



Mitt The Cyborg

BY KATHLEEN PARKER
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WASHINGTON — What's a day without a leaked video, a scandal, an unintended sliver of truth?
OMG: Mitt Romney doesn't care about the votes of the 47 percent of Americans who don't pay federal income taxes and therefore don't care much about his message of lower taxes.



Kathleen PARKER

Who. Knew?
Oh the umbrage, the unforced errors. How can we hand over the presidency to a man who cares so little about those who have no intention of voting for him?
Romney should know better. It's not as though there was no precedent for this sort of thing. Four years ago, Barack Obama spoke candidly at a similar "private" fundraiser in San Francisco, saying that small-town Pennsylvania voters expressed their economic frustrations by clinging "to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them."

A person running for president should keep his thinking cap more tightly affixed even when among his own kind, millionaires in Romney's case. And he should make sure his facts are right. Although true that nearly 47 percent don't pay income taxes, most do pay payroll taxes, as many have pointed out. Moreover, of the 18.1 percent of households that pay neither income nor payroll taxes, most are elderly or earn less than \$20,000, according to the Tax Policy Center.
But it is also true that tax issues are of greater significance to those who see large chunks of income disappear from their checks each pay period. It's easy to decide how much others should pay for your support when it's not your money.
Still, Romney's comments sounded callous and merciless, and will haunt him through the election. They also revealed something we hadn't previously seen. Unguarded, Romney is no compassionate conservative. At his core, he is ... a cyborg.
The human part of him may hop out of bed in the middle of the night to comfort someone in distress. Such stories abound. But the mechanical Romney on display in the video is strictly pragmatic. Problem: How to win presidential election. Solution: Focus on economy and ignore those who don't pay any taxes.
But alas, humans, not machines, vote and win elections. For good or ill, voters want their president to be caring if not paternal. Smart politicians return in kind: They

hug strangers and pose for pictures; they kiss babies; the pros shed tears. In the absence of active tear ducts, the successful candidate has a sympathetic biography.
Romney is not that person. Dry-eyed and awkward, he was born lucky and seems to lack the empathy born of struggle.

It is factually true that those who receive government largesse are not wildly interested in a candidate who promises to cut entitlements, especially when he also wants to cut taxes for the rich. As Romney said, the entitled ones will never vote for him so "my job is not to worry about those people."

Well, no, actually, this would not be his job as president, which, as everyone knows is also not what he meant. What he meant was he doesn't plan to focus resources on voters who will never embrace his message.

What was clearly wrong — and perhaps telling — is the notion that all those Americans are on the dole, willingly or that they consider themselves "victims," as Romney put it. Most of those people undoubtedly would love to have high-enough paying jobs to gripe about high taxes. Many would love to have jobs, period.

If only Cyborg Mitt had said it this way:
"I know that the 47 percent of Americans who don't pay any federal income tax are not going to be moved by my message of lower taxes. Heck, they need jobs and income before they can enjoy the problem of a high tax rate. Since I can't get their vote, I'm focusing on independents. But when I become president, my first priority will be to help all Americans get back to work so that everyone can contribute. I believe that most people would rather earn their own keep, care for their families, and enjoy the rewards of self-sufficiency."
Wouldn't even gazillionaires enjoy this bit of ideological largesse?

Based on my understanding of the man, this is likely what Human Romney believes and wishes he had said, but Machine Romney sees only numbers and problem-solving calculations. The immediate problem is how to win an election.

The issue going forth isn't whether voters' feelings are hurt. The question is whether the cyborg can see that the problems he's solving actually involve people.

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How Green Was This Valley?

BY KELLY HERTZ
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Fall officially arrives at 10:39 a.m. Saturday, and with this equinox, the land that has prematurely withered, giving it a cozy autumnal tone, now has nature's permission to continue the process as it should, not as the drought and the broiling heat have demanded.

I see at least one benefit of all this. (Actually, after this summer from hell, I can think of dozens, but one is particularly applicable for my purposes here.)
Now, when I wander around the James River valley, I'll see more trees losing their leaves and eventually look barren and lifeless. It's the natural fading away of the summer green. But in so doing, these turning trees will take my attention away from the shocking crop of dead trees that have taken hold of the river valley.



Kelly HERTZ

There are times when I look along the river in the northern part of Yankton County and my heart breaks. Great swaths of dead trees, their defoliated branches reaching like skeletal fingers up to the skies, stand where life once flourished. What used to be a curtain of lush green across the valley is now marred by blotches of brown, by the stain of lifelessness.
Ironically, what we are seeing in this summer of harsh drought are the consequences of years of flooding that have inundated the Jim River valley. Last year was the worst of it, with much of the valley covered with water almost all summer. The terrible toll is now clear.
The James River has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. My family owns farmland along the river, and part of the experience of going to "the farm," as we always knew it, was embracing the river that borders the land. And the river meant there were trees, lots of them, that created jungles for our imagination. And they tell stories. For instance, at one particular spot that some of us haunt, there is a curiously straight line of tall maple trees. That line indicates where floodwaters from

three decades ago reached, depositing the maples there as a sort of yardstick.
But this year, after so much flooding, we're witnessing a different valley, as the naked limbs of dead trees mar the bottomland. When you imagine just what is alive and how much is dead, it's sobering.
This is what many years of flooding have done. Once upon a time, that river barely ever flooded at all. Now, it does all the time; it even came out briefly this past spring before the drought asserted itself. For whatever reason, the river has changed. The waters run higher, although they still run slowly, and they do this even though the river bank is so much wider now — stretched out of shape by annual floods. So it's really not the same river, not even remotely, that I've known since I was a kid.
It's depressing to contemplate because we have a fixed vision of what the river looks like — a dirty stream hugged by lines of trees — and we will probably never see that again in our lifetimes. The lushness will take too long to return — that is, if the floodwaters even allow it.

Of course, the more pressing question may be, what on earth is going to happen to all those dead trees? Some will get cut down for firewood, especially the ash trees, but others will be left to rot. And collapse. And probably get swept into the river when the floodwaters return. This is going to be a big problem, and you're probably going to be hearing a lot about it for years to come. In a way, it will create a new kind of river clogged with brush piles and other debris. The Jim will become a river of headaches.
For now, however, we can only face the fact that the damage is done, the dead brown is here to stay and the river valley that I've always known is changed. In a way, it's like a permanent sort of autumn settling in, with spring too far in the distance to even reasonably contemplate.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly\_hertz

YOUR LETTERS

A Familiar Echo?

Robert F. Lyons, Kennebunkport, Maine
In "Demographic Doom for the GOP" (Press & Dakotan, Sept. 19) Robert Reich asks the question: "How can this be... the Romney-Ryan ticket is falling further and further behind?"

Surely, a primary reason that the Romney-Ryan ticket is failing is the latest display of presidential candidate Mitt Romney's disdain for the 47 percent of American citizens who "are dependent upon government ... for food, housing, you-name-it." This sounds remarkably similar to the words and policy of Charles Trevelyan, British Relief administrator, who during the Irish Famine of the 1840s warned of the need to eliminate "the canker of state dependency" manifest in the tendency of all Irish classes to "make a poor mouth."

Romney's economic theory is based on the same laissez-faire principles of economics that guided Trevelyan to claim that aiding the starving and homeless Irish brought "the risk of paralyzing all private enterprise." The British government closed the soup kitchens and food depots in Ireland in the belief that the free market would reduce the people's dependence on the government while at the same time maintaining the rights of private enterprise.

We know too well the consequences of the class warfare between the haves and the have-nots from that painful chapter of history. I am a descendant of one of the millions of families who were forced to flee Ireland where the policy of the free trade warriors, by emigration and death, successfully removed millions from "the canker of state dependency."

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OPINION | WE SAY

Business Day



THUMBS UP to the multi-faceted manufacturing activity in Yankton this week that drew a day-long visit from Gov. Dennis Daugaard. On Thursday, the governor made public appearances at three separate events. The first was for the annual Health and Safety Day at the Sapa Extrusions' facility. The second appearance was at the ribbon-cutting for a 110,000-square-foot expansion at Baldwin Filters that is expected to create 60-70 new jobs during the next four years. Finally, Daugaard spoke at Kolberg-Pioneer, Inc., at a rally to bring attention to America's deteriorating infrastructure and to encourage passage of a new federal highway bill. These events spotlighted the good work occurring at these companies, their importance to Yankton and their impacts far beyond this community.

Road Worries



THUMBS DOWN to the hand deal to the Yankton County Commission in regard to the continued problems with some off-road vehicle operators along Deer Boulevard west of Yankton. There have been numerous complaints about reckless off-road vehicle drivers along that busy stretch, and the commissioners have weighed the issue carefully, in the process putting out the word that continued bad driving would force sterner action. This week, the commissioners agreed they had little choice but to proceed with an ordinance due to the problems. Even the head of a local ATV group admitted the situation needed resolution. If those operators causing the problems had taken the hint and cleaned up their act, this might have been avoided. But such was not the case, and the county has been forced to head down another, stricter road.

Living Here



THUMBS UP to Yankton being named No. 7 on Livability.com's 2012 list of the top 10 small towns to live. According to the website, the authors looked for places of less than 25,000 residents that offer a relaxed lifestyle with beautiful scenery, cultural amenities, great restaurants and lots of outdoor activities. Yankton was the only South Dakota community to make this list. Papillion, Neb., earned the No. 1 spot. According to Livability.com, "What drew our attention to Yankton, S.D., were three lows every city wants to have — a low crime rate, which is less than half the national average, low unemployment and low cost of living. What kept our attention was the large amount of things to do and the diverse economy." Hey, that's a pretty good beginner's list of reasons to love our community. We hope the ranking brings some new visitors to our tourism-friendly area.

Inaction And Out Of Town



THUMBS DOWN to Congress for preparing to close shop until after the election without a new farm bill in place. Of course, it's not the only piece of unfinished business in the beltway, but it does bring home to people here how dysfunctional this Congress has been in accomplishing anything. With Congress punting, the farm bill expires Sept. 30 with no roadmap for the future in sight. Hard-line ideological differences are taking a painful toll on this nation, and the farm bill is just one of too many examples. With so much undone, Congress is "leaving town in disgrace," said Sen. John McCain. The country wearily agrees.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

Table with 2 columns: Question and Results. Includes 'Are you satisfied with your choices for president?' and 'Do support allowing abortions in cases of rape?'

TODAY IN HISTORY

- By The Associated Press
Today is Friday, Sept. 21, the 265th day of 2012. There are 101 days left in the year.
Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 21, 1912, magician Harry Houdini first publicly performed his so-called "Chinese Water Torture Cell" trick at the Circus Busch in Berlin, escaping after being immersed upside-down in a vertical water tank, his ankles secured in a set of stocks which made up the tank lid, which was locked into place.
On this date: In 1792, the French National Convention voted to abolish the monarchy.
In 1893, one of America's first horseless carriages was taken for a short test drive in Springfield, Mass., by Frank Duryea, who had designed the vehicle with his brother, Charles.
In 1897, the New York Sun ran its famous editorial, written anonymously by Francis P. Church, which declared, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."
In 1912, legendary cartoon animator Chuck Jones was born in Spokane, Wash.
In 1937, "The Hobbit," by J.R.R. Tolkien, was first published by George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. of London.
In 1938, a hurricane struck parts of New York and New England, causing widespread damage and claiming some 700 lives.
In 1948, Milton Berle made his debut as permanent host of "The Texaco Star Theater" on NBC-TV.
In 1962, "The Jack Paar Program," a weekly, prime-time show that followed Paar's stint on "The Tonight Show," began a three-year run.
In 1970, "NFL Monday Night Football" made its debut on ABC-TV as the Cleveland Browns defeated the visiting New York Jets, 31-21.
In 1982, Amin Gemayel, brother of Lebanon's assassinated president-elect, Bashir Gemayel, was himself elected president. National Football League players began a 57-day strike, their first regular-season walk-out ever.
In 1987, NFL players called a strike, mainly over the issue of free agency. (The 24-day walkout prompted football owners to hire replacement players.)
In 1989, Hurricane Hugo crashed into Charleston, S.C. (the storm was blamed for 26 directly-caused U.S. deaths). Twenty-one students in Alton, Texas, died when their school bus, involved in a collision with a soft-drink delivery truck, careened into a water-filled pit.
Ten years ago: A defiant Iraq said it would not abide by a U.N. resolution imposing new conditions in the weapons inspections issue or threatening war. Israel planted its flag in Yasser Arafat's West Bank compound and threatened to blow up his offices in an effort to make the Palestinian leader surrender militants or leave into exile. Angelo Buono Jr., whose gruesome killing of young Los Angeles women in the 1970s earned him the nickname "Hillside Strangler," died in a California prison; he was 67. Miss Illinois Erika Harold was crowned Miss America at the pageant in Atlantic City, N.J.
Five years ago: One student was mortally wounded, another injured, at Delaware State University. (A suspected gunman was indicted for second-degree murder, but the case was dismissed by a judge because prosecutors withheld evidence.) The Rev. Rex Humbard, whose televangelism ministry once spanned the globe, died in Atlantis, Fla., at age 88. Tony Award-winning actress Alice Ghostley died in Los Angeles at age 83.
One year ago: Josh Fattal and Shane Bauer, two Americans jailed in Iran as spies, left Tehran for the Gulf state of Oman, closing a high-profile drama that brought more than two years of hope and heartbreak for their families. The state of Texas executed Lawrence Russell Brewer for his role in the gruesome dragging death of James Byrd Jr. The state of Georgia executed Troy Davis, who used his last words to declare his innocence in the killing of police officer Mark MacPhail. Alternative rock group R.E.M. announced on its website that it had "decided to call it a day as a band."
Today's Birthdays: Actor Larry Hagman is 81. Poet-songwriter Leonard Cohen is 78. Author-comedian Fannie Flagg is 71. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer is 69. Musician Don Felder is 65. Author Stephen King is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Artis Gilmore is 63. Actor-comedian Bill Murray is 62. Hall of Fame jockey Eddie Delahoussaye is 61. Rock musician Philly Animal is 58. Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is 55. Movie producer-writer Ethan Coen is 55. Actor-comedian Dave Coulier is 53. Actor David James Elliott is 52. Actress Serena Scott-Thomas is 51. Actress Nancy Travis is 51. Actor Rob Morrow is 50. Retired MLB All-Star Cecil Fielder is 49. Actress Cheryl Hines is 47. Country singer Faith Hill is 45. Rock musician Tyler Stewart (Bareback Ladies) is 45. Country singer Ronna Reeves is 44. Actress-talk show host Ricki Lake is 44. Rapper Dave (De La Soul) is 44. Actor Rob Benedict is 42. Actor James Lesure is 41. Actor Alfonso Ribeiro is 41. Actor Luke Wilson is 41. Actor Paulo Costanzo is 34. Actress Autumn Reeser is 32. TV personality Nicole Richie is 31. Actress Maggie Grace is 29. Actor Joseph Mazzello is 29. Rapper Wales is 28. Actors Nikolas and Lorenzo Brino are 14.
Thought for Today: "The crisis of yesterday is the joke of tomorrow." — H.G. Wells, English author (born this day in 1866, died 1946).

FROM THE BIBLE

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. John 5:24. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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