

November 29, 2011

Heather Mac Donald says the Occupy folks should protest against one of the real campus calamities - the diversity pukers that populate American academia.

As protesters festively (oops! I mean "heroically") rally on college quads across California in the wake of the gratuitous macing of a dozen Occupy Wall Street wannabes at University of California–Davis last Friday, UC Berkeley's Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion declared that the rising tuition at California's public universities is giving him "heartburn." It should, since Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion Gibor Basri and his fellow diversity bureaucrats are a large cause of those skyrocketing college fees, not just in California but nationally.

It is to be expected that students will be immaculately ignorant of the matters they protest, but it takes a special type of gall for a bureaucrat such as Basri to shed crocodile tears over California's tuition increases, which had been a seeming target of OWS-inspired protest before the brutish UC Davis pepper-spray incident provided a more mediagenic reason to cut classes. OWS-ers are theatrically calling for a general strike of the University of California for this coming Monday.

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And [Debra Saunders](#) says the OWS group should hope they're not treated like those opposed to abortion.

For all their whining about the "police state" and the city's failure to respect their "First Amendment rights," Occupy Oakland activists have managed to flout the law with regular impunity. Somehow demonstrators have managed to turn Frank Ogawa Plaza into a tent stew and shut down parts of the city in a so-called general strike Nov. 2, and still they think they're victims who have been deprived of their free speech rights.

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[Janet Daley](#) writing in The Telegraph, UK, has advice for British pols - "Want to fix things in the economy, try doing less."

... Instead of finding new, ingenious ways to use your money that might give a brief appearance of nibbling at the edges of problems such as unemployment and property prices, the state needs to withdraw from hyperactive job-creation and mortgage-lending, and become much more vigilant in ensuring competition in the productive parts of the economy. The deregulation of the 1980s and 1990s would be coming in for much less criticism now if it had not funk'd the matter of competitiveness: nationalised industries too often gave way to private monopolies and cartels. If people are taxed less and fleeced less, they will be happy to stimulate the economy in the good old-fashioned way.

As David Cameron used to say before he took fright: we need a smaller state that does less and spends less. Mr Osborne used to say that, too, in terms that were at least as stark as any Tory backbencher. Maybe a generation of Treasury officials who came of age under the Brown Terror got to him with the electrodes. Or else, his role as election campaign manager for the Conservatives is conflicting with what should be his better judgment as head of the nation's finances. After all, it should be his function as Chancellor to tell his party's political strategist that voter-appeasing initiatives are unaffordable, and that economic reality must take precedence. Presumably, Mr Osborne would have had to carry on that argument with himself. (If he did, we know which side won.)

There is an urgent need now to rethink the whole relationship between government and populace while there is still the possibility of discussion. In Britain, Europe and America, the questions are remarkably similar. Can a free-market economy support an infinitely growing state? We will have to choose, quite soon, between liberty and the "security" of a society in which government controls the levers of economic life. Washington politicians are getting a terrible drubbing for failing to resolve their implacable differences over the size of the state (to the extent that they are unable to agree a federal budget). The US national debate may seem rough and ready to European ears – but at least they are engaging in the real argument.

[Jennifer Rubin](#) posts on the Gingrich balloon.

Many conservatives who know better have constructed an odd justification in the 2012 presidential primary for supporting the man who makes Bill Clinton look like a model of impulse control. It goes like this: Newt Gingrich did a magnificent job getting the GOP back into the House majority and defeating HillaryCare 17 years ago. His acerbic wit and mental dexterity would make for a hugely entertaining debate with President Obama. Therefore, he should be our nominee.

This is silliness on stilts. The American people — the ones who will vote in the general election — don't give a darn about 1994. Moreover, the huge ideological inconsistencies, the character flaws and the ever-present danger of self-immolation make Gingrich probably the worst possible nominee to go up against the search-and-destroy Obama reelection campaign. And should he, by some miracle, get to the Oval Office, do we really imagine the presidency would be any different than his speakership (disorganized, frenetic, disloyal to conservatives, gaffe-prone and all about HIM)? ...

[Ann Coulter](#) has Gingrich memories too. She closes by endorsing Romney.

So now, apparently, we have to go through the cycle of the media pushing Newt Gingrich. This is going to be fantastic.

In addition to having an affair in the middle of Clinton's impeachment; [apologizing to Jesse Jackson on behalf of J.C. Watts](#) -- one of two black Republicans then in Congress -- for having criticized "poverty pimps," and then inviting Jackson to a State of the Union address; cutting a global warming commercial with Nancy Pelosi; supporting George Soros' candidate Dede Scozzafava in a congressional special election; appearing in public with the Rev. Al Sharpton to promote nonspecific education reform; and calling Paul Ryan's plan to save Social Security "right-wing social engineering," we found out this week that Gingrich was a recipient of Freddie Mac political money. ...

... Although Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac -- the institutions most responsible for the nation's current financial crisis -- were almost entirely Democratic cash cows, they managed to dirty up enough Republicans to make it seem like bipartisan corruption.

Democrats sucked hundreds of millions of dollars out of these institutions: Franklin Raines, \$90 million; Jamie Gorelick, \$26.4 million; Jim Johnson, \$20 million.

By contrast, Republicans came cheap. For the amazingly good price of only \$300,000 apiece, Fannie and Freddie bought the good will of former Reps. Vin Weber, R-Minn., Susan Molinari, R-N.Y., and Newt Gingrich, R-Ga. Former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., was even cheaper at \$240,000.*

*[*Correction: After Gingrich admitted last week to receiving \$300,000 from Freddie, we found out this week that it was actually closer to \$1.6 million.] ...*

... Instead of sitting on our thumbs, wishing Ronald Reagan were around, or chasing the latest mechanical rabbit flashed by the media, conservatives ought to start rallying around Romney as

*the only Republican who has a shot at beating Obama. **We'll attack him when he's president.***

It's fun to be a purist, but let's put that on hold until Obama and his abominable health care plan are gone, please.

Kimberley Strassel gives us the back story on the government gripes against Gibson Guitar.

On a sweltering day in August, federal agents raided the Tennessee factories of the storied Gibson Guitar Corp. The suggestion was that Gibson had violated the Lacey Act—a federal law designed to protect wildlife—by importing certain India ebony. The company has vehemently denied that suggestion and has yet to be charged. It is instead living in a state of harassed legal limbo.

Which, let's be clear, is exactly what its persecutors had planned all along. The untold story of Gibson is this: It was set up.

Most of the press coverage has implied that the company is the unfortunate victim of a well-meaning, if complicated, law. Stories note, in passing, that the Lacey Act was "expanded" in 2008, and that this has had "unintended consequences." Given Washington's reputation for ill-considered bills, this might make sense.

Only not in this case. The story here is about how a toxic alliance of ideological activists and trade protectionists deliberately set about creating a vague law, one designed to make an example out of companies (like Gibson) and thus chill imports—even legal ones. ...

National Review

Pepper-Spraying Taxpayers

"Diversity" boondoggles are the real scandal.

by Heather Mac Donald

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If the OWS campus campers really wanted to understand California’s growing tuition costs, they might also check out the University of California, San Francisco, which created a Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Outreach earlier this year at the height of the state’s budget crisis. Naturally, this new sinecure was redundant with UCSF’s existing Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity, the Diversity Learning Center (where you can learn how to “Become A Diversity Change Agent”), the Center for LGBT Health & Equity, the Office of Sexual Harassment Prevention & Resolution, the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Diversity, the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Disability Issues, the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues, and the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

The OWS-ers should also look into UC San Diego, which announced the creation of a Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in May 2011, even as the campus was losing three prestigious cancer researchers to Rice University and was cutting academic programs. Needless to say, UCSD’s Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion replicated an equally fearsome mountain of diversity functions.

Do not think that the exploding diversity bureaucracy is confined to public universities. In 2005, Harvard created a new Senior Vice Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development, responsible for \$50 million in diversity funding, and six new diversity deanships. Whereas Harvard's previous diversity bureaucrats collected mere diversity data about faculty hiring and promotions, the new SVP for D and FD would be collecting "diversity metrics." Yale already has 14 Title IX coordinators (not enough to stave off a specious Title IX investigation by the Office of Civil Rights in the federal Education Department), but it nevertheless recently put a Deputy Provost in charge of assessing the "campus climate" with respect to gender and overseeing the 14 Title IX coordinators. All these new bureaucrats in campuses across the country — nearly 72,000 non-teaching positions added from 2006 to 2009 — cost \$3.6 billion, estimated Harvey Silverplate in Minding the Campus earlier this year.

Just where do the OWS-ish student protesters think that their tuition money is going? In the vast majority of colleges and universities, there are no greedy shareholders sucking their profits from the livelihoods of workers or other "community stakeholders." Rather, rising tuitions funnel straight into the preposterously unnecessary diversity bureaucracy and the rest of the burgeoning student-services infrastructure, as well as into the salaries of professors who teach one course a semester, the arms race of ever more sybaritic dorms and social centers, and the absolute monarchies of the football and basketball programs. It is particularly amusing to see New York University's Andrew Ross spearheading a campaign against the student-loan industry; we may safely assume that Ross's princely salary as Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis (achieved when NYU outbid Princeton for his services) was impervious to what should have been Ross's reputation-destroying unwitting publication of a hoax parody of cultural-studies gibberish in his journal, *Social Text*, in 1996.

If students think that they are paying too much for college — and either they or taxpayers most surely are — they should take up the matter with their college president and her retinue of deans, provosts, and vice chancellors, not to mention with the federal government, whose easy loans allow colleges to jack up their tuition even further. The problem lies not with the lenders but with the institutions whose undisciplined appetite for bureaucratic growth and for hiring trendy academic superstars, no matter the speciousness of their scholarship, makes such loans necessary. Berkeley's Vice Chancellor Basri intones: "We don't believe that higher education is a private right but a public good." Federally funded, free college tuition, the goal of Ross and other OWS-ers, would, however, simply remove any last restraints on academic greed, and put the full burden of that greed on taxpayers' shoulders.

As for the Davis pepper-spray incident, one's sympathy goes out to those individuals who were subjected to the painful and excessive use of police force. But may one also observe that, however unjustified the pepper-spraying of the protesters (who had refused the lawful order to remove their illegal camping equipment), the coverage of their plight has grown just a little maudlin? A 22-year-old pepper-spray victim told the Los Angeles Times that after hearing someone yell "pepper spray!" he "kissed his girlfriend and closed his eyes. 'At that point,' [he said,] 'I entered a world of pain. I wanted to breathe, but I couldn't. My face was covered with pepper spray. . . . My hands were covered with pepper spray. I was afraid. I was paralyzed with fear, and that's the truth.'"

The pepper-spray victims have been recounting their very real pain in media venues across the land. By now we get the point. But the melodrama showered on the Davis casualties is stoically restrained compared with the glamorization of the OWS movement both before and after the Davis fiasco. For once, student protesters spoke with impeccable accuracy when they called a

post-pepper-spray encampment at UC Berkeley a "pajama party." The only sacrifice incurred by students who sleep over in their college quads is having to forego widescreen TV; otherwise, they're having a ball, not least because they are so certain of their moral superiority.

And here's another reality check: American college campuses are not police states, *pace* UC Davis English professor Nathan Brown. ("The fact is," he wrote in an online letter, "the administration of U.C. campuses systematically uses police brutality to terrorize students and faculty, to crush political dissent on our campuses, and to suppress free speech and peaceful assembly.") To the contrary, despite the presence of a few abysmally trained clunkers of campus guards, they are zones of maximal freedom (unless of course you challenge certain campus orthodoxies) and of privileged leisure and comfort, into which millions of striving Chinese and Indians are desperately seeking entry.

The Big Lie of the campus diversity industry has been that without constant monitoring by diversity bureaucrats, faculty and other administrators would discriminate against minority and female professors and students. In fact, anyone who has spent a day inside a university knows that the exact opposite is demonstrably the case: Hundreds of thousands of hours and dollars are wasted each year in the futile pursuit of the same inadequate pool of remotely qualified underrepresented minority and female applicants that every other campus in the country is chasing with as much desperate zeal. The hiring process has been thoroughly corrupted. Faculty applicants are brought onto campus who have no chance of being hired, either because the hiring committee incorrectly assumed from their names or résumés that they were the right sort of minority (East Asians don't count) for a position set aside for just such a minority, or because, although they *were* the right sort of minority, their qualifications were so low that their only purpose in being interviewed was to fill an outreach quota.

In the wake of Peppergate, it looks like two other Big Lies are quickly forming: the campus as gulag and unscrupulous banks as the source of burdensome student debt. The first new conceit will soon evaporate of its own patent insubstantiality. But the push for wholesale debt forgiveness and even easier taxpayer funding of tuition will have staying power and will simply inflate the campus diversity bureaucracy further.

Heather Mac Donald is the John M. Olin fellow at the Manhattan Institute and co-author of The Immigration Solution.

San Francisco Chronicle

Inside Oakland bubble, all free speech isn't equal

by Debra J. Saunders

For all their whining about the "police state" and the city's failure to respect their "First Amendment rights," Occupy Oakland activists have managed to flout the law with regular impunity. Somehow demonstrators have managed to turn Frank Ogawa Plaza into a tent stew and shut down parts of the city in a so-called general strike Nov. 2, and still they think they're victims who have been deprived of their free speech rights.

But if they want to see what it's really like to fight City Hall, they should talk to Walter Hoye. Hoye's offense was to walk up to people with a sign that said, "Jesus loves you and your baby. Let us help." For that he was arrested twice in 2008 and sentenced to 30 days in jail.

The difference here is that Hoye wasn't peddling some amorphous grievances that might be addressed with higher taxes and more government. Hoye's sin - pardon the expression - is that he opposed abortion.

Please note: Police did not arrest Hoye for blocking access to reproductive health clinics. It's always wrong for one group, in the name of free speech, to infringe on the rights of others. And it's a federal crime for anyone to injure, intimidate or interfere with women seeking reproductive health care services. The penalty can be as high as six months in prison and a \$10,000 fine for a first-time nonviolent offense.

But that's not tough enough for Oakland. In 2007, the City Council passed an ordinance that created a "bubble" around reproductive health clinics. In the bubble, it's an offense to approach a woman entering a clinic without her consent. The measure actually banned "counseling."

Oakland passed the "bubble" bill, argued Hoye's attorney Katie Short of the Life Legal Defense Foundation, because the City Council had a problem: Hoye wasn't violating any existing laws, so they created a new one.

Later, Oakland tweaked the ordinance to make it appear even-handed. Problem: Oakland police required Hoye to wait for consent before he could talk to Family Planning Specialists patients. There was no such requirement for pro-abortion volunteers - escorts who don orange vests and stand between antiabortion activists and clinic patients. A three-judge federal panel that included the famously liberal Judge Stephen Reinhardt ruled that Oakland did not apply the law in a neutral manner.

"Throughout our nation's history, Americans have counted on the First Amendment to protect their right to ask their fellow citizens to change their mind," U.S. Circuit Judge Marsha Berzon wrote. "Abolitionists, suffragists, socialists, pacifists, union members, war protesters, religious believers, civil rights campaigners, antitax activists, and countless others have appealed to the principle, enshrined within the First Amendment, that in a democracy such as ours, public debate must be robust and free and that, for it to be so, the Constitution's protection of the freedom of speech must extend to the sidewalk encounter of the proselytizer and his prospective convert."

Berzon wrote that there has been no suggestion that Hoye "engaged in any physical obstruction or violence" or even rough language. Yet Oakland arrested and prosecuted him, a jury convicted him, and he served his time in a county jail in 2009.

City Attorney Barbara Parker noted that courts have upheld the ordinance itself. Parker maintains, "It's the same bubble for everyone" - protesters and escorts. She believes in applying the law equally and "respecting public safety, public health and the property rights of everyone."

I don't buy it. Mayor Jean Quan's husband and daughter participated in Occupy Oakland protests. In October, when police removed the tents, Quan invited activists back - and soon

there were more tents in front of City Hall than before the police moved in. City Council members embraced the encampment from the start.

Until campers wore out their welcome, City Hall and Occupy Oakland happily resided inside the same bubble.

John Russo, city attorney at the time, also - wrongly I think - defended the "bubble" bill as politically neutral.

Russo, however, scoffed, "The minute they pitched tents, they were in violation of city regulations. ... If it had been 120 tents from the NRA, right-to-lifers, the Boy Scouts, that would not have been tolerated."

I asked Hoye how he feels when Occupy Oakland protesters complain that they are victims whose free expression has been suppressed.

"I don't think they really know what being treated unfairly is," he answered. "I didn't see any of the kind of leniency that they received."

And: "Thank you for thinking of me. People have asked me about that."

Telegraph, UK

[A daring idea to fix the economy: try doing less](#)

The best thing the Government can do to restore growth is to stop imitating Labour, and get out of the business of running things.

by Janet Daley

Gosh, what a parcel of goodies George Osborne is about to present to us in his Autumn Statement. Already promised last week were a government programme to underwrite the mortgages of first-time buyers, as well as a nifty £200 million "green deal" to encourage families to insulate their homes. Then there was a billion-pound subsidy to employers who give young people work experience that will lead to jobs. And who knows what more bounty is to follow in the speech itself?

Now where have I seen the like of this beneficence before? Oh yes – it was under Gordon Brown. As Chancellor (and then later when he was Prime Minister, through his half-hearted proxy Alistair Darling), Mr Brown would stand at the Dispatch Box and shower us with government spending projects. There were injections of cash into house-building, and grants for scientific research, and God knows how many initiatives to create "training" and engineering apprenticeships. All that micro-management: new "start-up" schemes and "one-stop shop" outreach services funded by this department and that department, and then re-packaged and re-announced so that they sounded less tired and predictable.

Maybe you thought we had got past this. Not just because additional public spending is now supposed to be anathema, but because the myth of government activism – the idea that intervention by the state is the answer to every economic and social problem – had been

definitively routed. Apparently not: Mr Osborne and, we must assume, his boss still seem to believe that any unacceptable national situation must require direct action from them.

Or maybe they don't believe that at all. Perhaps they just lack the political courage to admit that, in our present crisis, the best thing that the Government can do is to get out of the business of running (or subsidising, or initiating, or incentivising) things altogether – not just in the interests of saving money, but because the effects of such interference are counter-productive. What the economy is suffering from is not an insufficiency of overweening, fussy, bureaucratic initiatives that inevitably unleash an avalanche of unintended consequences, but a lack of cash in the hands of people who might spend it in ways that would actually create wealth and stimulate (in the proper sense of the word) economic growth.

If ever there was a time for radical proposals by a governing party, this is it. Rather than the imitative, mealy-mouthed shuffling of dollops of money from one departmental scheme to another, in what will inevitably look like panic in the face of rising youth unemployment and disappointing growth figures, what we need is a display of real insight and nerve.

Paradoxically, it is in times of crisis that the public (especially the British public, who are peculiarly brave about these things) are most receptive to audacious pronouncements and drastic remedies. Knowing that a situation is genuinely parlous makes people more inclined to accept what seems like necessary risk-taking, especially if it is presented to them with honesty and conviction.

Couldn't we have a statement, then, of what most struggling voters know to be true: the economy is failing because people cannot (or are afraid to) spend money. It is no use offering to "underwrite" mortgages for first-time buyers who may not be in a position to repay them. Nor will bribing employers to take on young trainees help firms to expand: if they cannot increase their turnover, they will not be able to retain those fledgling staff. The effectiveness of both these programmes relies on precisely the kind of economic recovery that they are designed to stimulate. If that stimulus fails, the recipients of this state largesse will be left high and dry.

What the economy needs is more customers who are willing and able to buy. What the state needs to do is to give those potential customers more disposable income to spend. To this end, it has tried printing more money. Unfortunately, most of that cash ended up sitting in bank vaults instead of circulating through the system. In fact, the only way to encourage more spending without increasing personal debt is to let people keep more of what they earn in the first place, and to make sure that they are not being overcharged for necessities like fuel and energy. Certainly there will be a few nods in this direction, with a widely predicted freeze on fuel duty and a proposal to hold down increases in rail fares. But such tiny ameliorations in the cost of living are unlikely to make a dramatic impact on most people's lives.

Instead of finding new, ingenious ways to use your money that might give a brief appearance of nibbling at the edges of problems such as unemployment and property prices, the state needs to withdraw from hyperactive job-creation and mortgage-lending, and become much more vigilant in ensuring competition in the productive parts of the economy. The deregulation of the 1980s and 1990s would be coming in for much less criticism now if it had not funk'd the matter of competitiveness: nationalised industries too often gave way to private monopolies and cartels. If people are taxed less and fleeced less, they will be happy to stimulate the economy in the good old-fashioned way.

As David Cameron used to say before he took fright: we need a smaller state that does less and spends less. Mr Osborne used to say that, too, in terms that were at least as stark as any Tory backbencher. Maybe a generation of Treasury officials who came of age under the Brown Terror got to him with the electrodes. Or else, his role as election campaign manager for the Conservatives is conflicting with what should be his better judgment as head of the nation's finances. After all, it should be his function as Chancellor to tell his party's political strategist that voter-appeasing initiatives are unaffordable, and that economic reality must take precedence. Presumably, Mr Osborne would have had to carry on that argument with himself. (If he did, we know which side won.)

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Right Turn

[Gratitude for 1994 doesn't require a foolish 2012 pick](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

Many conservatives who know better have constructed an odd justification in the 2012 presidential primary for supporting the man who makes Bill Clinton look like a model of impulse control. It goes like this: *Newt Gingrich did a magnificent job getting the GOP back into the House majority and defeating HillaryCare 17 years ago. His acerbic wit and mental dexterity would make for a hugely entertaining debate with President Obama. Therefore, he should be our nominee.*

This is silliness on stilts. The American people — the ones who will vote in the general election — don't give a darn about 1994. Moreover, the huge ideological inconsistencies, the character flaws and the ever-present danger of self-immolation make Gingrich probably the worst possible nominee to go up against the search-and-destroy Obama reelection campaign. And should he, by some miracle, get to the Oval Office, do we really imagine the presidency would be any different than his speakership (disorganized, frenetic, disloyal to conservatives, gaffe-prone and all about HIM)?

This is worse than the now-fading mass delusion that Herman Cain was a serious presidential choice. In Gingrich's case most of those spinning the case for his nomination know all too well the faults that would be debilitating as a nominee and then as president.

Conservatives can be appreciative of Gingrich's pre-speakership efforts on behalf of the GOP. They can enjoy his wit. They can do all that and *still* recognize that Gingrich's nomination would ensure chaos and defeat for the GOP, and acceptance of a candidate's every whim would become the GOP's official policy.

This is not necessarily an argument for Mitt Romney. For those who can't abide Romney (who, let's be candid, is no more conservative or consistent than Gingrich) there are principled conservatives who have a grasp of policy, such as Rick Santorum and Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.). While less articulate and policy-adept, Texas Gov. Rick Perry is certainly more conservative than Gingrich and has not led his party into ruin. But Gingrich? For talk-show entertainers, contrarians and the horde of Washington insiders whom Gingrich has courted for more than 20 years (flattering them with his attention and peppering them with policy ideas), Gingrich is an attractive pick. For a party desperate to unite the conservative movement and win the White House he would be a disaster, just as he was as soon as he got the speakership.

Jewish World Review

If not Romney, who? If not now, when?

by Ann Coulter

So now, apparently, we have to go through the cycle of the media pushing Newt Gingrich. This is going to be fantastic.

In addition to having an affair in the middle of Clinton's impeachment; [apologizing to Jesse Jackson on behalf of J.C. Watts](#) -- one of two black Republicans then in Congress -- for having criticized "poverty pimps," and then inviting Jackson to a State of the Union address; cutting a global warming commercial with Nancy Pelosi; supporting George Soros' candidate Dede Scozzafava in a congressional special election; appearing in public with the Rev. Al Sharpton to promote nonspecific education reform; and calling Paul Ryan's plan to save Social Security "right-wing social engineering," we found out this week that Gingrich was a recipient of Freddie Mac political money.

(Even I will admit, however, that Newt was great when he was chairman of GOPAC back in the '90s with Gay Gaines at the helm.)

Although Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac -- the institutions most responsible for the nation's current financial crisis -- were almost entirely Democratic cash cows, they managed to dirty up enough Republicans to make it seem like bipartisan corruption.

Democrats sucked hundreds of millions of dollars out of these institutions: Franklin Raines, \$90 million; Jamie Gorelick, \$26.4 million; Jim Johnson, \$20 million.

By contrast, Republicans came cheap. For the amazingly good price of only \$300,000 apiece, Fannie and Freddie bought the good will of former Reps. Vin Weber, R-Minn., Susan Molinari, R-N.Y., and Newt Gingrich, R-Ga.* Former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., was even cheaper at \$240,000.

[*Correction: After Gingrich admitted last week to receiving \$300,000 from Freddie, we found out this week that it was actually closer to \$1.6 million.]

So now conservatives shy away from denouncing these crooked organizations for fear of running into Vin Weber at a cocktail party.

Sorry, guys -- on the plus side, you're millionaires, but on the downside, you've earned the contempt of your fellow man.

The mainstream media keep pushing alternatives to Mitt Romney not only because they are terrified of running against him, but also because they want to keep Republicans fighting, allowing Democrats to get a four-month jump on us.

Meanwhile, everyone knows the nominee is going to be Romney. That's not so bad if you think the most important issues in this election are defeating Obama and repealing Obamacare.

There may be better ways to stop Obamacare than Romney, but, unfortunately, they're not available right now. (And, by the way, where were you conservative purists when Republicans were nominating Waterboarding-Is-Torture-Jerry-Falwell-Is-an-Agent-of-Intolerance-My-Good-Friend-Teddy-Kennedy-Amnesty-for-Illegals John McCain-Feingold for president?)

Among Romney's positives is the fact that he has a demonstrated ability to trick liberals into voting for him. He was elected governor of Massachusetts -- one of the most liberal states in the union -- by appealing to Democrats, independents and suburban women.

He came close to stopping the greatest calamity to befall this nation since Pearl Harbor by nearly beating Teddy Kennedy in a Senate race. (That is when he said a lot of the things about which he's since "changed his mind.") If he had won, we'd be carving his image on Mount Rushmore.

He is not part of the Washington establishment, so he won't be caught taking money from Freddie Mac or cutting commercials with Nancy Pelosi.

Also, Romney will be the first Republican presidential nominee since Ronald Reagan who can talk. Liberals are going to have to dust off their playbook from 30 years ago to figure out how to run against a Republican who isn't a tongue-tied marble-mouth.

As we've known for years, his negatives are: Romneycare and Mormonism.

We look forward with cheery anticipation to an explosion of news stories on some of the stranger aspects of Mormonism. The articles have already been written, but they're not scheduled for release until the day Romney wraps up the nomination.

Inasmuch as the Democrats' only argument for the big-eared beanpole who's nearly wrecked the country is that you must be a racist if you oppose Obama, one assumes a lot of attention will be lavished on the Mormon Church's historical position on blacks. Church founder Joseph Smith said blacks had the curse of Cain on them and banned blacks from the priesthood, a directive that was not revoked until 1978.

There's no evidence that this was a policy fiercely pushed by Mitt Romney. To the contrary, when his father, George Romney, was governor of Michigan, he was the most pro-civil rights elected official in the entire country, far ahead of any Democrat.

No one is worried Romney will double-cross us on repealing Obamacare. We worry that

Romneycare will make it harder for him to get elected.

But, again, Romney is the articulate Republican. He's already explained how mandating health insurance in one particular wealthy, liberal Northeastern state is different from inflicting it on the entire country. Our Constitution establishes a federalist system that allows experimentation with different ideas in the individual states.

As governor, Romney didn't have the ability to change federal laws requiring hospital emergency rooms to treat every illegal alien, drug dealer and vagrant who walked in the door, then sending the bill to taxpayers. (Although David Axelrod, Michelle Obama, Eric Whitaker and Valerie Jarrett [did figure out a way to throw poor blacks out of the University of Chicago Medical Center.](#))

The Heritage Foundation, a leading conservative think tank, supported Romneycare at the time. The biggest warning sign should have been that Gingrich supported it, too.

Most important, Romney has said -- forcefully and repeatedly -- that his first day in office he will issue a 50-state waiver from Obamacare and will then seek a formal repeal.

Romney is not going to get to the White House and announce, "The first thing I'm going to do is implement that fantastic national health care plan signed by my pal, Barack!"

Unlike all other major legislation in the nation's history, Obamacare was narrowly passed along partisan lines by an aberrationally large one-party majority in Congress. (Thanks, McCain supporters!) Not one single Republican in Congress voted for it, not even John McCain.

Obamacare is going to be repealed -- provided only that a Republican wins the next presidential election.

If a Republican does not win, however, it will never be repealed. Recall that, in order to boast about the amazing revenue savings under Obamacare, Democrats had to configure the bill so that the taxes to pay for it start right away, but the goodies don't kick in until 2014.

Once people are thrown off their insurance plans and are forced to depend on the government for "free" health care, Obamacare is here to stay. (And Newt Gingrich will be calling plans to tinker with it "right-wing social engineering.")

Instead of sitting on our thumbs, wishing Ronald Reagan were around, or chasing the latest mechanical rabbit flashed by the media, conservatives ought to start rallying around Romney as the only Republican who has a shot at beating Obama. We'll attack him when he's president.

It's fun to be a purist, but let's put that on hold until Obama and his abominable health care plan are gone, please.

WSJ

Stringing Up Gibson Guitar

Environmentalists and trade protectionists set a trap for American businesses.

by Kimberley Strassel

On a sweltering day in August, federal agents raided the Tennessee factories of the storied Gibson Guitar Corp. The suggestion was that Gibson had violated the Lacey Act—a federal law designed to protect wildlife—by importing certain India ebony. The company has vehemently denied that suggestion and has yet to be charged. It is instead living in a state of harassed legal limbo.

Which, let's be clear, is exactly what its persecutors had planned all along. The untold story of Gibson is this: It was set up.

Most of the press coverage has implied that the company is the unfortunate victim of a well-meaning, if complicated, law. Stories note, in passing, that the Lacey Act was "expanded" in 2008, and that this has had "unintended consequences." Given Washington's reputation for ill-considered bills, this might make sense.

Only not in this case. The story here is about how a toxic alliance of ideological activists and trade protectionists deliberately set about creating a vague law, one designed to make an example out of companies (like Gibson) and thus chill imports—even legal ones.

The Lacey Act was passed in 1900 to stop trade in illegal wild game. Over the years it has expanded, and today it encompasses a range of endangered species. It requires American businesses to follow both U.S. and foreign law, though with most Lacey goods, this has been relatively clear. Think elephant tusks, tiger pelts or tropical birds.

That changed in 2007, when an alliance of environmentalists, labor unions and industry groups began pushing for Lacey to cover "plant and plant products" and related items. Congress had previously resisted such a broad definition for the simple reason that it would encompass timber products. Trees are ubiquitous, are transformed into thousands of byproducts, and pass through dozens of countries. Whereas even a small U.S. importer would know not to import a tiger skin, tracking a sliver of wood (now transformed into a toy, or an umbrella) through this maze of countries and manufacturing laws back to the tree it came from, would be impossible.

Furniture maker Ikea noted that even if it could comply with the change, the "administrative costs and record-keeping requirements" would cause furniture prices to "skyrocket." The wood chips that go into its particleboard alone could require tracking back and reporting on more than 100 different tree species.



Painted guitars hang to dry after being lacquered at the Gibson Guitar Corp. factory in Nashville, Tenn.

Which is exactly what the Lacey expanders wanted. The drive was headed up by a murky British green outfit called the Environmental Investigation Agency. The EIA is anti-logging, and, like most environmental groups, understands that the best way to force developing countries to "preserve" their natural resources is to dry up the market for their products. They would prefer that wood be sourced from the U.S. and Europe, where green groups have more influence over rules.

The EIA was joined by labor unions such as the Teamsters and industry groups such as the American Forest and Paper Association. As Mark Barford of the Memphis-based National Hardwood Lumber Association told one news outlet: "We need the protection of the Lacey Act. . . . Our small, little companies cannot compete with artificially low prices from wood that comes in illegally. . . . This is our Jobs Act."

While everyone can be against "illegal" wood, what this crew understood was that the complexity of complying with an expanded Lacey Act would discourage companies from importing even legal wood. They went to Sen. Ron Wyden, of the well-timbered Oregon, who dutifully introduced legislation.

Mr. Wyden cleverly attached it to the wildly popular 2008 farm bill, guaranteeing its passage. Even then, some lawmakers sought to ensure that companies weren't unfairly ensnared. In October 2008, Louisiana Sen. David Vitter sent a letter to the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division (whose career staff is notorious for pursuing a green agenda), asking it to clarify whether any companies acting in good faith would be granted some protection from the law. The division has never clarified.

And so Gibson has been trapped, as intended. The company, after all, is not accused of importing banned wood (say, Brazilian mahogany). The ebony it bought is legal and documented. The issue is whether Gibson ran afoul of a technical Indian law governing the export of finished wood products. The U.S. *government's* interpretation of Indian law suggests the wood Gibson imported wasn't finished *enough*. Got that?

The EIA, which helped author the Wyden legislation, happens to have spent years publicly targeting Gibson for buying foreign wood. Oh, to see the Justice Department's communications with outside groups.

Gibson was picked because it is famous and, sure enough, its travails have scared importers away from an array of foreign wood products. Tennessee Reps. Marsha Blackburn and Jim Cooper are now working to give companies some protection and reduce paperwork. On cue, the EIA is howling that Congress is "gutting" Lacey.

Congress would be better off doing just that—repealing the expansion in its entirety. The provision does nothing to stamp out illegal logging—the products from which were already clearly no-nos. This isn't environmental protection; it's hostage-taking.

WANKER
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THE BLACK EYE

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HOW THE NEWT SOLD GINGRINCH

