

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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A FOOL AND HIS QUESTIONS

A quotable source - who for the nonce shall remain anonymous - once noted: "*A wise man knows what he knows; a wiser man knows what he does not know; a truly wise man knows people who can help teach him that which he does not know.*" And as much as I wish I could tell you that the source was some literary lion - Aeschylus, Moliere, Dickens - I cannot; indeed, this anonymous source is a fool. How's that? Well, as the British actor and wit Richard O'Brien has deftly put it: "*He who quotes himself has a fool for a source.*" I am embarrassed to admit that I began this paragraph by quoting . . . myself.



Touchstone

To mitigate the embarrassment just a smidge, I introduce a quote from Touchstone -- Duke Frederick's court jester in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

"The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

So, according to both Shakespeare and Richard O'Brien, I am a fool. Nonetheless, I would like to think of myself as one who is wise - wise enough to know what he does not know and then seek the assistance of those who do. And so, I turn to you, dear reader in the hope that you can provide answers to a couple of things I neither know nor can claim to understand.

- Why is it that those who argue loudest and most persistently for government to stay out of their lives - their education, business, and weapons to name but three - argue even more stridently for government to essentially control women's bodies and proclaim who we may and may not marry.? There is a glaring inconsistency here I just cannot fathom. The most obvious example of this inconsistency is an anti-Federal Government pro Tea Party rally in which you see people carrying signs reading "Keep your hands off my Medicare . . . "
- Over the past 6+ years I have heard many of the president's most garrulous detractors scourge him for having had next to no real experience prior to his election in 2008. "That's what the country gets for getting fooled into electing a green, inexperienced idealist," they snipe. And yet today, many of these same garrulous detractors are offering overwhelming support to not one, not two but three -- count 'em three -- possible Republican nominees who between them have never served in a single elective office -- even for a single day. About the closest the retired pediatric neurosurgeon (that's Dr. Ben Carson), the disgraced Fortune 500 CEO (that's Carly Fiorina) and the blustering real estate baron (that the one "who shall not be mentioned by name") - the closest any of them have come to serving in office is losing a senate race by 10 points and nearly a million votes. So why is it alright for them to be without credentials where President Obama must have more experience than Adams *père et fils*, both Roosevelts and Ronald Reagan? Can anyone answer that?
- If I live to be one-hundred-and-twenty, I doubt I will ever understand how and why it is that so many people can be coerced into voting against the own self-interest. How, as an example, is it that so working class people -- some employed, some still looking for work - can be inveigled into supporting massive tax cuts which will benefit only those who are earning in the hundreds of thousands of millions per year, or derive a significant percentage of their income from dividends? This helps the lower middle class and working poor not a whit; it likely harms them. And yet, a significant percentage have been trained to believe that lowering taxes on the wealthy will somehow be their salvation. Will someone kindly explain this to me?
- How can it be that after years of careful debunking, nearly one-third of all Americans - and nearly 45% of those identifying as Republican - still firmly believe that Barack Obama is a Muslim? Moreover, according to a new [CNN/ORC poll](#) a whopping 54% of those who support "he who shall not be referred to by name" believe the president is a Muslim. Of late, a preposterous essay by conservative radio host Mike Gallagher has been making its way around the Internet. Published under the title *President Obama It Was You*, the essay explains away quite a number of Obama "diplomatic inanities" and "international insults" by claiming that these are the conscious missteps of a practicing Muslim. My question is this: why of why do so many -- including otherwise intelligent, educate citizens - continue to believe this unbelievable bugle oil? Can anyone enlighten me?

- Lastly, I cannot understand how so many people give serious consideration to supporting those who use maximal criticism and minimal programming in their campaigns. They are quite good in telling potential supporters where the president and his legions have erred; they utterly fail in telling these same potential supporters precisely what they would do once in office - the diametric opposite of what is currently being done. Have we come to the point where anything else would have to be better than what we've got? Can't anyone see the potential flaw? Can anyone offer enlightenment?

Indeed, I am wise to the point of knowing what I do not know. For all of those who have told me I am a fool, please, I beg you, share with me the answers to my questions. Enlighten me. Then I can be your wise student and you my even wiser mentor

And if you cannot, perhaps it's time to reshuffle your intellectual deck.

For as old Ben Franklin -- who certainly read and appreciated the wit of Shakespeare's *Touchstone* once noted - "*A fool can condemn, criticize and complain - and most fools do*"

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