

FEATHER RIVER DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Monthly Newsletter

September, 2016



General Meeting

Third Thursday of each month, 7-8 PM
Yuba City High School, Room 322,
850 B Street, Yuba City, CA

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Club Officers

Chair: Janet Brown
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Treasurer: Linda Hicks
Secretary: Joene Tranter
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August/September Meetings

E-Board Meeting: September 7
General Meeting: September 15
E-Board Meeting: October 12
General Meeting: October 20

Special Events

Presidential Debate: September 26, 6pm PDT
Vice-Presidential Debate: October 4, 6pm PDT
Presidential Debate: October 9, 6pm PDT

Newsletter Editor

Joene Tranter

Presidential Debate Moderators Are Set John Koblin, *The New York Times*, September 3, 2016

Lester Holt, Martha Raddatz, Anderson Cooper and Chris Wallace were selected Friday to moderate this year's presidential debates, providing a diverse and noncontroversial group of anchors for a role that has often been a lightning rod for partisan criticism. Mr. Holt, the anchor of "NBC Nightly News," will moderate the first debate on Sept. 26; Ms. Raddatz of ABC and Mr. Cooper of CNN will moderate the town hall debate on Oct. 9; and Mr. Wallace of Fox News will handle the final debate on Oct. 19. All are first-time presidential debate moderators. Elaine Quijano, a CBS News correspondent, will moderate the vice-presidential debate on Oct. 4.

The selections, announced by the Commission on Presidential Debates, also make for a considerably more diverse slate than in previous election cycles, with an African-American (Mr. Holt), two women, including a Filipino-American (Ms. Quijano), and an openly gay man (Mr. Cooper).

Competing interests and political agendas on all sides made the decision of selecting moderators difficult. Hillary Clinton, whose campaign objected to the involvement of anyone from Fox News, needs to avoid having the debate turn into a televised catharsis for doubts about her honesty and likability. Her opponent, Donald J. Trump, has an interest in maintaining his adversarial relationship with the media, which he uses as fodder for his arguments that the entire political system is conspiring to defeat him. And the debate commission, which found its relevance at risk after efforts by Republicans to undermine its credibility as an independent player in the process, needed to demonstrate that it was not biased or susceptible to pressure from either campaign.

For the candidates, the debates may be the best remaining opportunity for both candidates to reshape the 2016 race — and for Mr. Trump, who is trailing in the polls, to gain ground against Mrs. Clinton. Debates have allowed challengers and relative political newcomers to reach out to reluctant voters, providing reassurance about their qualifications. Barack Obama and Bill Clinton helped put to rest questions about their preparedness for the presidency in confident debate exchanges. George W. Bush defied the caricature of himself as a lightweight by holding his own against Al Gore.

The first presidential debate this fall will be held at Hofstra University on Long Island, the second in St. Louis and the final one in Las Vegas. The vice-presidential debate will be held at Longwood University in Farmville, Va.

The Far Right's Obsession with Hillary's Health
Margaret Talbot, *The New Yorker*, August 26, 2016

Politics is one of the few careers whose successful practitioners almost never pay a penalty for aging. A quarter of the U.S. senators serving currently are seventy or older. Among the Senate's twenty women, twelve are sixty or above. Ronald Reagan's folksy paternalism was part of his appeal. White-haired, seventy-four-year-old Bernie Sanders was practically a teen idol this election cycle. And the general election will pit a sixty-eight-year-old (Clinton) against a seventy-year-old (Trump). Politicians might skew old, but by self-selection they tend to be people with a lot of stamina; they also tend to be affluent and have access to high-quality health care, so, for the most part, they trundle along pretty nicely. All of which means that if you want to make a politician's age and possible accompanying health deficits an issue, you really have to work at it. You may have to gin something up entirely, relying on certain corners of the Internet least encumbered by facts.

That's what's been happening lately in the tabloid-y realm of Hillary health conspiracies, and in the insidious rhetoric from the Trump camp that echoes it. For several weeks now, Fox News and a slew of conservative bloggers have been excitedly floating the theory that Clinton is one sick lady. A video making the rounds shows her, at a public appearance in D.C. in June, exaggeratedly recoiling and making a face in response to a question from a reporter in the scrum. Sean Hannity, among others, has been airing the theory that what the video actually shows is Clinton having a seizure, which somehow went unnoticed by any of the people standing around her at the time. Setting aside the unexamined implication that a person with a seizure disorder would be unfit to hold office, there is no evidence that Clinton has such a disorder. (Lisa Lerer, the AP reporter who asked the question, and whose expression the health-conspiracy theorists have characterized as "scared," says she was no such thing.)

A photo of Clinton in which she looks as if she's being helped up a flight of stairs after slipping generated the theory that she's not physically strong enough to be President. (The many photos and videos of Clinton walking comfortably up and down stairs are presumably all doctored?) Other conservative bloggers have been sure that the square-shaped object visible under her jacket in another photo, taken in February, was a wearable defibrillator. (As many people have pointed out, it was most likely a transmitter pack from a wireless microphone; the same object was not visible in other photos taken on the same occasion, whereas a defibrillator obviously would be.) Not content with mere speculation, some enterprising sort released, via Twitter earlier this month, a set of fake medical documents allegedly from Clinton's doctor, Lisa Bardack, diagnosing the Presidential candidate with dementia. Snopes.com quickly determined that they were forgeries, and Bardack disavowed them.

Trump, of course, is an old hand when it comes to unfounded insinuation, so he's taken up the health conspiracy with nearly as much zeal as he brought to birtherism. In early August he gave speeches two days in a row in which he said that Clinton lacked the "physical and mental strength and stamina" to fight Islamic terrorism. He's taken to tweeting about how much she supposedly needs to nap. (If she does nap—as opposed to, say, nodding off—that's a good thing, strategic napping being a healthy habit.) Even more irresponsibly, his campaign spokesperson, Katrina Pierson, in an interview on MSNBC last week, referred to Clinton's "dysphasia"—the partial or total inability to communicate verbally because of a brain injury. Maybe if Clinton were a younger woman, they could resort to the timeworn slur against female politicians that their hormonal cycles will surely lead them astray. (Trump could resurrect his line about blood coming from her "wherever.") But, since that's out, they're left with making stuff up about how doddering and inarticulate Clinton is.

Last year, Bardack, who is an internist, released an actual letter that described Clinton as "a healthy 67-year-old female" who was "in excellent physical condition and fit to serve as President of the United States."

Trump's doctor, Harold Bornstein, a gastroenterologist, has attested to his patient's good health as well, albeit in the sort of language that suggested why Trump might have picked him: "Mr. Trump, I can state unequivocally, will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency." (Unequivocally, really? Mightn't Barack Obama, he of the abstemious, almond-eating habits, give him a run for his money?) Trump's results were not just excellent but "astonishingly excellent."

Still, I'm willing to accept both Trump and Clinton's basically clean bills of health; I don't expect either to be a perfect physical specimen. In 2012, Clinton suffered a concussion after a fall—she'd apparently contracted a stomach virus, become dehydrated, and fainted. An examination at the time revealed a blood clot between her skull and brain that had to be removed, and for which she now takes blood thinners. (That chain of events triggered the first rumormongering about her unfitness.) Bardack's report also mentions hypothyroidism, which is easily treatable, and seasonal pollen allergies. For his part, Trump has the kind of choleric temperament and penchant for fast food that doesn't always do wonders for your long-term health, however bullish his doctor sounded. But running for President is its own physical test. Make it through that Olympiad of unrelenting stress and judgment, germ-laden crowds, constant travel, and dubious dining and you are probably in reasonable shape. Besides, some of our finest Presidents were elected while suffering from serious illnesses voters knew nothing about—F.D.R.'s polio, J.F.K.'s long list of ailments—and those health conditions were not, as it happened, what killed them.

The ethicists Art Caplan and Jonathan Moreno argued in an op-ed recently that Presidential candidates should undergo examinations by an independent panel of doctors, not just their own, because "even competent physicians' judgments and recommendations can vary, especially when they know what the stakes are for their wannabe-president patients." But I'm not sure how well that would work, or how necessary it is. The people who are convinced, for example, that Hillary Clinton is disabled and deviously hiding it won't be persuaded by blue-ribbon panels from the National Institutes of Health or Walter Reed. And the rest of us will select our Presidents based on their politics and values, not their cholesterol levels.

**Donald Trump's Extended Health Assessment, the Ten-Minute Version
Broti Gupta, *Daily Shouts – The New Yorker*, August 29, 2016**

Donald Trump's personal physician said he wrote a letter declaring Trump would be the healthiest president in history in just five minutes while a limo sent by the candidate waited outside his Manhattan office. Dr. Harold Bornstein, who has been the GOP nominee's doctor for 35 years, told NBC News on Friday that he stands by his glowing assessment of the 70-year-old's physical state.—NBC

To Whom It May Concern:

In the past thirty-six years, Mr. Trump not only has had zero medical problems but has even become my doctor from time to time. That is how much I trust his life style and his body's conditions. His most recent medical examination showed only positive results (or should I say "negative results"—ha! ha!) for every disease known to man. His blood pressure, 120/80, is so ideal that doctors are now calling it "The Donald."

Since 2014, Mr. Trump has been getting healthier and somehow younger in both looks and physique. That's right—I'm talking the same two years that it's taken for Hillary to age two whole years. Every day, Mr. Trump insists on taking his vitamins and minerals even though his body comes naturally packaged with enough of both to keep him going forever.

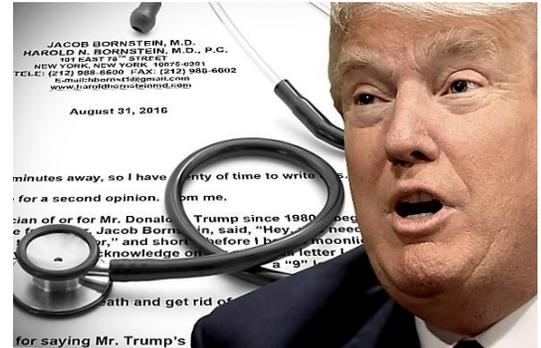
He has also, over the past two years, lost twenty-five pounds of what we in the medical field call "the bad stuff" (junk food and mental weakness). Meanwhile, he has gained forty-five pounds of "the good stuff" (muscle and the opposite of racism). This is an excellent weight for a human to be.

His physical strength and stamina are extraordinary. So much so that he was recently asked to compete in an Olympic track-and-field race, but instead he said, "That's not the race that needs me right now," then took an escalator down Trump Tower to announce his candidacy for President.

Trump has never had any surgery, big or small. He never even had baby teeth, because his body is not one to expel things from it. Each bone in his body is sturdy and cannot be broken, and never in his life has he had alcohol, tobacco, sugar, bread, rice, peanut butter, chocolate, or meat; he eats only the tops of broccoli. His hair is good.

When elected, Mr. Trump will unequivocally be the healthiest, strongest, tallest, youngest, and most handsome man elected to the Presidency. Trust me: it says so in his medical records.

Real Doctor Harold N. Bornstein, "M.D." (Sent from My Limo)



**Donald Trump is the Anti-Labor Candidate
John Nichols, *The Nation*, September 4, 2016**

**LABOR UNIONS:
THE FOLKS WHO BROUGHT YOU THE WEEKEND.
CHILD LABOR LAWS, OVERTIME,
MINIMUM WAGE, INJURY PROTECTION,
WORKMENS COMPENSATION INSURANCE,
PENSION SECURITY, RIGHT TO ORGANIZE . ETC.**

Donald Trump, the billionaire candidate who has argued that "having a low minimum wage is not a bad thing for this country" and complained in a 2015 GOP debate that wages are "too high," is running for president this fall on the most virulently anti-worker and anti-union platform in the history of his Republican Party.

Trump and the anti-labor partisans who nominated him for the presidency have rejected the legacy of a Grand Old Party that once cheered when Abraham Lincoln declared: "Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not

first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."

For more than a century, Republicans made a serious effort to compete with Democrats for the votes of workers. And they did so not just by uttering a few kind words on Labor Day but by supporting and embracing pro-worker and pro-labor policies.

Back in the 1950s, when Republicans such as Dwight Eisenhower actually fought for a robust and fair economy, the party promised to "clarify and strengthen the eight-hour laws for the benefit of workers who are subject to federal wage standards on Federal and Federally-assisted construction, and maintain and continue the vigorous administration of the Federal prevailing minimum wage law for public supply contracts" and to "extend the protection of the Federal minimum wage laws to as many more workers as is possible and practicable." The 1956 Republican platform pledged "to protect more effectively the rights of labor unions" and announced that "The protection of the right of workers to organize into unions and to bargain collectively is the firm and permanent policy of the Eisenhower Administration."

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LABOR – From Page 3

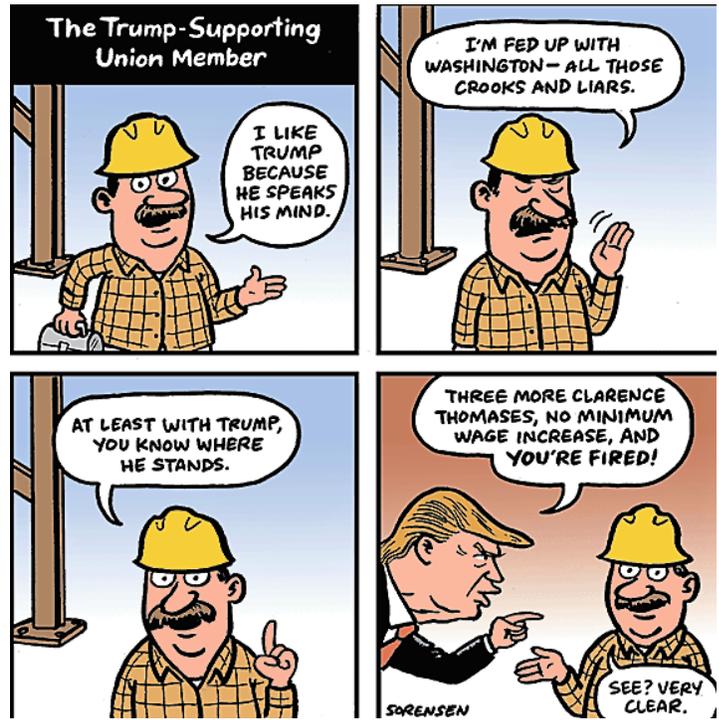
This year's Republican platform is dismissive of the federal minimum wage, declaring (in a stance similar to the one Trump appears to have evolved toward) that decisions about base hourly wages "should be handled at the state and local level." It endorses the anti-union "right-to-work" laws enacted by Republican governors such as Wisconsin's Scott Walker, and calls for taking the anti-union crusade national with a proposal "for a national law" along "right-to-work" lines. The 2016 GOP platform also attacks the use of the Fair Labor Standard Act to protect workers; rips the use of Project Labor Agreements to raise wages and improve working conditions; and proposes to gut the 85-year-old Davis-Bacon Act, which guarantees "prevailing wage" pay for workers on federal projects.

At campaign stops in swing states such as Ohio, Trump tries to portray himself as a champion of workers. Yet he sends conflicting and frequently wrongheaded signals on issues ranging from wages (going so far as to claim that he didn't say wages are "too high"—despite the videos of him griping to a GOP debate audience, "Taxes too high, wages too high, we're not going to be able to compete against the world") to trade policy (while the Republican nominee says he would negotiate better deals, he still does not seem to recognize that it is the "race-to-the-bottom" mentality of free-trade advocates that harms workers and communities). Trump's decision to make fiercely anti-union Indiana Governor Mike Pence his running mate should be read as another signal that the Republican presidential nominee is prepared to steer federal policy making toward the disastrous approaches of dogmatic governors such as Pence and Wisconsin's Walker.

Dwight Eisenhower warned, as a Republican president, about politicians "who hold some foolish dream of spinning the clock back to days when unorganized labor was a huddled, almost helpless mass."

"Only a handful of unreconstructed reactionaries harbor the ugly thought of breaking unions," Eisenhower argued in the prosperous 1950s. "Only a fool would try to deprive working men and women of the right to join the union of their choice."

Unfortunately, this year's Republican Party ticket is composed of a pair of unreconstructed reactionaries—and the Republican Party's platform is a litany of foolish dreams and ugly thoughts regarding the rights of workers and the trade union movement that defend those rights.



Friends,

On this Labor Day, I thank all the workers in the 3rd District and across America who have helped build our great nation. America was founded on the blood, sweat, and tears of our forefathers and foremothers, many of whom never got a proper shot at the American Dream. As a Member of Congress, I know it's my duty to find ways to lift hardworking Americans into the middle class. We're all better off when a decent wage and good benefits are possible for everyone willing to work hard and play by the rules. Whether it's remarking on the New Deal, celebrating the historic movement to end child labor, or appreciating the successful fight that created a 40 hour work week, there is a lot to be thankful for on this Labor Day. Let us use these historic successes as a foundation on our continued fight for fair wages, eliminating income inequality, and protecting the middle class.

On this Labor Day--and every day--I thank the hardworking men and women that make this country so remarkable.

Sincerely, Congressman John Garamendi

SEE WHAT OUR CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATORS THINK ABOUT CURRENT ISSUES
Congressman John Garamendi, California 3rd Congressional District: www.garamendi.house.gov
Senator Barbara Boxer: www.boxer.senate.gov
Senator Dianne Feinstein: www.feinstein.senate.gov

Voting Like a Woman
Connie Schultz, *Creators.com*, August 3, 2016

A popular mantra of political discourse in this presidential season involves lecturing women not to cast our votes as women. There are various versions of this mantra, coming mostly from conservatives and too many Bernie-or-bust folks, designed to prevent us from voting for one of our own just because she's one of our own. My personal favorite is, "Don't vote with your vagina." Believe me when I tell you that no good comes from trying to picture that. Let it go.

The assumption behind this myopic view of a woman's mind is that most women support Hillary Clinton because somewhere inside every American woman resides a 5-foot-5-inch tall white grandmother with blond hair and kitten heels. Or something like that. I really don't want to spend much time wading in the shallow end of their minds.

At least a dozen times a week, I hear this mantra, regardless of the topic. When I objected on social media to Donald Trump's mocking gold star mother Ghazala Khan, for example, the 10th response was, "Oh, yeah? So you're voting for Hillary because she's a woman."

I hear this. All. Day. Long.

So far, explaining that Hillary Clinton is the most qualified candidate to run for president in my lifetime has failed to convince those who apparently have been residing on the planet Dagobah for the past 59 years. I've learned — and my, is this the season for lessons — that defending my support for Hillary can inspire the sort of responses that leave me marveling at the vile stuff some people let crawl across their tongues.

Moving right along.

Earlier this week at a Trump rally, a baby began to cry. I'm inclined to think that infant has the power of prophecy, but let's assume for the moment that she or he was just rattled by the usual chants of racism and misogyny that have become so common at Trump rallies. For a few seconds there, Trump seemed to be almost fatherly — in a healthy way, even. "Don't worry about that baby," he said into the microphone. "I love babies. I hear that baby crying, I like it. I like it. What a baby, what a beautiful baby. Don't worry."

New York Times reporter Nick Corasaniti described what happened next: "But the platitudes did nothing to comfort the infant, whose persistent wails seemed to be getting on the candidate's nerves. "Actually, I was only kidding. You can get that baby out of here," Mr. Trump said a few beats later with a slight smirk as laughs and a few gasps escaped from the crowd. 'Don't worry, I think she really believed me that I love having a baby crying while I'm speaking. That's O.K. People don't understand. That's O.K.'"

Ah. There he is.

After seeing that video clip, I was reminded of a story about Gloria Steinem and crying babies that I'd heard many years ago. A quick search on Google and I found this 2014 account from Karin Lippert, who was Ms. magazine's promotion director from 1972 to 1981: "Sometimes in a college lecture hall there would be thousands and thousands of people ... and sometimes in smaller groups there would be a woman with a crying baby in the back of the room. Gloria would say, 'Would the woman with the crying baby please stay.' And everybody applauded, and everybody got teary-eyed. It was an era when women were always told, 'You can't have your child misbehave' and she would have left the room."

We women have moved on, you see, and one of the things we left behind is men like Donald Trump. When Khan stood silently next to her husband on that stage at the Democratic convention, Trump speculated that she wasn't allowed to speak.

When one woman after another at Fox so-called News said Roger Ailes sexually harassed them, Trump said they should have pursued other careers.

When Megyn Kelly dared to question Trump about all the awful things he's said about women, he later accused her of being on her period.

And you know what? Sometimes it's true that women think alike. Because every time Donald Trump makes such statements about women, millions of us look at him and think the same thing: *Oh, I know you.*

And our collective memory is bad, bad news for candidate Trump.



Trump's Failed Economic Plan Michael Gerson, *The Washington Post*, August 11, 2016

Many Republicans are being driven mad by hope. In the moments between Donald Trump's attacks on grieving parents and his joke about assassination, GOP loyalists are grasping at any straw of competence or sanity to justify their continued support of a Hindenburg-inspired presidential campaign. So Trump's recent speech at the Detroit Economic Club was received by some conservatives with grateful praise as "unifying" and a "good first step." It was, in fact, the least appealing, least creative, least coherent economic address I have ever had the extreme displeasure of reviewing. It is the product of a campaign searching for new ways to fail.

A major policy address is a different kind of test for a presidential campaign than building a crowd or controlling damage after gaffes. It requires a group of policy and political advisers — often holding different views on substance and strategy — to agree with (or at least live with) a text. And it forces a candidate to shape and affirm the best version of their agenda. Many internal policy debates in a campaign get decided in the struggle over the wording of a key paragraph.

The Trump campaign clearly intended the Detroit speech to appease economic conservatives by sounding slightly less like Bernie Sanders. So he supported an end to the death tax (affecting about three-tenths of 1 percent of the public), embraced the House Republican proposal for a simplified tax-rate structure, proposed lowering the corporate tax rate; and promised a moratorium on government regulations. These ideas range from good to irrelevant. But they hardly constitute a new economic agenda. They are more like the least popular leftovers of the Reagan Revolution.

There are at least three major economic and political problems with Trump's economic approach, which should have been obvious even to the non-economists on the campaign.

First, the speech offered little serious or creative policy that might appeal to Trump's most important political audience: working-class voters who feel shafted by economic change. There was almost nothing — just a single sentence promising a future proposal — about helping workers obtain the skills to succeed in a modern economy. Which means that Trump somehow gave a speech on economics that avoided the most urgent economic challenge of our time. There was nothing about increasing wage subsidies that would help less-skilled workers lead better lives — an idea endorsed by President Obama and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.). And Trump's child-care proposal came in the form of a tax deduction, which would mainly benefit upper-income households (the campaign has since scrambled to consider major changes to this plan).

Second, Trump's economic approach would explode government debt (through tax cuts and massive infrastructure spending) while completely ignoring the United States' long-term fiscal crisis. How does Trump respond to the 2016 Medicare Trustees Report projecting that the Medicare Trust Fund will be exhausted by 2024, resulting in massive, immediate benefit cuts? What reforms would Trump undertake of Social Security, which is running a cash deficit of about \$75 billion a year, incurring huge amounts of debt and facing insolvency by 2034? Trump does not even mention these issues. Which means he somehow gave a speech on economics that avoided the most urgent fiscal challenges of our time.

Third, the speech's main appeal to the working class was the promise to abrogate trade agreements, in the most ambitious application of protectionism since Herbert Hoover and the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act. This would amount to a massive, regressive tax on consumer goods from abroad, an increase in the cost of many goods used in the supply chains of American companies, and an invitation to a trade war that could result in a global recession. As economics, this is ludicrous. Conservatives are trying to look on the bright side of a plan that increases government power over the economy in Hugo Chávez-like ways, withdraws the United States from the entire postwar trading order and abandons the foundations of modern capitalism.

To summarize: The parts of Trump's economic plan that are familiar to Republicans are unresponsive to current challenges; the parts that are novel are horrifyingly destructive. Taken together, these proposals are evidence of a campaign that cannot produce a minimally coherent presentation of the candidate's beliefs. The most likely explanation is that the candidate lacks a coherent set of beliefs, and his advisers are left to shape an economic agenda around his favorite applause lines.

This is not a good start at anything. It is one more step in the degradation of the Republican Party.



Identity Politics Run Amok
David Brooks, *The New York Times*, September 2, 2016

Once, I seem to recall, we had philosophical and ideological differences. Once, politics was a debate between liberals and conservatives, between different views of government, different views on values and America's role in the world. But this year, it seems, everything has been stripped down to the bone. Politics is dividing along crude identity lines — along race and class. Are you a native-born white or are you an outsider? Are you one of the people or one of the elites?

Politics is no longer about argument or discussion; it's about trying to put your opponents into the box of the untouchables.

Donald Trump didn't invent this game, but he embodies it. His advisers tried to dress him up on Wednesday afternoon as some sort of mature summiteer. But he just can't be phony. By his evening immigration speech he'd returned to the class and race tropes that have defined his campaign: that the American government is in the grips of a rich oligarchy that distorts everything for its benefit; that the American people are besieged by foreigners, who take their jobs and threaten their lives.

It's not that these two ideas are completely wrong. The rich do have more influence. There are indeed some foreigners who seek to harm us. It is just that Trump (like other race and class warriors) takes these kernels of truth and grows them into a lie.

Trump argues that immigration has sown chaos across middle-class neighborhoods. This is false. Research suggests that the recent surge in immigration has made

America's streets safer. That's because foreign-born men are very unlikely to commit violent crime. According to one study, only 2 or 3 percent of Mexican-, Guatemalan- or Salvadoran-born men without a high school degree end up incarcerated, compared with 11 percent of their American-born counterparts.

Trump argues that the flood of immigrants is taking jobs away from unskilled native workers. But this is mainly false, too. There's an intricate debate among economists about this, but if you survey the whole literature on the subject you find that most research shows immigration has very little effect on native wage or unemployment levels. That's because immigrants flow into different types of unskilled jobs. Unskilled immigrants tend to become maids, cooks and farm workers — jobs that require less English. Unskilled natives tend to become cashiers and drivers. If immigrants are driving down wages, it is mostly those of other immigrants.

Trump claims the rich benefit from immigration while everyone else suffers. Doctors get cheap nannies, everyone else gets the shaft. This is false, too. The fact is, a vast majority of Americans benefit. A study by John McLaren of U.Va. and Gihoon Hong of Indiana University found that each new immigrant produced about 1.2 new jobs, because immigrants are producers and consumers and increase overall economic activity. A report from the Partnership for a New American Economy found that immigrants accounted for 28 percent of all new small businesses in 2011. Between 2006 and 2012, over 40 percent of tech start-ups in Silicon Valley had at least one foreign-born founder.

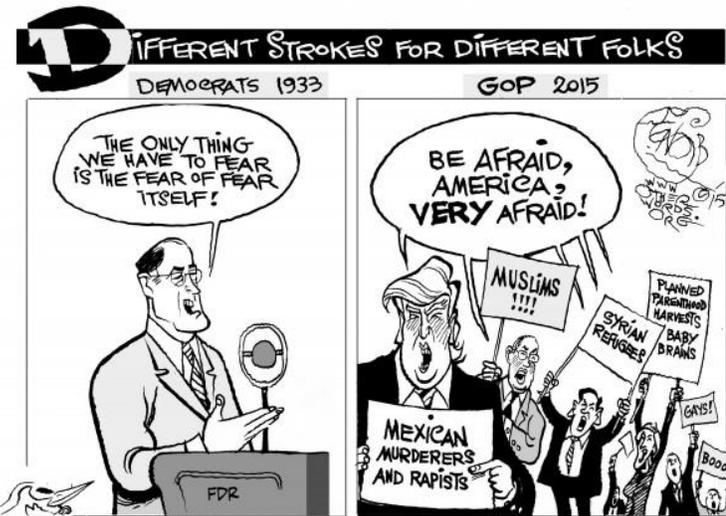
The cities that are doing best economically work hard to attract new immigrants because the benefits are widely shared. As Ted Hesson points out in *The Atlantic*, New York, Chicago, Houston and Los Angeles account for about 20 percent of America's economic output, and in those places, immigrants can make up as much as 44 percent of the total labor supply.

Identity politics distorts politics in two ways. First, it is Manichaean. It cleanly divides the world into opposing forces of light and darkness. You are a worker or an elite. You are American or foreigner. Seeing this way is understandable if you are scared, but it is also a sign of intellectual laziness. The reality is that people can't be reduced to a single story. An issue as complex as immigration can't be reduced to a cartoon. It is simultaneously true that immigration fuels American dynamism and that the mixture of mass unskilled immigration and the high-tech economy threatens to create a permanent underclass.

Second and most important, identity politics is inherently the politics of division. But on most issues — whether it is immigration or the economy or national security — we rise and fall together. Immigration, even a reasonable amount of illegal immigration, helps a vast majority of Americans. An economy that grows at 3 percent would help all Americans.

Identity politics, as practiced by Trump, but also by others on the left and the right, distracts from the reality that we are one nation. It corrodes the sense of solidarity. It breeds suspicion, cynicism and distrust.

Human beings are too complicated to be defined by skin color, income or citizenship status. Those who try to reduce politics to these identities do real violence to national life.



Private Insurance Fails Editorial, *The Progressive Populist*, September 1, 2016

Aetna's decision to pull out of health insurance markets under the Affordable Care Act in all but four states is further evidence that for-profit corporations cannot be trusted to provide health insurance. Hillary Clinton and other Democrats should push to expand Medicare as a public option.



Aetna's withdrawal from the health insurance exchanges forces nearly a million customers in 11 states to find coverage from different insurers in markets where their options are reduced. It followed announcements by two other large insurers — Humana and UnitedHealth — that they would scale back their participation, saying they could not sustain financial losses they were incurring in the ACA's state markets, where 20 million Americans have obtained coverage in the past three years.

The insurance companies claim they aren't making enough money because too many people with serious health problems are using the "Obamacare" exchanges, and not enough healthy people are signing up.

Aetna announced the withdrawal after the Department of Justice decided to block Aetna's proposed \$37-billion merger with Humana. The Justice Department sued on the grounds that merging two of the nation's five largest insurance providers was an antitrust violation that would strangle competition in the marketplace.

In a letter to the Department of Justice dated July 5, Aetna CEO Mark Bertolini made a clear threat: If President Barack Obama's administration refused to allow the merger to proceed, he wrote, Aetna would be in worse financial position and would have to withdraw from most of its Obamacare markets, and quite likely all of them. "[I]t is very likely that we would need to leave the public exchange business entirely and plan for additional business efficiencies should our deal ultimately be blocked," he wrote.

David Dayen noted at NewRepublic.com that Aetna is doing precisely what a monopolist does — using its market power and political influence to achieve a goal that would allow it to acquire more power and influence. "It's heartening that the Justice Department did not base its antitrust decision on Aetna's threat. But it shows how market concentration in the insurance industry was out of control well before Aetna and Humana decided to team up. If Aetna makes that threat and there are 20 other market participants offering insurance on the exchanges, it rings hollow. Only because of the current concentration is that threat credible. And a concentrated industry that serves as a pillar of the president's biggest legacy item may not be a reliable partner."

Wendell Potter noted that even if some of the people enrolled in Aetna's Obamacare exchanges were sicker than they had anticipated, making it necessary for them to pay more in medical claims than they had wanted to pay, "it got significantly more money from taxpayers ... via the government's Medicare and Medicaid programs, which have become cash cows for Aetna and many other insurers." In fact, although Aetna claimed a pretax loss of \$200 million from individual public exchange business in the second quarter, it reported significantly more income in the second quarter of this year than it made during the same period last year — far more than even Wall Street analysts had expected. Aetna's operating earnings increased 8.5%, from \$722.1 million during the second quarter of 2015 to \$783.3 million in the second quarter this year. Total revenues for the quarter also increased handsomely, to just a few bucks shy of \$16 billion, Potter noted.

The Charlotte Observer noted that Aetna enjoyed a record \$6.5 billion in government program premiums in the first quarter. "In other words, doing business with the government isn't so bad after all. In fact, it's gotten especially good since Obamacare came along, thanks largely to the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid in most states ... Medicaid, like Medicare, offers the best of most worlds for insurers — it's single-payer, government-financed insurance, and it has low enrollee costs. So while insurers like to gripe about the individual Obamacare exchanges, they have no issues with the big Medicaid profits that Obamacare helps provide."

Aetna's pullout from Texas will leave seven more counties with only one insurer to offer an individual market plan next year, in addition to 50 counties that had only one insurer last year, the Texas Department of Insurance reported. In Texas, discussion of the issue might be hampered by the extreme division between pro- and anti- Obamacare groups, said Lance Lunsford of the Texas Hospital Association. "Too many policymakers in the state run on an 'anything but Obamacare' platform," he said. "Considering the complexity of health care, that's not a very healthy way to go about thinking about the needs in Texas," where 1.3 million Texans get insurance from the exchange but 18% of adults still lack insurance.

Richard Mayhew writes at Balloon-Juice.com that one of the states Aetna is pulling out of is Pennsylvania, even though, according to the company's rate application memo, submitted to state regulators in June, Aetna made \$13.6 million on the individual market in 2015 and it expected a profit in 2017. "Conditions have not changed enough to make Pennsylvania a money loser in under two months," Mayhew said. But Aetna is pulling out of "nice, profitable, Democratic-leaning Pennsylvania," Kevin Drum noted at MotherJones.com. "It's very peculiar, isn't it?"

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If the pullout of Aetna, Humana and UnitedHealth from the exchanges shows us anything, it is that a “free market” does not work in ensuring equitable health insurance choices without strong government regulation. If insurance companies want a piece of the action in profitable Medicaid and Medicare Advantage programs, the government should require them also to participate in the exchanges. Those companies should be able to show a profit in the long run, as rising penalties drive more healthy people to participate in the marketplaces.

Hillary Clinton has proposed creating a new “government option” for health care coverage to compete with private insurers taking part in the exchanges. Clinton also has proposed a tax credit to help lower-income people afford their insurance deductibles and copayments. And, in an effort to woo supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders, Clinton has proposed lowering the eligibility age for Medicare from 65 to 55. Sanders said he will reintroduce legislation to establish a Medicare-for-all single-payer system in the next session of Congress. “The provision of health care cannot continue to be dependent upon the whims and market projections of large private insurance companies whose only goal is to make as much profit as possible,” Sanders said in a statement.

Republicans have remained steadfast in their opposition to any fixes in President Obama’s signature domestic program — demanding that it be scrapped entirely. That would put Americans who now get their insurance from the exchanges, regardless of pre-existing conditions, back at the mercy of insurance executives who increase their profits by denying health care for their customers.

Whether you think Obamacare can be fixed, or Medicare should be opened up as a public option to compete with private insurance companies, or Medicare should be expanded to cover everybody, the first step is to elect Hillary Clinton as president and Democratic majorities in the House and Senate.

California Farmworker Overtime Expansion Jeremy B. White, *The Sacramento Bee*, August 29, 2016

The California Assembly on Monday sent Gov. Jerry Brown a hard-fought and historic expansion of overtime rules for farmworkers, but it remains uncertain whether the Democratic governor will sign off on the measure. A nearly identical bill fell three votes short of passage on the Assembly floor in May, with 15 Democrats voting against the measure or declining to vote. But on Monday, an amended version of the measure, now contained in Assembly Bill 1066, passed on a 44-32 vote.

Agricultural workers already receive some overtime pay under California law thanks to a 2002 state directive that entitles them to extra wages if they work more than 10 hours in a day or more than 60 hours in a week. AB 1066 would expand that to bring it more in line with other industries, offering time-and-a-half pay for working more than eight hours in a day or 40 in a week and double pay for working more than 12 hours a day. The pay boosts would kick in incrementally over four years, and the governor could suspend them for a year if the economy falters.

Business groups quickly condemned the vote. “We are deeply concerned with the passage of AB 1066 today and the devastating impacts this bill will have on our small, independent farmers and the workers they employ,” said Tom Scott, state executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business. “This mandate does not consider the thousands of agricultural workers who will lose their jobs and the billions of dollars in lost crop production resulting from these new overtime regulations.

Ahead of Monday’s vote, Assembly members heard from both farmworkers who forfeited a day’s pay to visit offices and press for the bill and from farm industry representatives, including minority farm owners, who warned lawmakers the measure would devastate small-scale growers and diminish work for laborers. Supporters invoked fairness, justice and the need to rectify a history rife with labor exploitation “Right now, under current law, we’re telling our farmworkers, ‘You are different than other workers. You are less than other workers. You are less valued and less valuable,’” said Assemblyman Rob Bonta, D-Alameda, whose parents organized Central Valley farmworkers in the movement championed by Cesar Chavez.

They argued the extra compensation for farmworkers would correct historical wrongs, noting that Congress cut out agricultural workers while guaranteeing other workers extra wages via the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act. Farm fields have long allowed exploitation of powerless laborers, they argued, from slavery through the immigrant laborers for whom Chavez fought. “We must ask ourselves to be on the right side of history today,” said Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula, D-Kingsburg, a grandchild of immigrant farm laborers who recounted working as a doctor and treating “farmworkers I was struggling to keep alive because the hours are too long in the brutal sun.”

The United Farm Workers union, Chavez’s most visible political legacy in California, played a central role in the political struggle around AB 1066. The union repeatedly brought farmworkers to the Capitol and collaborated with lawmakers who launched a 24-hour hunger strike to support the measure. Its president, Arturo Rodriguez, who stood next to Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon on Thursday when the speaker promised to push the bill across the finish line, watched on Monday from a balcony overhanging the Assembly chamber. Again and again, supportive lawmakers invoked Chavez.

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Flipping the proponents' argument, critics said the well-intentioned measure would hurt laborers by leading to cuts in their hours and economic hardship for the farms that employ them. Farmworkers are treated differently from other workers, they said, because the nature of their work is different. "It's going to devastate the working families of our farming community," said Assemblyman Devon Mathis, R-Porterville, whose office dubbed the bill "The Farm Worker Poverty Act of 2016." Mathis said that workers "do not want to see their hours cut, and that is what will happen here if this is to pass."

Opponents, including agricultural industry representatives, said supporters of the bill fundamentally misunderstand how farm labor works. They argue that agricultural hours vary far more than in other industries, tied to seasonal cycles rather than state hour mandates. Setting a 60-hour-a-week benchmark for more wages makes far more sense given the long hours of harvest season, they said. "The people in this room that are part of this body that touch agriculture, that have lived it, that have had their hands in the dirt ... they've all told you this is a bad bill," said Assemblyman James Gallagher, R-Plumas Lake. "Things are a little bit different in the farming business," he added, "and if you don't understand it you shouldn't be voting on bills or putting things through you don't fully understand."

The bill voted on Monday differed slightly from the original version, having been amended to allow smaller farms more time to implement the change. In an olive branch to opponents, this version of the bill would give farms with 25 or fewer employees until 2022 start to complying, while larger farms would need to start paying more in 2019.

All 38 Democrats who voted for the bill previously were joined by one Republican, Eric Linder of Corona, and five Democrats who had either opposed the measure in June or not cast a vote. Seven out of eight Sacramento-area members of the Assembly opposed the bill with only Kevin McCarty, a Democrat, supporting it.

Brown has not said how he will act on the measure, and his record on labor and farmworker issues is mixed. He signed the landmark Agricultural Labor Relations Act when he was governor before, from 1975 to 1983, and has frequently mentioned his personal relationship with Cesar Chavez. But Brown has often sided with industry interests since returning to office, at times infuriating farmworker advocates. In 2011, the UFW protested Brown when he vetoed a bill that would have made it easier to unionize farmworkers, though Brown later signed a compromise bill. He disappointed the UFW again when he vetoed legislation that would have made it harder for farmers to stall new farmworker contracts. Brown's predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, vetoed similar overtime legislation in 2010.

Trump Blames Bad Poll Numbers on Existence of Numerical System Andy Borowitz, *The New Yorker*, August 15, 2016

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO (The Borowitz Report)—Donald J. Trump lashed out at a new target on Monday, blaming his bad poll numbers on the existence of the numerical system.

In sometimes rambling remarks at an outdoor rally in Ohio, the Republican Presidential nominee called the numerical system "rigged" and unleashed a torrent of abuse on numbers themselves, calling them "disgusting" and "the lowest form of life."

"It's why I won't release my taxes," he said. "They're full of goddam numbers." While Republican candidates in the past have attempted to exploit their supporters' distrust of math, Trump is believed to be the first nominee to call into question the numerical system itself.

Behind the scenes, G.O.P. insiders fretted that, in attacking the very existence of numbers, Trump was veering wildly off message. "He should be talking about Hillary Clinton, and instead he's going off on integers," one insider said.

Officially, aides remained upbeat about the campaign and denied reports that Trump was spending an increasingly large portion of each day angrily muttering to himself and chewing on paper.

What Trump Supporters May Be Thinking Calvin Trillin, *The Nation*, August 11, 2016

A man who goes ballistic
At trivial rebukes
Is just the sort of person
One wants in charge of nukes.

If you would like to join our club, please call Janet Brown at 530-674-9227 or attend our September 15 meeting. We meet from 7PM – 8PM at Yuba City High School, Room 322, 850 B Street, Yuba City.