The 400 wealthiest Americans have a greater combined net worth than the bottom 150 million Americans.

¶The top 1 percent of Americans possess more wealth than the entire bottom 90 percent.

¶In the Bush expansion from 2002 to 2007, 65 percent of economic gains went to the richest 1 percent.

As my *Times* colleague Catherine Rampell noted a few days ago, in 1981, the average salary in the securities industry in New York City was twice the average in other private sector jobs. At last count, in 2010, it was 5.5 times as much. (In case you want to gnash your teeth, the average is now \$361,330.)

More broadly, there's a growing sense that lopsided outcomes are a result of tycoons' manipulating the system, lobbying for loopholes and getting away with murder. Of the 100 highest-paid chief executives in the United States in 2010, 25 took home more pay than their company paid in federal corporate income taxes, according to the Institute for Policy Studies.

Now, there are several things to note about this rant. First, the fact that Algore is cited as a supporter of the "99%" and their "democracy" movement should surprise no one but should be taken as a sign that the left today is both lacking in legitimate heroes and completely clueless. Gore is, after all and perhaps more than anyone in recent memory, a symbol of everything that these protestors and their supporters claim to abhor – opulent wealth, nepotism, wealth earned through flim-flammy rather than hard work, etc. Recall that Gore is not just fabulously wealthy, but became so over the course of generations as the

result of misfeasance and skullduggery. His father's wealth came, in part, in return for providing political favors for a Soviet sympathizer. And young Al inherited the political fortune, parlaying his father's congressional seat into his own career and nearly into the presidency. Moreover, when he screwed that up, he made himself uber-wealthier by selling "scientific" snake-oil to his fellow doe-eyed liberals. Yet Kristof cites him approvingly, apparently unaware of the irony. The point, as always, is that leftist political sympathies are wholly redemptive and can overcome any real life faults. Pray to the proper gods and all is forgiven, regardless of the sin committed. And yet they have the gall to call those on the Religious Right "fanatics."

Second, the statistics cited by the occupiers and their supporters are cherry-picked. In the great income debate, it is well known that, among other things, lefties utilize household income data rather than individual data because it tends to distort the effect of family size and multiple earners on income equality. They also focus on cash income alone, ignoring total compensation, which includes such things as pensions, 401Ks, fringe benefits, government benefits, etc. Again, this allows them to paint a direr picture of the condition confronting the "99%." Lastly, these arguments completely disregard metrics of consumption, which not only address relative wealth and comfort but also measure purchasing power as opposed to asset holdings, which is to say the "trappings of wealth" if not wealth itself.

That said, let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the Krugmans, Kristofs, and the "occupiers" of the world have a point when they say that income inequality is growing and that this signals the destruction of the middle class and the demarcation of the nation into the two radically different camps noted above.

The presumption behind their unhappiness seems to be that the cause of this problem is that "corporations" are robbing people; or that "Wall Street" is manipulating the system to get rich; or that average people have no chance to get ahead and that the fix is in for the very few who will forever control

everything. Moreover, they imply, rather heavily-handedly, that the problem is of a recent vintage and one that can or should be blamed principally on the change in the country and its politics that dates from the early 1980s – let’s say January 20, 1981 to be specific.

The presumption is that the rich are getting richer because they are “allowed” to or because the tax system has been set up to favor them or because they have been “given” more by the conservatives who spent the last three decades trying their damndest to keep taxes as low as possible. As noted above, for example, in his paean to the masses, Kristof points out that “the rich” did particularly well during the Bush expansion, thereby implying something nefarious about Bush’s policies, namely his tax policies.

This is, of course, not only nonsense, but nonsense on stilts. The fact of the matter is that the spate of inequality that the nation faces, such as it is, has been evolving since roughly the early 1970’s; since Nixon was president, in fact, which means that it has continued apace throughout Ford’s and Carter’s soft leftism, Reagan’s supply-side experiment, Bush the Elder’s tax hikes, Clinton’s triangulation, and Bush the Younger’s tax-cut-and-spend incongruity.

The more serious and more honest complainers about income inequality – and as strange as it may sound, Paul Krugman generally falls into this category – acknowledge this inconsistency but nevertheless insist that the problem still lies with American politics and with its conservative bent since Johnson mercifully retired. Republicans pushed free trade, which, of course, drove good jobs overseas. Republicans pushed policies that killed unions, which, along with globalization, killed the middle class and moved good paying jobs beyond the reach of the high-school-educated. Republicans fought against federal education dollars to edify the masses. Republicans did this. Republicans did that. Republicans did the other, all of which made it easier for a small group of elites to seize a greater and greater share of the wealth at the expense of the “dying” middle class.

Now, this narrative is a little too complicated to enthrone the desperately “poor” and underfed aspiring *descamisados* for whom Krugman and Kristof are playing the role of Eva. Moreover, it is almost impossible to place on either cardboard placards or the professionally prepared signs favored by the union thugs. So, for the sake of simplicity, the message has been reduced to a plethora of complaints about “corporate greed” and about the sad state of higher education.

In the less simplistic world occupied by folks like Krugman, the “corporate greed,” and “people before profits” nonsense translates into an only slightly less nonsensical rage against competition and against the malign influence of what they see as “unfettered” competition. Once upon a time, in “good” America, government regulated competition more effectively – which is to say more overbearingly – and the world was full of sunshine, candy canes, and full employment at healthy wages. Never mind that “full employment” meant for men only and for white men specifically; or that the lack of competition meant the *de facto* cartelization of consumer products. The world was good. And now it’s bad.

To Krugman and company – the unofficial intellectual godfathers of the Occupy Wall Street movement – one of the keys to understanding income inequality is the increase in competition that resulted from the liberalization of the consumer product and capital markets in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Certainly, they have a point, but it’s a silly one, to put it delicately. For starters, they ignore the fact that this competition also dramatically increased the standard of living for those in the lower four quintiles of the economy in ways that the comfortable “middle class” of Krugman’s ideal dream world could not even have begun to imagine. The iPhones and iPads that have propelled this revolution and those like them, for example, would never have been possible without the reform in product and capital markets. And there can be little question that even the bottom quintile today lives far better than most Americans dreamt possible back in Krugman’s ideal world of the post-War era.

There is also a matter of necessity, which Krugman and the Left seem strangely intent on ignoring. For all of their constant berating of conservatives for their “Amero-centric” view of the world, the lefties fall far deeper into that trap here, somehow believing that the post-war “American moment” could have been prolonged simply by ignoring developments in the rest of world. This is nuts, to say nothing of its fundamental jingoism.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, those facets of corporate behavior that have managed to defy the trend toward greater competition have been those in which large corporate entities have interacted with government in the pursuit of complementary ends. And this just happens to be the kind of corporate behavior that is most likely to contribute to the growth of income inequality. Indeed, the revolving door between government and the private sector, with an occasional layover in the netherworld between the two, is among the most lucrative around. Just ask Rahm Emanuel. Or Robert Rubin. Or Chris Dodd. Or Peter Orszag. Or Hank Paulson. Or any of the countless government officials who made millions, then joined the government to get themselves in a position to rejoin the private sector and make millions more.

We’ve spent countless hours and countless cartridges of toner discussing the collusion between big government and big business, so we won’t bore you with yet another rant. But it should, for this discussion, suffice to say that the problem is not, as Krugman and his ilk would like us to believe, that too much competition has destroyed the spirit of community in the nation. It is that competition has not yet reached the murky depths of the statist’s world, which has used its enormous power to resist the liberating effects of competition, thereby stifling both growth and economic efficiency.

As for education, the wistful-leftist theory holds that the one benefit of all of this increased competition should be a surge in the value of educated and skilled workers, who should see a significant rise in their incomes, along with those of the ultra-rich. The fact

that that doesn’t appear to be the case any longer is one of the chief gripes of the Occupy Wall Street crowd. They paid their dues. They got their degrees. And now they can’t get jobs to pay back their loans. And they’re grouchy about it.

Unfortunately for them, the theory only applies if they manage actually to get degrees that are worth something. And for the most part, they did not and do not. Again, we have spent countless hours and countless cartridges of toner discussing the dissolution of the American education system in general and the higher education system in particular. And the fact of the matter is that today’s college students generally fall into one of four categories. In the first category are the foreign students, who constitute a shockingly large percentage of students pursuing the degrees necessary to compete globally in engineering and the hard sciences. As a Congressional Research Service study from last year noted:

NSF data reveal that in 2006, the foreign student population earned approximately 36.2% of the doctorate degrees in the sciences and approximately 63.6% of the doctorate degrees in engineering. In 2006, foreign students on temporary resident visas earned 32.0% of the doctorates in the sciences, and 58.6% of the doctorates in engineering.

The second category consists of smart American-born students who apply themselves in fields like the hard-sciences or business and who thereby have a real chance at making a successful career. The third category is comprised of similarly smart and serious students in the liberal or creative arts, who value traditional education and civic virtue and who also stand a chance at success but who will have to work harder, to focus, and to be creative.

The final category, of course, is that which unfortunately includes a growing majority of the “college educated” today, i.e. those who either don’t belong in college or don’t belong at four-year institutions or who are too stupid to know that the

pabulum their leftist sociology professors spoon-feed them is nonsense that should be disregarded as such. These students earn degrees yet know nothing that is of value to society. As such, they are qualified to do nothing. They have no skills, no ability to think, and no knowledge. And they blame “the system.” Consider, for example, the following tale from a *Washington Examiner* story on the Occupy movement:

In last week’s Zombie Parade the protesters, giddy with their cleverness, portrayed themselves as the living dead whose lives had been sucked from them by unnamed corporations.

One of the pre-Halloween costumers was asked why she had chosen to dress up like a zombie who looked like Marie Antoinette, the French queen guillotined by the revolutionaries of 1793. She replied that she had no idea of who Marie Antoinette was but just liked the look of the costume.

She didn’t know who Marie Antoinette was. She thinks Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife. She can’t find the world on a globe. Whatever. And she thinks her student loans should be forgiven cuz “the man” is keepin’ her down!

The way the “competition effect” has worked in real life is that those who, by fortune and their own hard work, received a degree that is equivalent to a degree that might have been awarded twenty, thirty, fifty years ago have, indeed, seen their value to employers and their incomes rise. The rest, whose degrees are as worthless as the paper on which they are printed, have not. But instead of blaming their professors or their university presidents or themselves, for cripes sake, they blame Wall Street, because . . . well . . . that seems about right to them.

For nearly fifteen years now, we have been writing about the role reversal in American politics and specifically about how the “liberals” or “progressives” have morphed into the “reactionaries” – tired, scared,

dreamy political flunkies who possess no new ideas, no creative solutions, and yearn only to return to a past that never existed. If ever one needed evidence of this, the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement – those whom the *Wall Street Journal’s* James Taranto has tagged “Krugman’s Army” – should amply suffice.

This entire Occupy movement is a farce, of course, but it’s more than that. As Kristof and Algoré note, it is indeed the “primal scream” of the nation’s left-wing and its youth, only what they are screaming is “STOP!” – as in “standing athwart history yelling ‘Stop!’” in Buckley’s famous appellation. They claim to want to go back to a world where a bachelors degree meant a good job and the government made sure that your shoes were made in Georgia and your skivvies in North Carolina and that everyone was happy.

Only that world never existed. It is a fantasy. And the forces that destroyed the approximation of that world simply can’t be re-harnessed. Or at least we don’t think that the protestors will willingly give up their iPhones and their iPods, and nor will all the girls head back into the kitchen “where they belong.” The notion that the world as it was can be recaptured is one of humanity’s enduring delusions. And recapturing a world as it *wasn’t* is notably more delusional.

Unfortunately, these delusions attract not only followers among the benighted masses, but among their “leaders” as well, which is to say that they may, at some point, produce political repercussions. We certainly hope not, since apparently all solutions proposed here involve more government, which, in many ways is the source of the problem.

There is much to say about the Occupy Wall Street movement, and sadly, it appears that we will be given ample time to say it as the movement drags on, interminably and incomprehensibly.

## WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MITT?

For months now – years even – Willard “Mitt” Romney, the former Governor of Massachusetts and savior of the Salt Lake City Olympics, has been the official frontrunner for the Republican nomination for president of the United States in 2012. He has led in all the polls since . . . well . . . since pollsters started taking them. He looks presidential. He sounds presidential. And, best of all, according to media and political establishment types, he knows which fork to use for which course. Moreover, he enjoys those courses with all the “right” people. And he only attends “tea parties” at which the finest Earl Grey is served. He is everything that a Republican frontrunner should be.

And yet he's the least popular frontrunner for any national office in recent memory. As countless commentators have noted, roughly 25% of the GOP primary electorate like the guy, have always liked the guy, and appear willing to continue to like the guy, no matter what. The remaining 75%, by contrast, seem desperate to find someone else. Anyone else.

First, there was the Ron Paul boomlette, which lasted only as long as it took for Paul to open his mouth and remind people that while he is often brilliant and right about a great many things, he also has a touch of the “least crazy lunatic at the asylum” about him. Then there was the Tim Pawlenty phase, which again, lasted only until the former Minnesota governor began to speak, which in his case put everyone within hearing distance instantly to sleep. Then there was the Michele Bachmann spurt, which lost steam as soon as she declared that vaccines can make you “retarded.” Then, along came Rick Perry, the one GOP “white knight” who actually jumped in feet first, and immediately started drowning under the weight of his own ego. And now Herman Cain is the man everyone wants desperately to be Not-Mitt. Along the way, nearly everybody else in the field, even Rick “The Last Time I Ran for Office I Lost My Senate Seat by 18%-points” Santorum and Newt “Have You Met My Third Wife” Gingrich, has been given at least a good once over, if not twice over by the GOP faithful.

Additionally, as we noted last week, every Republican lawmaker capable of walking and chewing gum, who is not yet in the race, has been mentioned as a possible primary entrant. And all of this because the overwhelming majority of Republican primary voters are underwhelmed by Mitt.

Does any of this matter? Republicans tend, for the most part, to nominate guys like Mitt – guys who are next in line, who have waited their turn, and who are reassuring if generally unexciting. Even Reagan, the proto-conservative whom all of today's Republicans mythologize, was, in many ways, the typical Republican nominee. Even though he was anything but the establishment's choice, he was the guy who took Ford to the convention four years earlier; the guy who kept his organization and fundraising machinery intact; and the guy who had made a play and then returned the next time around for the shot he had “earned.” So even if Republicans don't seem too enthusiastic about Romney now, they'll come around eventually. Won't they? We mean, they always have before. And this time, the stakes are – or at least seem to be – a great deal higher than they have been in quite some time. So Mitt, Mitt, he's our man? Right?

Well . . . maybe.

Over the span of the Republican pre-primary – which already seems interminable, despite the fact that the first ballots won't be cast for another three months – literally dozens of journalists, columnists, analysts, and pollsters have tried to explain frontrunner-Mitt's tacit weakness. Some have dismissed it as mere bigotry. You know the drill: mean, nasty, stupid, closed-minded Republican, fundamentalist, religio-goofballs no-likey the Mormon interloper. Others have attributed it to the rise of the right-wing extremism in the form of the Tea Party, which, they claim, now dominates the GOP and is unwilling to sanction any politician who will not explicitly do its bidding. More thoughtful analysts have, naturally, offered more thoughtful analysis. One such attempt to explain the lukewarm attitude toward Mitt was delivered just last week by the inimitable John Podhoretz, who put it this way:

And then there's the other 75 percent. They know Romney. They've been listening to him for nearly five years. And they're not buying.

There are three possible explanations for this.

*They dislike his stands on policy.* How can Republicans nominate a man who imposed an individual health-care mandate on the state of Massachusetts to lead a party whose primary policy goal since 2010 has been the repeal of ObamaCare – designed around an individual health-care mandate?

*They can't make an emotional connection with him.* Romney is a Scotchgarded candidate – all attempts to penetrate the shiny surface are repelled. This is why there is political value to his rivals when someone brings up his Mormonism, and not just to make evangelicals uncomfortable with him. Because LDS is a minority faith, Romney's membership in the church only emphasizes his otherness and distance.

The GOP base's difficulty in finding a commonality with Romney is related to their unease with his policy history. Romney does not have a natural affinity with the GOP faithful. Or, as Rush Limbaugh put it simply yesterday, "Romney is not a conservative. He's not, folks."

Romney has sought to calm these concerns simply by changing some of his positions. He was pro-choice; now he's pro-life. He was a supporter of some vague form of gay marriage; now he promises to oppose it. Which leads to point 3:

*GOP voters think Romney is a phony.*  
Combine the above two and you get this one.

All of this is well and good. And certainly Podhoretz makes some valid and valuable points. But he, like the rest of the collective commentariat, misses the larger point, in our opinion.

If you take Romney's policy predilections and combine them with the fact that he does not connect with the voters, you do, in fact, come away with the impression that he is a phony. That we'll grant Podhoretz. But there's more to it than that. Let us explain.

What is it, exactly, about Romney's policies that Republican primary voters don't like? Is it that they're too timid? Too bland? Too trite and hackneyed? Or is it that they're too . . . Obama-ish? Podhoretz says it right there at the top of the quote, but then lets it drop: this is the guy who gave us the blueprint for Obamacare. What could be worse? And he can try to back away from that all he wants to now. But the fact of the matter is that he once supported, shepherded, signed, and implemented the plan that is the principal cause of unhappiness with Obama among Republicans and independents alike.

And it's not just health care. Daniel Henninger, a political columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, put it this way after last week's Republican primary debate:

The health-care problem has been widely discussed. There are two other troubling policy areas, both on display in the debate: taxes and China.

Newt Gingrich rightly asked Mr. Romney why his capital gains cut stops at incomes above \$200,000—a total economic absurdity, especially for anyone who purports to know "how the economy works."

Mr. Romney's standard reply is that the "rich can take care of themselves" and he's all about "the middle class." But

that's Barack Obama's divisive view. And despite two bipartisan commissions explicitly calling for lower individual rates, Mr. Romney's tax reforms are "in the future." So he sits below 22% support.

China is hacking into the Pentagon's computers, grabbing the South China Sea, offering little help on nuclear proliferation, and Mr. Romney's big proposal is "on day one" to file a complaint against China with the World Trade Organization for currency manipulation. But that's proto-Democrat Chuck Schumer's issue. If one can glean a commonality in the Schumer-Romney complaint, it would be campaign contributions.

Mitt Romney has undoubted gifts. He could be president. But in the current Obama morass, so could 100 other people.

The problem with Romney's policies is not that they are too moderate or that they're not "conservative" enough. It's that they reflect a deep and abiding faith in Mitt Romney – and not in the American people. Romney believes that he is a capable manager. And, indeed, that is his selling point against Obama: "This guy," he tells us, "is a putz, a joker, a 'community organizer' who never held a real job and can't get anything right. But me; I'm a winner. I'm a successful businessman. I saved the Olympics. I've done great things before and I can do them again." I. Me. Mine. Romney isn't a moderate. He's a technocrat. He's a planner and an organizer. He's a fixer and an administrator. He is, in so many ways, interchangeable with Obama, only more experienced, more socially traditionalist, and less inclined toward stupid leftist fairy tales about American and Western impiety.

Now, you take *that* and combine it with the fact that he is hard to connect with, that he just doesn't seem like regular people, and *now* you're on to something. Mitt Romney, for whatever blessings he may have and whatever assets he may bring to the GOP ticket,

is, nonetheless a charter member of the American ruling class. His father coulda, maybe shoulda been president. Now old Mitt thinks he can and should be president. Indeed, he's spent his whole life preparing for the chance to be president. He took the last four years off – from what, who knows and who cares? – just so he could lap the field in preparing to stage his run to become president.

You can't connect with him, you say? Well, no kidding. That's because he's one of them. And you're . . . well . . . you're not. And when he's president, he'll know what's best for you, just like he did when he was Governor of Massachusetts. And just like the current president knows what's best for you.

Is this an entirely fair appraisal? Well, no. Not really. Mitt Romney is, from all appearances a perfectly swell and talented man. But he is, much to his, his handlers', and the Republican voters' dismay, a man whose talents are entirely wrong for the current political moment. Republican voters in particular, but a great many independents and "moderates" as well, are, at present, rebelling against the model of governance for which Romney is best suited and in which he believes he is destined to "serve." Call this model what you will: republicanism, elitism, statism, bureaucratism, the administrative state, whatever. The American people grew restless under eight years of Bush and have rebelled *in toto* under Obama. They are tired of being told what is best for them and what they *need* to do and *need* to sacrifice in order to make their leaders' policy visions become reality. And they appear largely unwilling to take it anymore – even from a Republican.

This isn't to say that Mitt Romney isn't a tremendous business man or a tremendous problem solver or even a tremendous politician. We're certain that he is all-of-the-above. But we're also certain that he is used to being the decision-maker and that he believes that all the problems that he encounters can be solved by putting all his best men and women together in a room and brainstorming until they come up with an answer. Which is to say that we're certain as well that Republican voters find him troubling and tiresome in the same way that they find Obama troubling and tiresome, though obviously to a far lesser extent.

When you look at Romney and compare him to the other Republicans in the race, the thing that sticks out is his zest for . . . organization and procedure. Herman Cain's tax proposal can be summed up in three words (or numbers): Nine-Nine-Nine, and it can be explained in thirty seconds or less. Romney's tax and economic plan – which is impressive and solid and aggressively growth oriented – is available in pdf format on his web site. It is 87 pages long. It's also available for Kindle, for crying out loud – *like a book*.

When Republican voters hear that Mitt Romney used to hold positions on such issues as global warming and gay marriage that are different from the positions he now holds, they are troubled mildly by the notion that he is a “flip-flopper.” They are troubled somewhat more substantively by the idea that he was once more liberal than he now appears. But what is most bothersome and most troubling to them is the fact that his erstwhile positions indicate that his instincts move him to adopt, at least initially, positions that contradict the will of the people and require top-down solutions in contravention of that will. It's not just that he was a liberal, in other words, it's that he was a specific kind of liberal, one who believes that he knows better than the people and will do what is best for them whether they like it or not.

Does any of this mean that Mitt Romney will not be the nominee? Not necessarily. Thus far at least, Romney is unflappable. He is a capable politician who looks and sounds the role. He appears “electable.” He is, as the *Journal's* Henninger calls him, “the party's Unsinkable Molly Brown.” Until a challenger proves that he or she has what it takes to stay with him over the long haul, Mitt Romney has to be considered the

odds-on favorite to win the GOP nomination. The voters, obviously, will have the final say. But right now, it's Mitt's nomination to lose.

As for the general election, that is something else altogether. The conventional wisdom on the right has it that Republican and independent voters are so unhappy with Obama that they will vote for anyone else next November, and that Romney, despite his weaknesses, is as “electable” as anyone in the GOP field. This may be true. But it is also, we will note, precisely the same conventional wisdom that led the Democrats to nominate John Kerry in 2004. And we all recall how well that turned out for them.

Again, this isn't to say that Romney can't win. Obviously, he can. But he certainly won't cruise to victory, and he will, most definitely, give more than a few Republicans and independents pause. He will have to prove decisively better than Obama in the general election campaign and debates, something of which he is capable, but of which there is no guarantee.

So the search for the anti-Mitt goes on.

We have our doubts whether this search will succeed, but if it does, the candidate who emerges from the process will be strengthened by having had to overcome not just the frontrunner and odds-on favorite, but the party establishment, and the mainstream media as well. Which is to say that he or she will be a helluva candidate come general election time.

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