

## **GOP GOES ALL IN ON CONTRACEPTION**

Not satisfied with President Obama's new religious accommodation, Republicans will move forward with [legislation](#) by Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) that permits *any* employer to deny birth control coverage in their health insurance plans, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said Sunday.

"If we end up having to try to overcome the President's opposition by legislation, of course I'd be happy to support it, and intend to support it," McConnell said. "We'll be voting on that in the Senate and you can anticipate that that would happen as soon as possible."

The [Blunt amendment](#) he was specifically referring to would "ensure that health care stakeholders retain the right to provide, purchase, or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions" under the Affordable Care Act. Similar legislation was [introduced by Sen. Marco Rubio](#) (R-FL) before the White House announced Friday that it would allow religious nonprofits such as charities, hospitals and universities to opt out of paying for contraception coverage and force the insurance company to do so instead.

White House chief of staff Jack Lew, asked about the Blunt amendment after McConnell's remarks, declined to delve into the issue but predicted that "it's not going to come to pass."

A debate over access to contraception could be politically problematic for Republicans as polls show Americans overwhelmingly support the use of birth control and want insurance plans to cover the service for free. Tellingly, McConnell was eager to keep the focus on religious freedom as opposed to contraception itself.

"The fact that the White House thinks this is about contraception is the whole problem. This is about freedom of religion, it's right there in the First Amendment. You can't miss it — right there in the very first amendment to our Constitution," McConnell said. "What the overall view on the issue of contraception is has nothing to do with an issue about religious freedom."

McConnell went on to embellish the argument, claiming Obama is being

“rigid in his view that he gets to decide what somebody else’s religion is.” He said that “this issue will not go away until the administration simply backs down.”

House GOP leaders also said Friday they will move forward with legislation to repeal the birth control rule in its entirety. Republicans from both chambers are aligning themselves with the Catholic Bishops who say the new policy remains unacceptable.

The push indicates either that Republicans believe there’s still an opportunity to score political points against Obama, or that they’ve simply calculated they cannot back down now. Regardless, the success of the strategy now rests on the gamble that Republicans will be able to continue framing the issue as one over religious liberty and not contraception, despite the new accommodation Obama carved out.

## **Stupid Jesus Freaks**

Posted on **February 12, 2012** by cousinavi

As part of the Health Care Reform Act, President Obama mandated that women will have access to contraception with no co-pay. This has offended Christians (particularly the Catholics), who consider this as meddling in the fundamental tenets of their faith. Catholics, as is well known and lamented by thinking people everywhere, oppose any form of contraception [including condoms in AIDS ravaged Africa](#).

They contend that institutions affiliated with the Catholic church should not be forced to provide contraception through employer based health insurance because they are opposed to it; that forcing them to do so violates their 1st Amendment right to freedom of religion. This is not only bullshit, it’s stupid bullshit.

First, no one is forcing Catholics to use birth control, despite the fact that [a vast majority of Catholic women use it anyway](#). The hypocrisy in preaching for others what Catholics themselves will not practice is appalling but, and of course, what can one expect from Catholics? One does not simply abandon two thousand years of utterly two-faced hypocrisy overnight.

They also argue that they should not be forced by law to pay for it when, as a matter of faith, they oppose the use of contraception. This is another bullshit argument. Health insurance is a job benefit, the same as wages, vacation time and sick days. As such, it belongs to the employee, not the employer.

The Catholic church has no right whatsoever to tell their employees where or how to spend their days off. Imagine if they stopped providing health insurance entirely but commensurately increased the wages of their employees to compensate for that lost benefit. Would they then be entitled to say, "You can now purchase your own insurance but you may not buy a policy that covers contraception"? Of course not...but that is exactly the position they take: "We pay for it, and you cannot make us pay for something we consider immoral!"

No, they don't pay for it. The employees pay for it, the same damn way they pay for their Social Security and unemployment benefits. These fatuous cretins might as well claim that since the salaries come out of their coffers, they have the right to say how that money shall be spent. It takes a certain sort of delusional mindset that can only be supported by the certain knowledge that one is doing god's own work to believe such convoluted horseshit.

They argue that the government has no right to inflict their morality on the Catholic faithful by forcing them to offer contraception in health coverage packages. The irony is apparently lost on them that the 1st Amendment stands for the proposition that they have no right to inflict their religious restrictions on people who do not share their deluded convictions.

Much like the druggist who refuses to provide the morning after pill on religious grounds, this is an offensively backward position. No pharmacist has any right whatsoever to deny legally available medicine to any customer. If doing one's job comes into conflict with one's faith, go get another job. Inflicting one's own bible-based notions of morality on rational people seeking necessary health care services ought to result in the loss of the druggist's license to practice his trade. Consider the Jehovah's Witness: is he permitted to deny blood transfusions to anyone unfortunate enough to find themselves employed in his Watch Tower bookstore?

The logical contradictions go deeper. Catholics oppose abortion – the more fervent of them so even in cases of rape and incest – and yet they are opposed to preventing pregnancy by any means except abstinence ([a strategy that has been demonstrated to be a complete and utter failure](#)).

Permitting faith-based organizations to determine, at their theocratic whim, what form of medical services may be accessed by their employees, gives every god-walloping employer the unfettered right to meddle in the most intimate aspects of the lives of people who may not share their beliefs. And yet they whine about the government "inflicting" upon them secular laws. Jesus Humped Up Christ, how does one avoid taking their lord's name in vain as a starting point?

President Obama, in a move to mitigate the wailing and gnashing of teeth of this

twisted gang of theocratic crackpots, altered the plan. Religious institutions will not now be required to provide health insurance that includes contraception, but in such cases the insurance companies will be required to reach out and offer contraceptive coverage directly to the employee at no additional cost.

The insurance companies are only too happy to do this. Preventing pregnancies is far less expensive than paying for an abortion; far, far less expensive than paying for pregnancy and delivery, and orders of magnitude cheaper than having a minor dependent covered under Mommy's policy.

This, of course, did not mollify the papists, which very much reveals their true intentions and agenda. It is not enough that they are no longer required to "contravene their faith" by providing the same sort of health care everyone (including Catholics!) commonly receives – they don't want anyone, anywhere using contraception.

Period. It is not enough that *Catholics* may not have an abortion, they don't want anyone, anywhere to terminate any pregnancy for any reason. Plainly, they are not about following their faith, they are about inflicting their faith on everyone else, everywhere. The 1st Amendment is a one-way street for those in thrall to Rome.

But the politics of it – the never-ending Republican war on women; their twisted desire to make government small enough to fit in your vagina, while outrageous and certainly related, is a bit off topic. This post is about the Jesus freaks. These deluded assbuckets are not content to privately or quietly kneel before their mythical creator. They will not be content until they can make everyone else kneel, and to that I say, "Get fucked."

If anyone believes the horrid, crushing ratbag of insane, morally repulsive gibberish that constitutes Catholicism, they are absolutely welcome to it. At the moment, the very instant, they demand that anyone else conduct any element of their life in accordance with that hogwash, they shall find themselves not merely opposed but crushed.

There is a legal maxim that says one's right to swing one's arms about ends at the tip of my nose...and so it is with belief and conduct within the secular law: your right to pray ends when you order me to kneel, and your right to eschew birth control goddamn well ends when you tell me I must also abide by the restrictions you set for yourself.

The GOP, for its part, is only too happy to ramp up their fear-based gin mill by calling this an attack on religious faith. President Obama seeks to ensure that all women have access to contraception – the single best way to prevent abortion! – and the Republicans accuse him of undermining the free practice of religion. And

it bears repeating that this is an ugly and hateful lie. No one is being forced to USE birth control.

They are being prevented from inflicting their faith practices on those who do not wish to participate. And this is a common refrain from the bible thumpers. Tell them they cannot force a high school assembly to participate in Christian prayer and they scream bloody murder: "How dare you tell us we cannot pray?" Pray all you want. Pray night and fucking day. Pray in public and pray loudly so everyone can witness your great piety. Tebow on your lunch break. No one is stopping you from praying, but we are saying you have no damn right to inflict your grovelling sky wizard entreaties on the rest of us; you have no right to make us listen, much less make us join in.

You are free to waste your time. You are not free to waste mine. For people who are ruled by fear – fear of god, fear of hell...perhaps most honestly fear of being revealed as the horrid hypocrites they truly are...this "attack" on their faith plays powerfully. And so it is trumpeted from the political podium by such notable followers of Christ as serial adulterer Newt Gingrich, anti-abortionist Rick Santorum who approved a late-term abortion for his wife, and uber-hypocrite Mitt Romney who was pro-choice until the time came to kiss the backside of the evangelicals in his craven grasp for the nomination.

And so, despite the separation of church and state, the overlap of religion and politics continues to simmer deep in the putrescent heart of America, salted and stoked by a cadre of sick and vicious bastards: Palin, Bachmann, Dobson, Robertson, Warren...people who know what god wants are well prepared to force everyone else to comply with their visions.

Where an institution that sanctioned and enabled centuries of child rape finds the nerve to argue any fucking thing from a moral position is beyond me, but there it is. The political and social fabric of the most powerful nation on earth is infected with unthinking hordes of Jesus freaks who take their marching orders from aging virgins and pedophiles in dresses; people who are only too happy to make their silly, edited, rewritten, redacted, poorly translated, inerrant word of god fiction the basis for what everyone else may or may not do. They must be stopped.

### **JUST GIVE IT A PASS**

You know how in Scrabble sometimes you look at your seven letters and you've got only vowels that spell nothing? What do you do? You go back to the pile. You throw your letters back and hope to pick up better ones to work with. That's what Republican primary voters seem to be doing. They just keep going back to the

pile but still coming up with only vowels that spell nothing.

There's a reason for that: Their pile is out of date. The party has let itself become the captive of conflicting ideological bases: anti-abortion advocates, anti-immigration activists, social conservatives worried about the sanctity of marriage, libertarians who want to shrink government, and anti-tax advocates who want to drown government in a bathtub.

Sorry, but you can't address the great challenges America faces today with that incoherent mix of hardened positions. I've argued that maybe we need a third party to break open our political system. But that's a long shot. What we definitely and urgently need is a *second party* — a coherent Republican opposition that is offering constructive conservative proposals on the key issues and is ready for strategic compromises to advance its interests and those of the country.

Without that, the best of the Democrats — who have been willing to compromise — have no partners and the worst have a free pass for their own magical thinking. Since such a transformed Republican Party is highly unlikely, maybe the best thing would be for it to get crushed in this election and forced into a fundamental rethink — something the Democrats had to go through when they lost three in a row between 1980 and 1988. We need a “Different Kind of Republican” the way Bill Clinton gave us a “Different Kind of Democrat.”

Because when I look at America's three greatest challenges today, I don't see the Republican candidates offering realistic answers to any of them.

The first is responding to the challenges and opportunities of an era in which globalization and the information technology revolution have dramatically intensified, creating a hyper-connected world. This is a world in which education, innovation and talent will be rewarded more than ever. This is a world in which there will be no more “developed” and “developing countries,” but only HIEs (high-imagination-enabling countries) and LIEs (low-imagination-enabling countries.)

And this is a world that America is hard-wired to thrive in — provided we invest in better infrastructure, postsecondary education for all, more talented immigrants, regulations that incentivize risk-taking and prevent recklessness, and government-financed research to push out the boundaries of science and let our venture capitalists pluck the best flowers. There is no way we can thrive in this era without this kind of public-private partnership. We need strong government,

but limited government, which enables our companies and individuals to compete globally. It's the kind of public-private partnership that Republicans like Dwight Eisenhower and George H.W. Bush embraced.

The second of our great long-term challenges are our huge debt and entitlement obligations. They can't be fixed without raising and reforming taxes and trimming entitlements and defense. We absolutely cannot just cut entitlements and defense. That would imperil the personal security and national security of every American. We must also reform taxes to raise more revenues.

But when all the Republican candidates last year said they would not accept a deal with Democrats that involved even \$1 in tax increases in return for \$10 in spending cuts, the G.O.P. cut itself off from reality. It became a radical party, not a conservative one. And for the candidates to wrap themselves in a cartoon version of Ronald Reagan — a real conservative who raised taxes, including the gasoline tax, when he discovered his own cuts had gone too far — is fraudulent.

Our third great challenge is how we power our future — without dangerously polluting and warming the earth — as the global population grows from 7 billion to 9 billion people by 2050, and more and more of them want to drive, eat and live like Americans. Two billion more people who want to live like us? We can't drill our way out of that challenge, which is why energy efficiency and clean power will be the next great global industry. Real conservatives — like Richard Nixon, the father of the Environmental Protection Agency, and George H.W. Bush, the author of the first cap-and-trade deal to curb acid rain — believe in conserving. The current Republican candidates are so captured by the oil and coal lobbies that they can't think seriously about this huge opportunity for energy innovation.

Until the G.O.P. stops being radical and returns to being conservative, it won't provide what the country needs most now — competition — competition with Democrats on the issues that will determine whether we thrive in the 21st century. We need to hear *conservative* fiscal policies, energy policies, immigration policies and public-private partnership concepts — not *radical* ones. Would somebody please restore our second party? The country is starved for a grown-up debate.

## **NO MORE LUNCH BREAKS**

New Hampshire's GOP legislature has come up with all manner of absurd bills recently, including a proposal [making public school curriculum optional](#), another to [prevent police from protecting domestic abuse victims](#), and even a measure

mandating that new laws be [based on the Magna Carta](#). Some of the Granite State's GOP lawmakers have even [proposed doing away with](#) the law that requires employers to give their workers time off for lunch, under the rationale that all employers will simply grant lunch breaks out of the goodness of their hearts:

The bill's sponsor, state representative J.R. Hoell, argued that companies failing to provide lunch breaks would be shamed over social media, thus rendering the law unnecessary. "If they are not letting people have lunch, they could put it out though the news media, [though social media](#). I don't think that abusive behavior would continue, the way communications are today," he said

Of course, not every employer can be counted to follow even the easiest of requirements to look after workers' health and rights. Back in 2005, Walmart was forced [to pay \\$172 million](#) for denying workers their lunch breaks. Pyramid Breweries Inc. [settled a case in 2008](#) for \$1.5 million. Just a few months ago, California ordered Embassy Suites to pay workers [tens of thousands of dollars](#) for forcing them to skip breaks.

## **EVERY SPILLED SEED A CRIME**

Despite being rebuffed by voters in Mississippi and Colorado, proponents of the "personhood" movement are still pushing to [enact legislation](#) in states like Ohio and Oklahoma that would give zygotes the same rights as American citizens. These bills would not only criminalize abortion in all circumstances, they would also [outlaw](#) common forms of contraception, as well as in vitro fertilization.

To poke fun at the absurdity of the measure, Oklahoma state Sen. Constance Johnson (D), has tacked on a provision affirming — in the words of a famous Monty Python song — that [every sperm is sacred](#): every seed that's spilled outside the vagina is a crime against life. Her proposal reads:

***Any action in which a man ejaculates or otherwise deposits semen anywhere but in a woman's vagina shall be interpreted and construed as an action against an unborn child.***

Among other things, Johnson's amendment would essentially outlaw oral sex, anal sex, and masturbation. Were it not a satirical bill, it would almost certainly be [deemed unconstitutional](#)

## **iHORROR**

Behind the sleek face of the iPad is an ugly backstory that has revealed once more the horrors of globalization. The buzz about Apple's sordid business practices is courtesy of the *New York Times* series on the ["iEconomy"](#). In some

ways it's well reported but adds little new to what [critics](#) of the Taiwan-based Foxconn, the [world's largest electronics manufacturer](#), have been [saying](#) for [years](#).

The series' biggest impact may be discomfiting Apple fanatics who as they read the articles realize that the iPad they are holding is [assembled from](#) child labor, toxic shop floors, involuntary overtime, suicidal working conditions, and preventable accidents that kill and maim workers.

It turns out the story is much worse. Researchers with the Hong Kong-based Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) say that legions of vocational and university students, some as young as 16, are forced to take months'-long "internships" in Foxconn's mainland China factories assembling Apple products.

The details of the internship program paint a far more disturbing picture than the *Times* does of how Foxconn, "[the Chinese hell factory](#)," treats its workers, relying on public humiliation, military discipline, forced labor and physical abuse as management tools to hold down costs and extract maximum profits for Apple.

To supply enough employees for Foxconn, the 60th largest corporation globally, government officials are serving as lead recruiters at the cost of pushing teenage students into harsh work environments. The scale is astonishing with the Henan provincial government having announced in both 2010 and 2011 that it would send 100,000 vocational and university students to work at Foxconn, according to SACOM.

Students at vocational schools – including those whose studies have nothing to do with consumer electronics – are literally forced to move far from home to work for Foxconn, threatened that otherwise they won't be allowed to graduate.

## ← **From Physiological Science**

Despite their important implications for interpersonal behaviors and relations, cognitive abilities have been largely ignored as explanations of prejudice.

We proposed and tested mediation models in which lower cognitive ability predicts greater prejudice, an effect mediated through the endorsement of right-wing ideologies (social conservatism, right-wing authoritarianism) and low levels of contact with out-groups.

In an analysis of two large-scale, nationally representative United Kingdom data sets we found that lower general intelligence in childhood predicts greater racism

in adulthood, and this effect was largely mediated via conservative ideology.

A secondary analysis of a U.S. data set confirmed a predictive effect of poor abstract-reasoning skills on anti-homosexual prejudice, a relation partially mediated by both authoritarianism and low levels of intergroup contact.

All analyses controlled for education and socioeconomic status. Our results suggest that cognitive abilities play a critical, albeit underappreciated, role in prejudice. Consequently, we recommend a heightened focus on cognitive ability in research on prejudice and a better integration of cognitive ability into prejudice models.

## **POOR LITTLE RICH BOY**

One of Mitt Romney's strongest assets as the GOP presidential front-runner is also a potentially serious liability in the race: his heavy reliance on a small group of millionaires and billionaires for financial support.

A quarter of the money amassed by Romney's campaign and an allied super PAC has come from just 41 people, each of whom has given more than \$100,000, according to a Washington Post analysis of disclosure data. Nearly a dozen of the donors have contributed \$1 million or more.

The preponderance of [mega-rich supporters](#) poses a political challenge for Romney, who has struggled for weeks over questions about his vast wealth, his history as a private equity manager and a series of gaffes that seemed to highlight his privileged station. Some of Romney's [biggest supporters](#) include executives at Bain Capital, his former firm; bankers at Goldman Sachs; and a hedge fund mogul who made billions betting on the housing crash. Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul objected to such criticism and said 84 percent of the campaign's donations in the fourth quarter last year were \$250 or less. Meanwhile, the candidate sought to clarify his [remarks to CNN](#) about the poor, saying they were taken out of context.

The president has acquired nearly half of his campaign war chest from small-money donors, raising more from contributions of \$200 or less than the Romney campaign has brought in overall, disclosure data show. Romney's GOP rivals also have raised a larger proportion of their money from small donors.

Paul Begala, a longtime Democratic strategist who advises a pro-Obama group called [Priorities USA](#), argues that Romney's close connections to the super-rich exacerbate his problems relating to regular voters. Romney has generally fared poorly among lower-income voters in early GOP contests, particularly in his loss to Newt Gingrich in South Carolina on Jan. 21.

Canada: Climate Criminal

Greenpeace Blogpost by **Rex Weyler** - January 4, 2012

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/canada-climate-criminal/blog/38567/>

At the dawn of the 21st century a new political regime has transformed Canada from global hero – once standing up for peace, people, and nature – to global criminal, plunging into war, eroding civil rights, and destroying environments.

What happened to Canada? Oil. And not just any oil, but the world's dirtiest, most destructive oil. Canada's betrayal at the Durban climate talks – abandoning its Kyoto Accord commitments – is the direct effect of becoming a petro-state.

By the late 20th century, oil companies knew that the world's conventional oil fields were in decline and oil production would soon peak, which it did in 2005. These companies, including sovereign oil powers such as PetroChina, turned their attention to low-grade hydrocarbon deposits in shale gas, deep offshore fields, and Canada's Alberta tar sands. Simultaneously, inside Canada, oil companies began promoting the political career of the son of an Alberta oil executive, the conservative ideologue Stephen Harper.

Shell Oil opened operations in the tar sands in 2003. In 2004, the same year Canada signed the Kyoto Accord, committing to reduce carbon emissions, oil companies began to form "think tanks" and astroturf groups in Canada to establish the oil agenda and promote Harper as Conservative Party leader. Two years later, in 2006, Harper's Conservatives formed a minority government with 36% of the popular vote and launched Canada's petro-state era, slashing environmental regulations, joining US Middle East wars, and launching a tar sands campaign, one of the most ecologically destructive industrial projects in human history.

In Durban, in December 2011, after mocking climate science and common

decency, Canada's Environment Minister, Peter Kent announced that Canada would abandon the Kyoto deal, abrogating a legally binding international agreement, which Canada had signed seven years earlier.

The Canadian government has become the policy arm and public relations voice of the international oil industry, discarding its reputation as an ethical country. Millions of Canadians have expressed outrage at the government that abandoned them and shamed Canada on the world stage. These voices are rarely heard in Canada's corporate media. Meanwhile, Canadians witness an erosion of free press and civil rights within their own nation. They should not be surprised.

### **Life as an oil resource colony**

"Oil and democracy do not generally mix," explains Terry Karl in [\*The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States\*](#). Oil is a "resource curse" for local populations, as experienced by Nigeria, Indonesia, Venezuela, Iran, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and other nations. Oil rich nations attract oil industry patrons, who tend to support dictators. Petro-states often lose local economic sovereignty, suffer human rights atrocities, and see their environments devastated.

In the 1970s, the UK and Dutch economies experienced the oil curse as the North Sea oil and gas boom gave the illusion of prosperity while eroding sovereign economic capacity. Britain's petro-state leader Margaret Thatcher used oil revenues to wage war, create banking empires, and subsidize elite society, while plundering the environment and leaving common citizens dispossessed of their own national heritage.

In 1977 *The Economist* magazine coined the term "Dutch disease" to describe the social and manufacturing decline caused by extreme resource exploitation. Oil revenues make a nation's currency appear stronger for a while, but this makes their exports more expensive and undermines manufacturing and local economy.

In 2011, the Montreal Macro Research Board warned that the "petrolization" of Canada had created "A severe case of Dutch Disease," weakening Canadian business sovereignty, "hollowing out manufactured goods exporters" and making Canada "increasingly reliant" on oil and coal exports.

Like Thatcher's England Canada launched a scheme to privatise profits and socialize the costs of oil development. In the last decade, Canada has handed out over \$14 billion in tax subsidies to oil, coal, and gas companies, while losing over 340,000 industrial jobs. A University of Ottawa study shows that oil colony economics is the largest factor in these job losses.

“Petro-states,” writes Terry Karl, become “unaccountable to the general population.” To impose the oil company agenda on their citizens, petro-regimes tend to centralize power, avoid transparency, and create a politics of lies and deceit.

## **Politics as war**

Twice, in 2008 and 2009, Harper shut down the Canadian Parliament to avoid inquiries into his international deals, finances, and scandals including abusive treatment of Afghanistan detainees. Canada now ranks last among industrial nations in honouring freedom of information requests.

Harper’s perverse secrecy is typical of oil politics. “This is how petro states are made,” writes Andrew Nikiforuk in one of Canada’s best news sources, [The Tyee](#); “with a quiet infection that eats away a nation's entire soul.”

In March 2011, as Harper ran Canada from secret cabinet meetings, 156 members of the government found Harper and his minority regime in contempt of Parliament for its refusal to share legislative information with other elected members.

In April 2011, Canadians learned that Harper’s liaison to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers had previously been convicted of defrauding two Canadian banks, a car dealer, and his own law clients, and had lobbied the Canadian government on behalf of his ex-hooker girlfriend.

The convicted felon, Bruce Carson, served as chief tar sands promoter, claiming “The economic and security value of oil sands expansion will likely outweigh the climate damage that oil sands create.” Carson also opposed “clean energy efforts in the U.S.” Canadian lobbyists undermined US low-carbon fuel standards by [lobbying](#) the US government.

In June 2011, on national television, another Harper henchman, Tom Flanagan, advocated assassinating WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange: “I think Assange should be assassinated,” he told Canada’s CBC. Flanagan has been one of the lead architects of Harper’s war on his own people. Before the 2011 election, in Canada’s *Globe and Mail*, Flanagan wrote, “An election is war by other means.” He compared an election campaign to Rome’s destruction of Carthage, whereby they “razed the city to the ground and sowed salt in the fields so nothing would grow there again.”

Alan Whitehorn of the Royal Military College of Canada wrote, “This suggests a paradigm not of civil rivalry between fellow citizens, but all-out extended war to destroy and obliterate the opponent. This kind of malevolent vision and hostile

tone seems antithetical to the democratic spirit.” Harper’s government is now constructing barricades around the Parliament buildings, erecting more jails, and passing tougher criminal codes. The Canadian people, who once felt proud of their democratic institutions, now feel like the “enemy” of their own government.

## **Canada against the world**

Outside Canada, the Harper regime has dismissed the United Nations and international opinion. Canadian government officials called the UN a “corrupt organization.” Former Canadian senior UN official Carolyn McAskie wrote in [Canada and Multilateralism: Missing In Action](#) that Canada, once respected as a UN leader, is now “spurning a whole system of organizations critical to world peace, security and development.”

Economic analyst [Jim Willie](#) wrote that Canada has “followed the Goldman Sachs path to the fields of corruption and fealty... Canada followed the Bush Doctrine of fascism, embracing the war footing ... and tightening the security vice. Next they will become a Chinese commercial colony.”

When citizens around the world objected to the climate impact of the tar sands, Harper’s government attempted to rebrand the notorious carbon bomb as “ethical oil,” shamelessly ignoring the facts. The tar sands crimes against humanity and nature begin with obliterating boreal forests and soils, creating massive open-pit mines, and removing two tons of sand and soil for every barrel of oil. The thick bitumen is melted with natural gas, which requires one-third of the energy in tar sands oil to remove it. The project uses about 150-million gallons of water each day from the Athabasca river and aquifers, and the black waste turns boreal lakes into sludge pits, kills birds and other wild life, and contaminates the local ground water. Pollutants from tar sands smoke stacks have caused lung disease throughout the region and a 30% increase in cancers over the last decade. Mike Mercredi from the indigenous Fort Chipewyan Cree Nation calls the impact “slow industrial genocide.”

The crime continues with pipeline oil spills and oil tankers that threaten the entire coast of North America. Meanwhile, the tar sands project emits more than 45-million tons of greenhouse gases each year. NASA climatologist James Hansen has warned that if the tar sands are fully exploited, “it is game over for the climate.”

The French Foreign Ministry called Canada’s decision to renege on its Kyoto climate commitments, “bad news for the fight against climate change.”

Representative Ian Fry from the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu called Canada’s reversal “an act of sabotage ... a reckless and totally irresponsible act.”

The China news agency, Xinhua, called Canada's decision "preposterous," and China's Foreign Ministry urged Canada to "face up to its due responsibilities and duties... and take a positive, constructive attitude towards participating in international cooperation to respond to climate change."

UN climate chief Christiana Figueres warned that Canada "has a legal obligation under the convention to reduce its emissions, and a moral obligation to itself and future generations to lead in the global effort." UN Advisor on Water, Maude Barlow, called the tar sands "Canada's Mordor."

After Canada's shameful showing in Durban, a Canadian businessman wrote to national newspaper, *The Globe & Mail*: "The pride of wearing the maple leaf on the lapel or backpack is gone. It's best hidden now. .. not one person in any country I have visited has been complimentary. Harper and his sheep will deny or ignore such facts while people like me lose business."

Inside Canada, people are rising up, lead by [The Wilderness Committee](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Council of Canadians](#), the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), the [Yinka-Dene Alliance](#), and others. These groups need international support to halt the tar sands crime and help Canada recover its lost reputation.

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[Noah Millman says George Packer has it wrong](#), that the GOP is not, in fact, going to have a McGovern moment anytime soon. I think these are good observations:

The Presidency of George W. Bush hasn't been mentioned much on the campaign trail this season, but that doesn't mean his policies have been repudiated by the various contenders for the nomination – particularly not with respect to foreign policy and the ongoing "War on Terror" – with the exception of Ron Paul. The same can't entirely be said for domestic policy – there has been some sniping at TARP, some criticism of the level of spending, but nothing resembling a sustained critique – except from Paul. If anybody fits the McGovern mold this time around, it's Paul, not Gingrich.

This is an underappreciated point. Can you find a single significant point on which Romney, Gingrich, or Santorum differ substantially from George W. Bush? It's amazing. If Bush were considered a successful president, they would be bringing him up all the time. That they do not, even as they have an incumbent Democrat they deride as a failure, tells you that they know Bush and his legacy are poison. And yet, they may not believe in Bush, but they sure believe in what he stood for. And so does the GOP base, evidently.

Noah again:

Regardless of who the GOP lost with this year, I wouldn't expect a profound soul searching. The Democrats had to lose a run of five out of six Presidential elections over two decades to thoroughly remake their party. If you want to know what will likely follow a Romney loss, take a look at what followed Dole's loss in 1996.

Regrettably, this is probably true. I really did think after the failed Bush presidency and the Obama defeat of McCain, the GOP would do the soul-searching thing. Didn't happen. Not even close. Maybe it's just me, but whenever I hear Romney speak, it's nothing but recycled GOP boilerplate. I cannot imagine why anybody who isn't already a highly partisan Republican would vote for him, except that he's Not Obama (which, let me be clear, might be reason enough). My point is that the GOP is not offering a credible vision of the future. Nobody wants Newt because they think he has good, innovative ideas for America's future. They want him because they think he can tear Obama's heart out with his teeth. That is hardly what future GOP victories are built on, especially when the oldsters start to die off.

Daniel Larison also has [smart things to say](#) about the GOP future, should Obama win a second term:

Something that makes it difficult to analyze the possibility of "an ideological reckoning with the base" is that there is no consensus among conservatives about what that reckoning would look like and what it ought to produce. More "reformist" moderates and conservatives in the GOP think that this reckoning would involve driving Tea Partiers and populists to the margins and developing a more "centrist" governing agenda, whereas many movement conservatives see Bush-era accommodations with the welfare state and so-called "big-government conservatism" as the things to be repudiated and resisted in the future. Dissident conservatives see both groups as too accommodating of the security/warfare state as well as the welfare state. The desired "reckoning" would look different for each group, and there are enough contradictions in Gingrich and Romney to provide justifications for each group to claim that their view has been vindicated by an electoral defeat.

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### **31 Responses to "Actually, it won't be 1972"**

*johan*, on February 1st, 2012 at 8:16 am Said: "Regardless of who the GOP lost with this year, I wouldn't expect a profound soul searching..." The GOP now has the character of a fundamentalist church, and such people do not do soul searching (i.e. critical examination) because that is definitionally heretical. The GOP holy trinity of 1) globe-spanning military force, 2) the priority of tax cuts, and 3) restrictive social policies, cannot be reexamined. So instead of a remaking

themselves into a new type of party, I'd think it would become shrinking minor sectarian party, as is the case in some European countries, or in Israel.

## **Stanford Professor Gives Up Teaching Position, Hopes to Reach 500,000 Students at Online Start-Up**

January 23, 2012, 4:53 pm

By [Nick DeSantis](#)

The Stanford University professor who [taught an online artificial-intelligence course](#) to more than 160,000 students has abandoned his teaching position to aim for an even bigger audience.

Sebastian Thrun, a research professor of computer science at Stanford, revealed today that he had given up his teaching role at the institution to found [Udacity](#), a start-up offering low-cost online classes. He made the surprising announcement during a [presentation](#) at the Digital–Life–Design conference, in Munich, Germany. The development was first reported earlier today by [Reuters](#).

During his talk, Mr. Thrun explored the origins of his popular online course at Stanford, which initially featured videos produced with nothing more than “a camera, a pen, and a napkin.” Despite the low production quality, many of the 200 Stanford students taking the course in the classroom flocked to the videos because they could absorb the lectures at their own pace. Eventually, the 200 students taking the course in person dwindled to a group of 30. Meanwhile, the course’s popularity exploded online, drawing students from around the world. The experience taught the professor that he could craft a course with the interactive tools of the Web that recreated the intimacy of one-on-one tutoring, he said.

Mr. Thrun told the crowd his move had been motivated in part by teaching practices that evolved too slowly to be effective. During the era when universities were born, “the lecture was the most effective way to convey information. We had the industrialization, we had the invention of celluloid, of digital media, and, miraculously, professors today teach exactly the same way they taught a thousand years ago,” he said.

He concluded by telling the crowd that he couldn’t continue teaching in a traditional setting. “Having done this, I can’t teach at Stanford again,” he said.

One of Udacity’s first offerings will be a seven-week course called “Building a Search Engine.” It will be taught by David Evans, an associate professor of computer science at the University of Virginia and a Udacity partner. Mr. Thrun said it was designed to teach students with no prior programming experience how to build a search engine like Google. He hopes 500,000 students will enroll.

Teaching the course at Stanford, Mr. Thrun said, showed him the potential of digital education, which turned out to be a drug that he could not ignore.

“I feel like there’s a red pill and a blue pill,” he said. “And you can take the blue pill and go back to your classroom and lecture your 20 students. But I’ve taken the red pill, and I’ve seen Wonderland.”

*Correction (1/26, 11:54 a.m.):* This article originally reported incorrectly that Mr. Thrun was leaving Stanford in order to pursue his start-up venture. In fact, Mr. Thrun has only left his tenured teaching position at the university, and remains an untenured research professor there. The article has been updated to reflect this correction.

## **U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL ATTACKS HOMOPHOBIA**

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon says African nations should stop treating gays as "second-class citizens, or even criminals".

Ban told African leaders that gathered in Ethiopia's capital on Sunday for an African Union summit that discrimination based on sexual orientation "had been ignored or even sanctioned by many states for far too long".

Ban said it would be challenging for Africa to "confront this discrimination". There was no immediate response from African heads of states to Ban's speech. Many African countries outlaw homosexuality and many African churches preach

## **FREDDIE MACK BETRAYS ITS CLIENTS**

Freddie Mac agreed last month to stop making new bets against American homeowners after its regulator, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, raised concerns. Freddie, the taxpayer-owned mortgage giant, still retains \$5 billion worth of such bets.

The mortgage-insurance company bought billions worth of complex mortgage-backed securities that profit if borrowers stay trapped in high interest rate home

loans. The \$5 billion figure released Monday afternoon is more than had been reported in the ProPublica-NPR investigation.

In late 2010 and early 2011, Freddie began dramatically increasing these multibillion-dollar deals. At the same time, Freddie also made it harder for homeowners to get out of their high-interest mortgages and into more affordable loans that could save them thousands of dollars a year. No evidence has emerged that these decisions were coordinated at the company, and Freddie has denied that they were.

But the deals highlight a conflict of interest: While Freddie's charter calls for the company to make home loans more accessible, the company also has giant investment portfolios that could lose large amounts of money, at least in the short run, if too many borrowers refinance into more affordable loans.

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Mortgage experts said that inverse floaters burden Freddie with new risks. With these deals, Freddie has taken mortgage-backed securities that are easy to sell and traded them for ones that are harder and possibly more expensive to offload.

ProPublica and NPR found \$3.4 billion of Freddie's inverse floater deals, and their value is based mostly on interest payments on \$19.5 billion of mortgage-backed securities. The new statement suggests that Freddie retained exposure to greater than \$19.5 billion, but it is unclear how much more.

## **WSJ DENIES GLOBAL WARMING**

In a [Wall Street Journal op-ed](#), sixteen prominent [global warming deniers](#) with scientific backgrounds — such as [tobacco apologist Richard Lindzen](#) of MIT and ExxonMobil executive [Roger Cohen](#) — concede that manmade carbon dioxide emissions have a warming effect on the planet, but argue that the effect is “small” and nothing to “panic” about.

All the other scientists in the world who believe the science are part of a conspiracy to intimidate people like themselves, they write, just as Soviet biologists who believed in genes were “[sent to the gulag](#) and some were condemned to death.”

The most amazing and telling evidence of the bias of the Wall Street Journal with respect to manmade climate change is the fact that 255 members of the United States National Academy of Sciences wrote a scientifically accurate essay on the realities of climate change and on the need for improved and serious public

debate around the issue, offered it to the Wall Street Journal, and were turned down.

## NAS SLAMS THE WSJ

In a scathing letter to the editor, thirty-eight of the world's top climatologists have rebuked Rupert Murdoch's Wall Street Journal for its publication of a "scientist" op-ed [denying](#) the threat of manmade global warming. The letter, authored by climate scientist Kevin Trenberth and colleagues from the world's top science institutions, tells the Wall Street Journal editors to "[Check With Climate Scientists for Views on Climate](#)":

You published "No Need to Panic About Global Warming" (op-ed, Jan. 27) on climate change by the **climate-science equivalent of dentists practicing cardiology**. While accomplished in their own fields, most of these authors have no expertise in climate science. The few authors who have such expertise are known to have extreme views that are out of step with nearly every other climate expert. This happens in nearly every field of science. For example, there is a retrovirus expert who does not accept that HIV causes AIDS. And it is instructive to recall that a few scientists continued to state that smoking did not cause cancer, long after that was settled science.

The 16 climate deniers include a medical doctor, some engineers, and astrophysicists. One of the climate deniers who wrote the "No Need to Panic" op-ed, Richard Lindzen, questions whether [smoking](#) causes cancer, and another of the climate deniers, Claude Allegre, doesn't believe [asbestos](#) is hazardous.

## AND...GOOD NEWS

Today is the deadline for residents of Oregon's first congressional district to vote in a special election for U.S. Representative — and the Republican nominee in that race holds some rather extreme views.

The Republicans selected unsuccessful 2010 nominee Rob Cornilles. In 2010, ThinkProgress Green [reported](#) that Cornilles [claims](#), "There is absolutely no science that can be proven... that man, through our activities, can advance climate change." He's getting his clock cleaned.