



Celebrating Ignorance

EDITOR'S NOTE: Peter Heck no longer writes a weekly column for the PRESS & DAKOTAN, but he sent us this column for publication.

BY PETER HECK
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I believe the psychological term for it is “projection.” *Time* magazine’s painfully liberal writer Joe Klein came on MSNBC’s painfully liberal commentator Chris Matthews’ Hardball show to do what is routinely done there - share painfully liberal ideas with whoever is watching. And, not surprisingly, Matthews and Klein decided to pile on the Todd Akin business out of Missouri.

Amidst all the typical drivel about how Republicans are bad for women came this little jewel from Klein: “The Republican Party has a major grassroots problem which is that a good part of its grassroots now celebrate ignorance. It’s more, it’s more than abortion and women’s rights.” Pushed by Matthews to explain what he meant by “celebrate ignorance,” Klein rambled on. “It’s, you know, denying evolution, denying the science behind climate change, the birtherism. How is it that when Donald Trump comes out of the closet as a major league birther, he shoots to the top of the polls, the presidential preference polls among Republicans? I mean, there is an awful lot of celebration of ignorance going on in that Party right now. It’s really sad for me because there was a point 20 years ago when I thought the Republicans were coming up with some of the best policy ideas.”

Right. I would have given anything to see Joe Klein make a similar comment in front of a responsible host who would logically follow up by asking, “Like what policies of the Republicans were you applauding, Joe?” For some reason, I am quite confident that he wouldn’t have come up with many.

Nevertheless, let’s take on the heart of what Klein suggests. First, saying that it is anti-intellectual to deny the “science” behind climate change or the “science” behind evolution is itself anti-intellectual. What many conservatives reject is not science. It’s the scientific interpretations offered by liberals.

Conservatives see liberals distort and misrepresent the climate data to arrive at pre-determined conclusions, making irresponsible leaps of logic in the process. So they reject those interpretations of the data. They see liberals pretend theoretical explanations of unobservable phenomena that allegedly occurred at the origin of the universe is the same as testable and repeatable operational science, and then supposedly “validate” their conclusions through circular reasoning without ever acknowledging the assumptions at the heart of “evolution.” So many conservatives reject those interpretations of the data. Now, it’s fair to say that not all conservatives who



Peter
HECK

reject evolution (just like not all liberals who accept it) have done much digging into the issue. But exactly what is their offense? They are simply content trusting the Word of God over the word of people like Joe Klein. Based on the Bible’s track record for both scientific and historical accuracy, as compared to Klein and company, that can’t be characterized in any way as ignorant.

And in terms of “birtherism,” let’s set the record straight. A lot of conservatives have long believed that President Obama was born in the United States, but were very uncomfortable with his militant refusal to show something as simple as a birth certificate to prove it when legitimate questions arose. Shouldn’t we be more concerned at the blind willingness of liberals like Klein and Matthews who apparently care so little for the U.S. Constitution that they weren’t concerned at all about the issue?

And just so we’re clear, Donald Trump shot to the top of the polls momentarily not because of his “birtherism,” but because of his willingness to boldly confront Obama. Conservatives were tired of candidates who cowered in the face of the media and their support of this failed presidency. They wanted a fighter, and that’s what caused many to gravitate towards Trump...for a very short period of time.

But while Klein’s thesis is absurd, the subject matter is not. I think it’s high time we have a conversation about ignorance in our political system. And we could begin by talking about a Democrat Party that thinks you can spend your way out of debt, that boasts charismatic visionaries like Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and Joe Biden as their chosen leaders, that thinks it makes sense to forbid the death penalty for rapists but to allow the death penalty for the innocent child that is the product of the rape, that thinks an increase in food stamps stimulates economic growth or that extending unemployment checks is a sign the economy is on the rebound. We could talk about a Democrat Party whose best policy ideas are the very ones that were attempted and failed throughout the 1930s and the 1960s, and that continue to bankrupt state and local governments around the nation.

And if Klein is particularly interested in evaluating the intellectual prowess of the “base” of the Republican Party, perhaps we could put a magnifying glass on the “base” of his own party: from whacked out eco-terrorists to Code Pink war protestors to the Occupy Wall Street public defecators.

No Joe, when it comes to celebrating ignorance, conservatives can’t hold a candle to you and your liberal comrades.

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Both Sides Use ‘Medi-scare’ Tactics

BY CATHY YOUNG
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Which side really wants to gut Medicare? That question has emerged at the forefront of the presidential campaign. In the process, what’s getting gutted is facts — and, quite possibly, chances of meaningful Medicare reform.

Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan claim that President Barack Obama would “rob” Medicare with \$716 billion in cuts to pay for Affordable Care Act programs. Team Obama claims the Romney-Ryan reform plans would eviscerate Medicare and saddle seniors with huge medical bills.

Nonpartisan fact-checkers such as PolitiFact.com assert that while both sides are guilty of truth-bending “Medi-scare” tactics, Republicans are the worse offenders. Conservatives counter that the fact-checkers are biased. A lie, it seems, is often in the eye of the beholder.

Take Republican charges about Obama’s Medicare cuts. Obama defenders point out that the \$716 billion figure refers to cost reductions that the Congressional Budget Office projects will result from Obama’s health care reform law between 2013 and 2022. The law authorizes a government panel to lower costs by restructuring Medicare programs, mainly by cutting payments to doctors and hospitals.

This is not a “death panel.” Its goal is to root out fraud and waste, and it is expressly prohibited from cutting benefits or denying treatment. Still, critics have a point when they argue that the squeeze on reimbursements could lead to Medicare recipients being offered fewer services. So, while claims of granny-robbing are full of melodramatic exaggeration, they have more truth than the president’s champions will concede.

Likewise, there is some truth to assertions that the money saved through these cuts will be channeled to untested new government programs. Obamacare may

not be the bogeyman painted by its foes, but even many supporters agree it is unlikely to reduce overall government spending on health care, especially when it subsidizes new benefits (such as full coverage of preventive checkups and birth control, even for those who can afford out-of-pocket payments).

Meanwhile, Romney promises to repeal all of Obama’s health care law, including the Medicare cuts — even though the same reductions are incorporated into Ryan’s much-vaunted budget plan. Ryan’s plan is not Romney’s, but neither Romney nor Ryan has explained what budget changes they propose to offset the loss of those savings. Even if the Affordable Care Act is repealed, there is near-universal agreement that it will have to be replaced with other programs requiring funds.

Much Democratic criticism has focused on Ryan’s Medicare reform plan (Romney largely embraces it), which would keep the existing system for anyone currently 55 or older, then phase in vouchers to help seniors buy private insurance. Democrats have claimed this could force seniors to pay as much as \$6,400 a year in additional premiums. But that figure is based on an earlier version of Ryan’s plan — which, unlike the new one, did not allow future retirees the option of traditional Medicare, and had a more draconian Medicare spending cap. There are no reliable estimates of what the new Ryan plan may mean to seniors. (Whether it will make a dent in the deficit is also questionable; Medicare Advantage, which allows competition from private insurers, lowers premium costs for beneficiaries but boosts government spending.)

Health care for seniors is a highly charged issue. It’s not surprising each side makes inflammatory claims. Unfortunately, both sides end up perpetuating the illusion that we can prevent fiscal catastrophe without hard choices or sacrifices.

Cathy Young is a regular contributor to Reason magazine and the website RealClearPolitics. She wrote this for Newsday.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

It’s Time To Kill Fed Ethanol Mandate

THE KANSAS CITY (Mo.) STAR (Aug. 19): The drought and sky-high corn prices are forcing federal officials to at least consider doing something that should have been done a long time ago.

Kill the federal ethanol mandate. The law passed by Congress five years ago essentially says the industry will produce a certain amount of ethanol every year and American motorists will buy it.

The mandate curries favor with farmers and farm conglomerates that produce corn to be used to make the ethanol. It’s a way to prop up the corn market even while it does far too little to drive down oil consumption or petroleum prices.

The dry times of 2012 have killed large portions of the corn crop, spiking prices, even while the mandate calls on ethanol producers to make more of their product. Meanwhile, farmers who have herds of cows to feed are draining their wallets to pay for higher-priced corn.

You’d think Republicans who constantly whine about government mandates would be chomping at the bit to get rid of this whacky incentive.

You would be wrong. GOP members of Congress — just like President Barack Obama and too many other Democrats — continue to kowtow to the farm vote, as fiscally illogical as that is.

Congress did allow one costly tax credit for the ethanol industry expire late last year. That’s progress.

Obama should use the opportunity to waive the ethanol blending quota for this year. And Congress in 2013 should get rid of it for good.

THE VIEWS PAGE

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TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, Aug. 23, the 236th day of 2012. There are 130 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Aug. 23, 1912, actor, dancer, director and choreographer Gene Kelly was born Eugene Curran Kelly in Pittsburgh.

On this date: In 1305, Scottish rebel leader Sir William Wallace was executed by the English for treason.

In 1775, Britain’s King George III proclaimed the American colonies to be in a state of “open and avowed rebellion.”

In 1858, “Ten Nights in a Bar-room,” a play by Timothy Shay Arthur about the perils of alcohol, opened in New York.

In 1914, Japan declared war against Germany in World War I.

In 1926, silent film star Rudolph Valentino died in New York at age 31.

In 1927, amid protests, Italian-born anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed in Boston for the murders of two men during a 1920 robbery.

In 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to a non-aggression treaty, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in Moscow.

In 1944, Romanian prime minister Ion Antonescu was dismissed by King Michael, paving the way for Romania to abandon the Axis in favor of the Allies.

In 1962, John Lennon married his first wife, Cynthia Powell, in Liverpool, England. (The marriage lasted until 1968.)

In 1972, the Republican National Convention, meeting in Miami Beach, nominated Vice President Spiro T. Agnew for a second term.

In 1973, a bank robbery-turned-hostage-taking began in Stockholm, Sweden; the four hostages ended up empathizing with their captors, a psychological condition now referred to as “Stockholm Syndrome.”

In 1982, Lebanon’s parliament elected Christian militia leader Bashir Gemayel president. (However, Gemayel was assassinated some three weeks later.)

Ten years ago: North Korean leader Kim Jong Il made his second visit to Russia in a year, meeting with President Vladimir Putin outside Vladivostok. New York publicist Lizzie Grubman pleaded guilty in a hit-and-run crash that injured 16

people outside a Hamptons nightclub. (Grubman ended up serving 37 days of a 60-day sentence at the Suffolk County, N.Y., jail, with time off for good behavior.)

Five years ago: A report by top U.S. spy analysts concluded the Iraqi government was strained by rampant violence, deep sectarian differences among its political parties and stymied leadership. Reality TV star Nicole Richie spent 82 minutes in a Los Angeles County jail to complete a four-day sentence for driving under the influence of drugs.

One year ago: A pair of judges in New York put an end to the sensational sexual assault case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn, setting him free after prosecutors questioned the credibility of the hotel housekeeper who’d accused the French diplomat. A magnitude 5.8 earthquake centered near Mineral, Va., the strongest on the East Coast since 1944, caused cracks in the Washington Monument and damaged Washington National Cathedral.

Today’s Birthdays: Actress Vera Miles is 82. Political satirist Mark Russell is 80. Actress Barbara Eden is 78. Pro Football Hall of Famer Sonny Jurgensen is 78. Actor Richard Sanders is 72. Ballet dancer Patricia McBride is 70. Former Surgeon General Antonia Novello is 68. Pro Football Hall of Famer Rayfield Wright is 67. Country singer Rex Allen Jr. is 65. Singer Linda Thompson is 65. Actress Shelley Long is 63. Actor-singer Rick Springfield is 63. Country singer-musician Woody Paul (Riders in the Sky) is 63. Queen Noor of Jordan is 61. Actor-producer Mark Hudson is 61. MLB All-Star pitcher Mike Boddicker is 55. Rock musician Dean DeLeo (Army of Anyone; Stone Temple Pilots) is 51. Tejano singer Emilio Navaira is 50. Country musician Ira Dean (Trick Pony) is 43. Actor Jay Mohr is 42. Actor Ray Park is 38. Actor Scott Caan is 36. Country singer Shelly Fairchild is 35. Figure skater Nicole Bobek is 35. Rock singer Julian Casablancas (The Strokes) is 34. NBA player Kobe Bryant is 34. Actress Joanne Froggatt is 32. Actress Annie Ilonczeh is 29. Dance musician Sky Blu is 26. Actress Kimberly Matula is 24. NBA player Jeremy Lin is 24.

Thought for Today: “A wise man without a book is like a workman with no tools.” — Moroccan proverb.

FROM THE BIBLE

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Snap Judgment?

Tom Welter, Carmel, Ind.

Robert Reich’s article (*Press & Dakotan*, Aug. 15) was extremely quick to condemn Paul Ryan on his views for America.

I realize that some Americans believe in a disproportionate tax system, big government and redistribution of wealth. I also know that a majority of Americans believe in free enterprise, capitalism, paying your share and earning what you consume.

Reich would have you believe that Ryan and Romney are villains and are a threat to the American way of life, while his party borrows 40 cents for every dollar spent in government today. Pelosi, Reid and Obama had two years of unbridled power controlling the House, Senate and executive branch. The country is in despair. Those looking for work have quit looking after their 90 weeks of benefits have run out and the normalized rate of unemployment is over 10 percent.

Reich and the Democrats try to scare Americans by telling them that

food stamps are not going to be available, Medicare will be gone and that the rich are going to get richer. We all know Medicare **MUST** be overhauled. We all know Social Security needs privatization in order to survive. American business needs to have regulation removed in order to prosper and create jobs.

Safety nets are necessary for those in society who cannot help themselves. Those who cannot provide for themselves, through no fault of their own, should be shown mercy. Thessalonians tells us if a man is unwilling to work, he shall not eat.

Rather than villainize Ryan, look at what he is trying to accomplish. If you think we can remain on the current path of tax and spend while running up huge deficits and double digit unemployment, you should vote for Obama and Biden. They are not solely at fault for our economic woes, but their administration has not improved our economic situation and in fact, has made it dramatically worse. If you want change, you need to enter the discourse and do something about it.

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