

November 7, 2011

[Mark Steyn](#) follows the Occupy Oakland group.

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That's "collaborate" in the Nazi-occupied France sense: the city's feckless political class are collaborating with anarchists against the taxpayers who maintain them in their sinecures. They're not the only ones. When the rumor spread that the Whole Foods store, of all unlikely corporate villains, had threatened to fire employees who participated in the protest, the Regional President David Lannon took to Facebook: "We totally support our Team Members participating in the General Strike today – rumors are false!" But, despite his "total support", they trashed his store anyway, breaking windows and spray-painting walls. As The Oakland Tribune reported:

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[Debra Saunders](#) lives down the road from Oakland.

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politically correct school board should consider themselves "on notice that they will be evicted from office in the next election for doing the dirty work of the 1 percent."

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Neal Boortz reminds us Obama owns the Occupy creeps.

I'm sure I don't have to remind you of this, but just on the off chance that some Democrat libs or progs might stumble onto Nealz Nuze, let's remind everyone that this whole increasingly absurd and violent "occupy" movement belongs lock, stock and barrel to Barack Obama.

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The more you listen the more you see that these useful idiots are merely repeating the very same things that Obama has been saying for much of his adult life. They are Barry's Kids ... Obama's Children. He cannot escape them.

Toby Harnden opens a section here on Herman Cain.

... While decrying race-based politics, Cain has been happy to compare himself to Haagen Dazs black walnut ice cream, joke that he's a "dark horse" or quip that his Secret Service codename should be "Cornbread". By Friday, a Cain Super PAC had cut a television ad entitled: "High-tech lynching".

Just as Barack Obama's race was a key part of his appeal in 2008, Cain is a more attractive candidate for Republicans because he is black. Obama's supporters responded with fury and lobbed accusations of racism when their candidate came under legitimate attack from the Clintons. Cain backers have been similarly vehement.

Sexual allegations against a black man are rightly treated with great suspicion by many Americans because they play on the kind of fears and taboos examined in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mocking Bird. With the case against him thin and the accusation so incendiary, Cain's predicament is prompting more sympathy than opprobrium.

Those who leaked the details of the 1990s sexual harassment cases might have thought that they'd destroy Herman Cain and leave his campaign dangling from a tree. But, as befits this strange and unpredictable election campaign, a funny thing happened on the way to the lynching.

Norm Ornstein at AEI takes a negative view of Cain and the people around him. *The frenzy over allegations of sexual harassment against Herman Cain has obscured another scandal involving the candidate, what appears to be a blatantly illegal use of a non-profit organization to fund the initial stage of his campaign. Set up as a 501(c)3, the same kind of non-profit as charities, universities, and think tanks, Prosperity USA spent tens of thousands of dollars on campaign-related activities for Cain, according to investigative reporting by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Much of the money for Prosperity USA came from Americans for Prosperity, the activist conservative organization funded by the Koch Brothers. Prosperity USA was apparently the brainchild of Cain campaign impresario Mark Block, who had served as Wisconsin director of Americans for Prosperity. ...*

Ross Douthat has a thought about the reasons for the rise of someone like Herman Cain.

... In meritocracies, though, it's the very intelligence of our leaders that creates the worst disasters. Convinced that their own skills are equal to any task or challenge, meritocrats take risks that lower-wattage elites would never even contemplate, embark on more hubristic projects, and become infatuated with statistical models that hold out the promise of a perfectly rational and frictionless world. (Or as Calvin Trillin [put it](#) in these pages, quoting a tweedy WASP waxing nostalgic for the days when Wall Street was dominated by his fellow bluebloods: "Do you think our guys could have invented, say, credit default swaps? Give me a break! They couldn't have done the math.")

Inevitably, pride goeth before a fall. Robert McNamara and the Vietnam-era whiz kids thought they had reduced war to an exact science. Alan Greenspan and Robert Rubin thought that they had done the same to global economics. The architects of the Iraq war thought that the American military could liberate the Middle East from the toils of history; the architects of the European Union thought that a common currency could do the same for Europe. And Jon Corzine thought that his investment acumen equipped him to turn a second-tier brokerage firm into the next Goldman Sachs, by leveraging big, betting big and waiting for the payoff.

What you see in today's Republican primary campaign is a reaction to exactly these kinds of follies — a revolt against the ruling class that our meritocracy has forged, and a search for outsiders with thinner résumés but better instincts. ...

Andrew Malcolm shares a story from his childhood.

In the days of my childhood, just before television, my father and I waited in a very long line on a very cold autumn Friday night outside an observatory in Cleveland. I grew up in the countryside, so black night skies full of countless twinkling pins of light were as much a part of life as trees and a family dog.

We had pilgrimaged into the city to shuffle slowly ahead in that line for a special occasion. The facility was opening its giant telescope to the public because one of the other planets called Saturn was unusually "close" to Earth.

It was a long shuffle though -- my feet were very bored -- down two sides of the block, along the sidewalk, up the steps, through the lobby, up more steps, around the giant telescope base and, one by one, up a few more metal steps to squit into the eyepiece.

Oh my God Almighty, there it was. ...

Orange County Register

Occupiers part of grand alliance against the productive

At heart, Oakland's occupiers and worthless political class want to live as beneficiaries of a prosperous Western society without making any contribution to the productivity necessary to sustain it.

by Mark Steyn

Way back in 1968, after the riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, Mayor Daley declared that his forces were there to "preserve disorder." I believe that was one of Hizzoner's famous malapropisms. Forty-three years later, Jean Quan, mayor of Oakland, and the Oakland City Council have made "preserving disorder" the official municipal policy. On Wednesday, the "Occupy Oakland" occupiers rampaged through the city, shutting down the nation's fifth-busiest port, forcing stores to close, terrorizing those residents foolish enough to commit the reactionary crime of "shopping," destroying ATMs, spraying the Christ the Light Cathedral with the insightful observation "F**k", etc. And how did the Oakland City Council react? The following day they considered a resolution to express their support for "Occupy Oakland" and to call on the city administration to "collaborate with protesters."

That's "collaborate" in the Nazi-occupied France sense: the city's feckless political class are collaborating with anarchists against the taxpayers who maintain them in their sinecures. They're not the only ones. When the rumor spread that the Whole Foods store, of all unlikely corporate villains, had threatened to fire employees who participated in the protest, the Regional President David Lannon took to Facebook: "We totally support our Team Members participating in the General Strike today – rumors are false!" But, despite his "total support", they trashed his store anyway, breaking windows and spray-painting walls. As The Oakland Tribune reported:

"A man who witnessed the Whole Foods attack, but asked not to be identified, said he was in the store buying an organic orange when the crowd arrived."

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"The experience was surreal, the man said. 'They were wearing masks. There was this whole mess of people, and no police here. That was weird.'"

No, it wasn't. It was municipal policy. In fairness to the miserable David Lannon, Whole Foods was in damage-control mode. Men's Wearhouse in Oakland had no such excuse. In solidarity with the masses, they printed up a huge poster declaring "We Stand With The 99%" and announcing they'd be closed that day. In return, they got their windows smashed.

I'm a proud member of the 1 percent, and I'd have been tempted to smash 'em myself. A few weeks back, finding myself suddenly without luggage, I shopped at a Men's Wearhouse, *faute de mieux*, in Burlington, Vermont. Never again. I'm not interested in patronizing craven corporations so decadent and self-indulgent that as a matter of corporate policy they support the destruction of civilized society. Did George Zimmer, founder of Men's Wearhouse and backer of Howard Dean, marijuana decriminalization and many other fashionable causes, ever glance at the photos of the OWS occupiers and ponder how many of "the 99%" were ever likely to be in need of his two-for-one deal on suits and neckties? And did he think even these dummies were dumb enough to fall for such a feebly corporatist attempt at appeasing the mob?

I don't "stand with the 99%," and certainly not downwind of them. But I'm all for their "occupation" continuing on its merry way. It usefully clarifies the stakes. At first glance, an alliance of anarchists and government might appear to be somewhat paradoxical. But the formal convergence in Oakland makes explicit the movement's aims: They're anarchists for statism, wild free-spirited youth demanding more and more total government control of every aspect of life – just so long as it respects the fundamental human right to sloth. What's happening in Oakland is a logical exercise in class solidarity: the government class enthusiastically backing the breakdown of civil order is making common cause with the leisured varsity class, the thuggish union class and the criminal class in order to stick it to what's left of the beleaguered productive class. It's a grand alliance of all those societal interests that wish to enjoy in perpetuity a lifestyle they are not willing to earn. Only the criminal class is reasonably upfront about this. The rest – the lifetime legislators, the unions defending lavish and unsustainable benefits, the "scholars" whiling away a somnolent half-decade at Complacency U – are obliged to dress it up a little with some hooey about "social justice" and whatnot.

But that's all it takes to get the media and modish if insecure corporate entities to string along. Whole Foods can probably pull it off. So can Ben & Jerry's, the wholly owned subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch corporation UniLever that nevertheless successfully passes itself off as some sort of tie-dyed Vermont hippie commune. But a chain of stores that sells shirts, ties, the garb of the corporate lackey, has a tougher sell. The class that gets up in the morning, pulls on its lousy Men's Wearhouse get-up and trudges off to work has to pay for all the other classes, and the strain is beginning to tell.

Let it be said that the "occupiers" are right on the banks: They shouldn't have been bailed out. America has one of the most dysfunctional banking systems in the civilized world, and most of its allegedly indispensable institutions should have been allowed to fail. But the Occupy Oakland types have no serious response, other than the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by government-funded inertia.

America is seizing up before our eyes: The decrepit airports, the underwater property market, the education racket, the hyper-regulated business environment. Yet, curiously, the best example of this sclerosis is the alleged "revolutionary" movement itself. It's the voice of youth, yet everything about it is cobwebbed. It's more like an open-mike karaoke night of a revolution than the real thing. I don't mean just the placards with the same old portable quotes by Lenin et al, but also, say, the photograph in Forbes of Rachel, a 20-year-old "unemployed cosmetologist" with remarkably uncosmetological complexion, dressed in pink hair and nose ring as if it's London, 1977, and she's killing time at Camden Lock before the Pistols gig. Except that that's three-and-a-half decades ago, so it would be like the Sex Pistols dressing like the Andrews Sisters. Are America's revolting youth so totally pathetically moribund they can't even invent their own hideous fashion statements? Last weekend, the nonagenarian Commie Pete Seeger

was wheeled out at Zuccotti Park to serenade the oppressed masses with "If I Had A Hammer." As it happens, I *do* have a hammer. *Pace* Mr. Seeger, they're not that difficult to acquire, even in a recession. But, if I took it to Zuccotti Park, I doubt very much anyone would know how to use it, or be able to muster the energy to do so.

At heart, Oakland's occupiers and worthless political class want more of the same fix that has made America the Brokest Nation in History: They expect to live as beneficiaries of a prosperous Western society without making any contribution to the productivity necessary to sustain it. This is the "idealism" that the media are happy to sentimentalize, and that enough poseurs among the corporate executives are happy to indulge – at least until the window smashing starts. To "occupy" Oakland or anywhere else, you have to have something to put in there. Yet the most striking feature of OWS is its hollowness. And in a strange way the emptiness of its threats may be a more telling indictment of a fin de civilization West than a more coherent protest movement could ever have mounted.

San Francisco Chronicle

OCCUPY MOVEMENT

The root of all Oakland

by Debra Saunders

The morning after Occupy Oakland's midweek violent protests, the take in the Bay Area was that it was a dirty, rotten shame that a few bad-egg anarchists hijacked a mostly peaceful protest and made an otherwise good cause look bad.

That is so delusional.

From the start, troublemakers have advocated violent protest during the group's general assemblies. Guys with masks and ill intent threw rocks and bottles at police before officers used tear gas - and Iraq vet Scott Olsen, 24, sadly was injured - to clear Frank Ogawa Plaza on Oct. 25. They were armed with incendiary devices when the sun went down on Nov. 2.

Councilman Ignacio De La Fuente is sick of hearing about how peaceful the majority of protesters were. "The reason the minority's here," he sputtered, is because "the majority's here."

The majority of Occupiers aren't victims, they're enablers.

There was no positive political message. The goal of the general strike was supposed to be to "liberate Oakland and shut down the 1 percent." That's not positive. They want to shut down the city, but they don't want to get anything done. The strike didn't hurt Wall Street bankers or other big shots among the top 1 percent; it cut into the pockets of baristas and truck drivers.

Free speech does not mean free camping.

Councilwoman Nancy Nadel doesn't understand the First Amendment. She authored a resolution that says, "Occupy Oakland demonstrators are asserting their rights to free speech and peaceful assembly 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in order to create public dialogue around corporate control of the political process and public space." The resolution would have put the City Council on record opposing "the use of force to remove the encampment unless absolutely necessary."

Free speech rights do not include a right to trample the rights of others or keep other people from making a living.

Do not think that this general strike only cut into business activities in Oakland for one day. Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce head Joseph Haraburda has seen the lasting damage these actions have inflicted on Oakland's reputation as a place to do business. He counts three commercial tenant cancellations, including one for an operation that would have hired 100 employees.

Oakland's former Mayor (and now governor) [Jerry Brown](#) devoted his tenure to enticing 10,000 new residents to live downtown. Mayor Jean Quan has undone that good work: Who wants to buy a condo in the land of broken windows?

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Now, if Oakland were a Wall Street boardroom, activists would be swept out of sight. But because Oakland is a liberal enclave - and Quan invited activists back to their encampment after the Oct. 25 police sweep - the number of tents in front of City Hall has been growing and now numbers 165.

Thursday's City Council meeting might signal a turning point. More than a hundred people, overwhelmingly in support of the Occupiers, scolded, lectured or addressed the council members. Most council members had been friendly toward the protests. But by the end of the night, Nadel conceded that she did not have the votes to pass her resolution.

It would appear warnings issued for weeks by Councilmen De La Fuente and Larry Reid finally had sunk in. As De La Fuente asked earlier, why did Oakland become the center of the Occupy movement? Because City Hall was "obstructing the police from doing their damn job. That's why this is happening."

Quan, Nadel and company had made trashing Oakland after dark as easy as mugging an old lady.

"I think people are waking up," Haraburda told me earlier. "I'm getting more and more pointed in my comments because I'm more and more upset."

Waking up is good. Because when Occupy Oakland boasts that it plans to "Occupy Everything," the public is beginning to understand: Anarchists and their enablers don't start with the 1 percent. They cut their teeth on the soft meat.

Neals Nuze

[The Occupiers belong to Obama](#)

by Neal Boortz

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- Barack Obama has spend years excoriating corporations. Remember when he changed the standard term "business jet" to "corporate jet?" Just part of his effort to demonize corporate America and to assign to evil corporations the blame for our current fiscal situation. Now we have the occupiers bragging about their "anti-corporation" credentials.
- Again, for years, Obama spoke of the evil of the 1% and the taxes they were paying (or not paying). In the beginning Obama would simply say that the top 1% "needed" to pay "their fair share" of taxes. Then, this year, he started flat-out stating that the top 1% "were not paying their fair share" of taxes. Now we have the occupiers with their "we are the 99%" signs and chants.

The more you listen the more you see that these useful idiots are merely repeating the very same things that Obama has been saying for much of his adult life. They are Barry's Kids ... Obama's Children. He cannot escape them.

Telegraph, UK

[A funny thing happened on the way to the Herman Cain lynching](#)

by Toby Harnden

Herman Cain's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad week ended on a discordantly high note. Addressing a packed ballroom in Washington's Convention Centre, the former pizza mogul prompted whoops and cheers when he referred obliquely to the sexual harassment storm that had at times threatened to sweep away his White House candidacy.

"You know, I've been in Washington all week, and I've attracted a little bit of attention," he boomed. "And there was an article in *The New York Times* today that has attempted to attract some more attention. You know, that's kind of what happens when you start to show up near or at the top of the polls. It just happens that way."

The [article in question](#) was one of the few that had not been about allegations that Cain, the unlikely Republican front runner in national polls, had behaved inappropriately with women while he was president of the National Restaurant Association.

Instead, the article sought to bracket Cain with the Koch brothers, the billionaire bogeymen for liberals who founded the Americans for Prosperity group and pump money into conservative and liberal causes. Rather than seek to wriggle out of the association, [Cain embraced it](#), declaring, as the room erupted: "I am the Koch brothers' brother from another mother."

The address by the former motivational speaker, at the Americans for Prosperity [annual conference](#), was vintage Cain – strong on rhetoric, short on policy detail, powerfully delivered and unashamedly politically incorrect.

Hours earlier, an [ABC/Washington Post poll](#) had found that Cain's national popularity had improved during a week that, by any conventional standards, had been disastrous.

Mitt Romney, the best-funded, most-disciplined and most experienced candidate, was stuck on 25 percent while Cain was up six points from a month at 23 percent and breathing down his neck. As every student of American politics knows, national polls matter little in a primary race. But the surveys in early-voting states like Iowa and South Carolina are also indicating that Cain has not been damaged.

There's no way this should be happening. The 65-year-old grandfather's response to the sexual harassment claims that have emerged out of the woodwork after a dozen years has been miserable. At least two cases were settled for a total of \$80,000 after allegations were made against him.

Rather than being prepared for the inevitable disclosure of the cases, he was caught flat-footed, claiming at first not to remember what had happened and then dribbling out details and shifting explanations over the ensuing days. He fuelled more controversy by blaming Governor Rick Perry's campaign for planting the story, lost his temper with the press and was barely able to talk about the US economy until his speech on Friday.

By any normal rules of politics, Cain should be toast. So what's going on?

Simply put, the media and Cain's detractors have over-played their hand. By Friday night, Politico, which broke the [original story](#), had published [94 articles](#) on the allegations in under six days. Every other major publication had followed suit. Every time he stepped out of a room, Cain was mobbed by reporters.

Yet despite the maelstrom, Cain's accusers remain anonymous and the details of the allegations oddly vague. With many conservatives believing that sexual harassment lawsuits are an industry and that frivolous cases are often settled to avoid more expensive litigation, there was a growing sense that Cain was being treated unfairly.

Cain's very amateurishness became almost endearing. Rather than mouthing slick talking points, Cain got angry with the journalists (a profession loathed by most Republican activists) and claimed that he was the victim of a "high-tech lynching".

That was the phrase used by Clarence Thomas during the ugly confirmation hearings for his seat on the Supreme Court in 1991. Thomas had been accused by Anita Hill, a former subordinate, of making crude sexual comments.

Vilified and mocked by the Left, Thomas's righteous anger boiled over as he condemned the hearings as "a circus" and "a national disgrace" in which "uppity blacks who in any way deign to think for themselves" would be destroyed. "You will be lynched, destroyed, caricatured by a committee of the US Senate rather than hung from a tree."

Cain, of course, is also a black conservative. As such, he sends many on the Left crazy because he defies the standard categories of politics. White conservatives are eager to support conservatives of colour partly to combat allegations of racism but also because they appreciate the courage it takes for blacks to break out of the Democratic party straitjacket.

Despite his anti-politician message and his campaign gaffes (he did not know [China had nuclear weapons](#), had not heard of the [Palestinian right of return](#) and suggested he would free [Guantanamo Bay prisoners](#) if terrorist hostage-takers demanded it, to name but three) Cain is a shrewd operator.

While decrying race-based politics, Cain has been happy to compare himself to Haagen Dazs [black walnut ice cream](#), joke that he's a "[dark horse](#)" or quip that his Secret Service codename should be "[Cornbread](#)". By Friday, a Cain [Super PAC](#) had cut a [television ad](#) entitled: "High-tech lynching".

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American.com

[The Cain scandal you haven't heard about](#)

by Norman J. Ornstein

The frenzy over allegations of sexual harassment against Herman Cain has obscured another scandal involving the candidate, what appears to be a blatantly illegal use of a non-profit organization to fund the initial stage of his campaign. Set up as a 501(c)3, the same kind of non-profit as charities, universities, and think tanks, Prosperity USA spent tens of thousands of dollars on campaign-related activities for Cain, according to investigative reporting by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Much of the money for Prosperity USA came from Americans for Prosperity, the activist conservative organization funded by the Koch Brothers. Prosperity USA was apparently the brainchild of Cain campaign impresario Mark Block, who had served as Wisconsin director of Americans for Prosperity.

Mark Block is already well known to campaign junkies and a larger swath of voters because he was the star of the Cain commercial that ended with him blowing smoke from his cigarette into the camera. But Block has been well known in Wisconsin for a long time—as a dirty trickster accused at various times of voter suppression and who was actually banned for three years from participating in Wisconsin political campaigns as a settlement from charges that he

coordinated a judge's re-election campaign with a special interest group. Block has an even more checkered personal history—a tax lien from the IRS, a home foreclosure, and two drunken driving charges.

We have no idea what will happen with the sexual harassment brouhaha. But if Cain survives it—and maybe even emerges stronger with conservative base voters—it should not fuzz up another serious question about his competence and judgment of people, especially since he has bragged that he knows nothing about foreign leaders and little about foreign policy, and will just bring the best people around him if he becomes president. If his idea of the best is the scoundrel who is his campaign guru, this is not a guy who ought to be anywhere near the Oval Office, much less in charge of the nuclear football.

NY Times

[Our Reckless Meritocracy](#)

by Ross Douthat

HERE is a story about the promise of America. A boy grows up in rural Illinois, the grandson of a farmer who lost everything in the Great Depression. He goes to his small-town high school and then attends his state university, where he walks onto the basketball team and graduates Phi Beta Kappa. He does a stint in the Marine Corps Reserves, gets his M.B.A. and then goes to work for one of the Midwest's regional banks.

In a different era, he might have stayed there for the rest of his career. But he's lucky enough to be coming up in the 1960s and '70s, just as the WASP elite is fading and the big East Coast institutions are opening their doors to strivers from all over. So our Illinois farm boy climbs and keeps on climbing.

He moves to New Jersey and goes to work for Goldman Sachs. He rises to become the company's C.E.O., and a millionaire many times over. He goes into politics, winning a term in the United States Senate and then getting elected governor of New Jersey. When Barack Obama wins the White House, he's discussed as a candidate for Treasury secretary. And when he loses his re-election bid, he returns to Wall Street as the head of a financial services company.

By now you may have guessed that I'm talking about Jon Corzine. If so, you probably know that his inspiring story has an unhappy ending — for New Jersey, which faced an enormous budgetary mess when Corzine left office; for his latest Wall Street firm, MF Global, which filed for bankruptcy last week after somehow mislaying some \$600 million in customer money; and for the former farm boy himself, who resigned on Friday in disgrace.

But this sudden fall from grace doesn't make Corzine's life story any less emblematic of our meritocratic era. Indeed, his rise, recklessness and ruin are all of a piece. For decades, the United States has been opening paths to privilege for its brightest and most determined young people, culling the best and the brightest from Illinois and Mississippi and Montana and placing them in positions of power in Manhattan and Washington. By elevating the children of farmers and janitors as well as lawyers and stockbrokers, we've created what seems like the most capable, hardworking, high-I.Q. elite in all of human history.

And for the last 10 years, we've watched this same elite lead us off a cliff — mostly by being too smart for its own good.

In hereditary aristocracies, debacles tend to flow from stupidity and pigheadedness: think of the Charge of the Light Brigade or the Battle of the Somme. In one-party states, they tend to flow from ideological mania: think of China's Great Leap Forward, or Stalin's experiment with "Lysenkoist" agriculture.

In meritocracies, though, it's the very intelligence of our leaders that creates the worst disasters. Convinced that their own skills are equal to any task or challenge, meritocrats take risks that lower-wattage elites would never even contemplate, embark on more hubristic projects, and become infatuated with statistical models that hold out the promise of a perfectly rational and frictionless world. (Or as Calvin Trillin [put it](#) in these pages, quoting a tweedy WASP waxing nostalgic for the days when Wall Street was dominated by his fellow bluebloods: "Do you think *our* guys could have invented, say, credit default swaps? Give me a break! They couldn't have done the math.")

Inevitably, pride goeth before a fall. Robert McNamara and the Vietnam-era whiz kids thought they had reduced war to an exact science. Alan Greenspan and Robert Rubin thought that they had done the same to global economics. The architects of the Iraq war thought that the American military could liberate the Middle East from the toils of history; the architects of the European Union thought that a common currency could do the same for Europe. And Jon Corzine thought that his investment acumen equipped him to turn a second-tier brokerage firm into the next Goldman Sachs, by leveraging big, betting big and waiting for the payoff.

What you see in today's Republican primary campaign is a reaction to exactly these kinds of follies — a revolt against the ruling class that our meritocracy has forged, and a search for outsiders with thinner résumés but better instincts.

But from Michele Bachmann to Herman Cain, the outsiders haven't risen to the challenge. It will do America no good to replace the arrogant with the ignorant, the overconfident with the incompetent.

In place of reckless meritocrats, we don't need feckless know-nothings. We need intelligent leaders with a sense of their own limits, experienced people whose lives have taught them caution. We still need the best and brightest, but we need them to have somehow learned humility along the way.

Investor's.com

[A soaring NASA rocket prompts thoughts of earthly politics a year from 2012 vote](#)

by Andrew Malcolm



In the days of my childhood, just before television, my father and I waited in a very long line on a very cold autumn Friday night outside an observatory in Cleveland. I grew up in the countryside, so black night skies full of countless twinkling pins of light were as much a part of life as trees and a family dog.

We had pilgrimaged into the city to shuffle slowly ahead in that line for a special occasion. The facility was opening its giant telescope to the public because one of the other planets called Saturn was unusually "close" to Earth.

It was a long shuffle though -- my feet were very bored -- down two sides of the block, along the sidewalk, up the steps, through the lobby, up more steps, around the giant telescope base and, one by one, up a few more metal steps to squint into the eyepiece.

Oh my God Almighty, there it was.

The thing was huge! It filled the lens. Covered with yolky swirls, tilted. And it really had those tidy rings; National Geographic was right. I had never seen nor imagined anything so immensely immense. I now know Saturn is nearly 800 times larger than Earth. My father recalls an unusually long silence enroute home.

Evidently, I never got over that intriguing and strangely comforting fascination with large things that made me feel small, very small. I suspect I'm not alone. Being in the presence of large airplanes, ships, mountains, oceans, machines and even personalities awards a welcome perspective. I saw a photo last week of a gaseous star nursery eight billion light years from my desk. That scale -- a single light year is just under 5.9 trillion miles -- remains deliciously incomprehensible.

It's a reminder to humans, me anyway, that despite all the wondrous things we have accomplished, humans remain minute ants on this relatively tiny orb moving through space at eight miles per second.

Earthly lessons from NASA flights

I got to thinking about all this the other night, drawn to wait nearly five hours on cold cement in a damp field for the launch of that spot-lit white rocket just 15,000 feet away. It held the latest earth science satellite for NASA and NOAA, [NPP](#), to study the intricate workings of this thin environmental envelope wrapped around the planet.

I was part of another grand [NASA Tweetup](#) to give regular Twitter users unusually open access to its amazing work. Here's what the new two-ton satellite will do from 521 miles up -- capture varied images and instrument readings of every square inch of Earth every single day, creating nearly real-time data for weather forecasters as well as an hourly environmental history database for study and comparison in coming decades.

You know those family e-mails you get that contain maybe 7kb, or 7,000 bytes, of data? Well, the satellite will dump back down to Earth 48,000,000,000,000 bytes of data every day. See what I mean about big?

Sitting in that field, my feet were cold, not bored. So why the personal excitement? I think it had to do with the approaching launch of that large, complex rocket painstakingly built by teams of American technicians, in contrast to the everyday small things we each live with in this country these days.

Instead of being united as a nation by some grand tasking -- President Kennedy's challenge to reach the moon comes to mind -- many of us have by dint of the times become consumed with individual survival, keeping a job, a house, a car, like single swimmers flailing the water in fear and search of lifeboats.

There was a brief hope in 2008 for change to believe in, the enticing possibility of a newly re-discovered continental unity. But tough times and puny leaders have combined to create a widespread national ethos that Mike Royko once captured as the motto of Chicago's local political machine -- "Ubi est mea." ("Where's mine?")

Watching earthlings with petty plans

Amid our own daily fears and priorities, we watch this crowd of elected officials cynically wrap their own ambitions and goals in the flag of national need. And so many of us, without really thinking much, pick sides to believe in and cheer for like a high school football game and immunize ourselves against reconsideration because we no longer share common big goals.

This administration and its House foes are, for instance, both whacking and reordering space programs, seeing them as lifeless sums of money, no longer enabling national goals or pride. The space shuttles, designed for 100 missions each, are all gone now after no more than 40. So, we must rent rides on Russian rockets. The American astronaut corps, once national heroes, has declined, along with morale.

When I arrived in that lumpy field near Vandenberg Air Force Base about 10 p.m. on launch night late last month, there were two of us monitoring the not-so distant \$800 million rocket. By 2 a.m. there were hundreds -- seniors, youngsters, teens, couples, all wanting to witness something bigger than themselves.

The spontaneous community played trivia games. told jokes, shared cellphone photos. A radio appeared. People danced. Strangers conversed in the dark, unable to decipher each other's faces but fully grasping the shared thoughts.

At T-minus 90 seconds silence. One minute. Everyone standing, riveted. Thirty seconds. T-minus 20 seconds. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2- Main engine ignition. For one second, nothing.

Then nine solid-fuel rockets ignite. A sudden explosion of silent sunlight shatters the darkness. "Ohhh!" everyone exclaims, wincing, in the suddenly lit field.

Silence where there should be fury

From the pad, still silence. The manmade sun begins to rise, slowly. At T-plus 3 seconds, barely clear of the tower, crackling thunder blasts through the crowd.

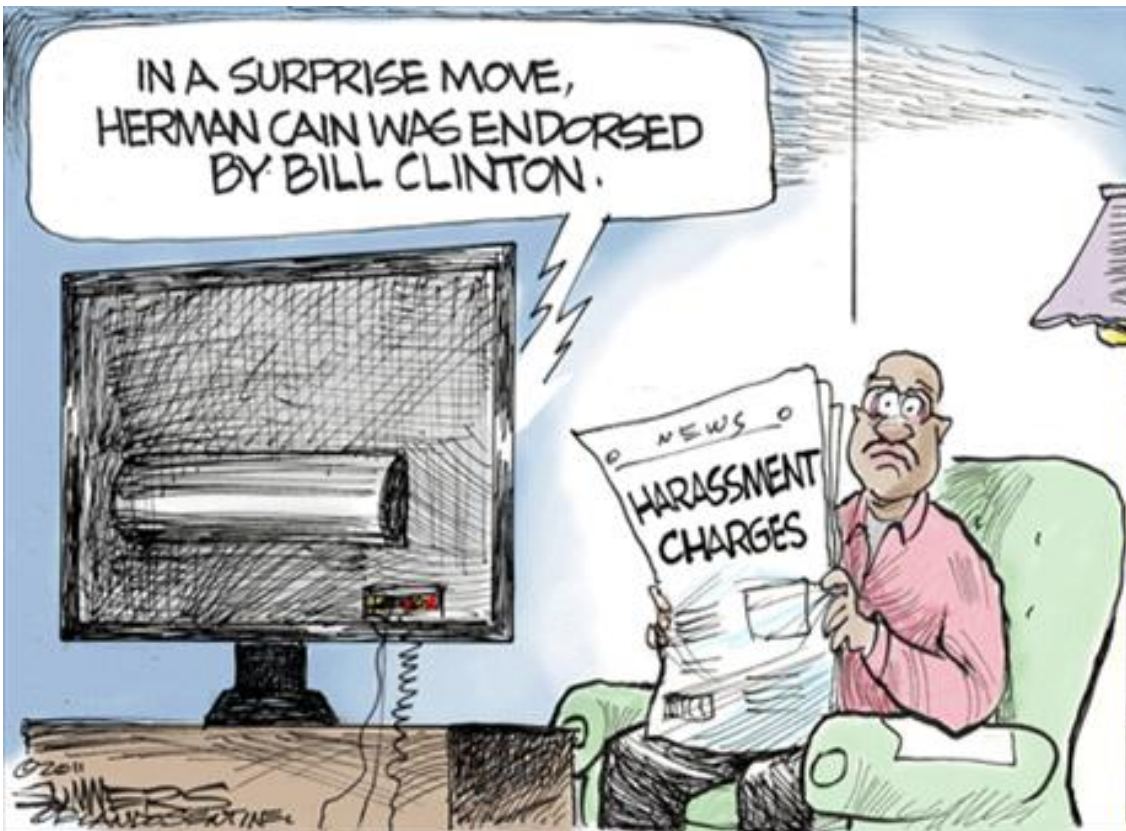
The bright light lifts, higher and faster. Faster. Even faster, arcing out over the Pacific. Hundreds of Americans, unknown to each other, scream, yell, exchange inaccurate high-fives in the resuming darkness.

When my father and I saw Saturn that black night not so long ago as space counts time, a jet pilot named Chuck Yeager flew faster than sound for the first time, Mach 1.

As we watched the other night, the Delta2 rocket and new NASA satellite soared away at Mach 26.

I felt wonderfully small -- again.





WHO WANTS SAUSAGE?

AAAAHHHHHHH

HE HAS TO STOP DOING THAT...

Fairview
11/11/08

