

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



April 05, 2014

THINGS DON'T GO BETTER WITH KOCH

What is that god-awful noise we're beginning to hear from above? Sorry to inform you, but it's the thudding sound of shovels-full of dirt landing atop Democracy's coffin. And who's doing the shoveling? It's the mega über rich, who have been bequeathed yet another gift from the Supreme Court in this week's McCutcheon decision. (For those endowed with a strong stomach and a stiff spine, you can follow [this link](#) and can read the court's decision. But don't say I didn't warn you!)

Once again, by a 5-4 majority, the court has reaffirmed the conservative meme that money is speech and as such, must be unfettered. The court's ruling means that a single



contributor, armed with limitless oodles of cash, can do more to elect -- or defeat -- a candidate than thousands upon thousands of voters. Moreover, wealthy donors are no longer saddled with a cap on how many candidates and party committees he or she can contribute to in any given election cycle. This means that if billionaires like the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson, or the Scaifes can now make six-figure donations to virtually every candidate running for office in America. To be certain, there are a

few progressive, Democrat-leaning billionaires out there. Truth be told however, the vast majority of cash-heavy donors are conservative Republicans, Tea Partiers and Libertarians.

In essence, what the Supreme Court has done is to effectively give hyper wealthy plutocrats like the brothers Koch a green light to do pretty much as they like with America; to reshape and refashion it so as to provide them with maximal power and profits. This is why we're beginning to hear the inexorable thud of dirt being shoveled atop Democracy's coffin. Ironically, [poll after poll](#) shows that a majority -- an overwhelming majority -- of the public believes that there is far too much money in politics; that the deck is stacked in favor of the very wealthy. And yet, a majority of the American public will likely vote for Republican senate candidates come November, thanks in large part to tens of thousands of ads underwritten by the very wealthy. And the largest percentage of these ads will contain blatant untruths about people, policies and programs.

It is absolutely mind boggling how much money the Koch brothers contribute to conservative politicians and conservative causes. To the Kochs, America is a battleground between the forces of light and darkness -- between "patriots" and "collectivists." (Remember, their late father was the original financial backer of the John Birch Society.) To them, what's good for Koch Industries is good for the U.S.A. Their America is a land of low -- or no -- corporate taxes, of few if any regulations, and a vast cadre of elected officials who can be counted on to do their bidding. The Koch Brothers have pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into "foundations," "research institutes" and "voter education projects" aimed "proving" that climate change is a collectivist lie, that unions are a cesspool of greedy filth, and that there in America is suffering from a pandemic of voter fraud. They pay good money to elect senators, representatives, state legislators and local officials who will march to their tune.

Need proof?

Just the other day, Kansas Senator Jerry Moran, who chairs the National Republican Senate Campaign Committee (NRSC) and happens to be the single-largest recipient of Koch brother largesse, took the floor to praise his financial backers and read a Wall Street Journal op-ed piece written by Charles Koch in its entirety. It's one thing to read into the record, say, the Declaration of Independence or Washington's farewell address to the nation; but a self-serving editorial written by your largest donor? Prior to reading [the op-ed piece](#) (in which Charles Koch tries to paint himself as a victim and proclaim that he's "fighting to restore a free society"), Senator Moran told an almost empty chamber: *"In Kansas, there's a company called Koch Industries that is a component of our state, its economy, and many, several thousand, Kansans work there. And unfortunately in the political discourse of our country, Koch Industries, its owners, are often subject to attack."* And why not? Haven't they been responsible for attacking virtually anyone who disagrees with their Robber Baron mentality? Reading Charles Koch's piece, I was reminded of Poe's [The Cask of Amontillado](#), in which Montresor entombs his former friend Fortunato for an unknown, long-simmering slight. Shortly before encasing Fortunato in an

underground niche, he proclaims his family motto -- *Nemo me impune lacessit* -- namely, "No one insults me with impunity!"

Over the past many years, the Koch Brothers have funded dozens upon dozens of conservative groups, including:

- [American Commitment \(CPI\)](#)
- [American Legislative Exchange Council \(ALEC\)](#)
- [Americans for Prosperity](#) (formerly Citizens For A Sound Economy)
- [American Energy Alliance](#)
- [American Future Fund](#)
- [Americans for Job Security](#)
- [Americans for Tax Reform](#) (Grover Norquist's group)
- [Association for American Innovation](#)
- [Bill of Rights Institute](#)
- [Cato Institute](#)
- [Cause of Action](#)
- [Center to Protect Patient Rights](#)
- [Charles Koch Institute](#)
- [CitizenLink](#)
- [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#)
- [Concerned Women for America](#)
- [Energy and Environment Legal Institute](#)
- [Federalist Society](#)
- [Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment](#)
- [Fraser Institute](#) (Canada)
- [Freedom Works](#) (formerly Citizens For A Sound Economy)
- [Galen Institute](#)
- [Goldwater Institute](#)
- [Heartland Institute](#)
- [Institute for Human Studies](#)
- [Institute for Policy Innovation](#) (Dick Armey)
- [Knowledge and Progress Fund](#) (Charles Koch)
- [Manhattan Institute](#)
- [Mercatus Center](#)
- [National Petrochemical and Refiners Association](#) (Koch Industries is a member)
- [National Taxpayers Union](#)
- [Natural Gas Supply Association](#) (Koch Industries is a member)
- [Public Notice](#)
- [Reason Foundation](#) (and Reason.com)
- [State Policy Network](#)
- [Texas Prosperity Project](#)

If you click on a sampling of the above links you will notice that there is a tremendous amount of overlap among these foundations and organizations. Most support free-market solutions to just about any challenge facing society.

One of these groups which the Koch Brothers lavish funding on, [Freedom Partners](#) is organized under the same section of the Tax Code as a trade association, a 501(c)6, which allows the group to conceal its donors from public release, although the amounts and recipients of its major grants are public. In essence "Freedom Partners" is a so-called "pass through," a group which bundles huge donations and then distributes them to various groups. Freedom Partners makes possible such groups as:

- [Center to Protect Patient Rights](#), a group that vehemently opposes Obamacare: a total of **\$115 million**, from three grants.
- [Americans for Prosperity](#), an organizing and advocacy group that is courted by Republican presidential candidates: **\$32.3 million**.
- [The 60 Plus Association](#), a free-market seniors group that also opposes Obamacare: **\$15.7 million**.
- [American Future Fund](#), an Iowa group that spent a lot of money on ads in 2012, many for Mitt Romney: **\$13.6 million**.
- [Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee](#), which opposes gay rights, sex education and feminism: **\$8.2 million**.
- [Themis Trust](#), a Koch-based voter database that is made available to other conservative organizations: **\$5.8 million**.
- [Generation Opportunity](#), a group for "liberty-loving" young people: **\$5 million**.
- [The LIBRE Initiative](#), which targets a free-market message to Hispanic immigrants: **\$3.1 million**.
- [The National Rifle Association](#): **\$3.5 million**.

Besides their vast petrochemical empire, Koch Industries also manufactures or owns the following products:

- Angel Soft Ultra
- Brawny Towels
- Dixie Cups (& napkins & plates)
- Insular Plates
- Perfect Touch cups, paper products

- Quilted Northern
- Sparkle paper towels
- Stainmaster
- Vanity Fair napkins & paper towels
- Mardi Gras napkins
- Zee Napkins
- Georgia Pacific products

Home/Office papers:

- Advantage
- Image Plus
- Spectrum

Koch Industry Gasoline:

- Chevron
- Union
- Union 76
- Conoco

Let's be clear: things don't go better with Koch, unless you happen to be one of the titans who are shoveling soil on Democracy's coffin. Without question, all the above is overwhelming. What can the average person do? Koch money stacks the decks in thousands of different and insidious ways, not the least of which is underwriting legislative campaigns throughout the country to limit voters' abilities to cast ballots -- especially if they're young, old, impoverished or ethnic. About the only way to fight back at this point is to boycott anything and everything Koch Industries makes or owns. Might I suggest that you copy the list above and then keep it with you the next time you go shopping?

It ain't much, but it's better than lying there listening to the thudding of the soil . . .

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April 13, 2014

NOT ALL RESIDENT ALIENS ARE FOREIGNERS

Every president has one or more nicknames. Some are instantly recognizable:

- "The Father of Our Country" (Washington)
- "Old Hickory" (Jackson)
- "Honest Abe" (Lincoln)
- "The Roughrider" (Teddy Roosevelt)

Some are rather obscure:

- "Old Sink or Swim" (John Adams)
- "The Little Magician" (Martin Van Buren)
- "His Fraudulency" (Rutherford B. Hayes)
- "Ten-Cent Jimmy" (James Buchanan)
- "His Obstinacy" (Grover Cleveland)

Then, there are our most recent presidential nicknames which, because they are so recent, are instantly recognizable:

- "The Great Communicator"
- "Slick Willie"
- "Dubya"
- "No Drama Obama"

President Barack Obama has one other less descriptive, more acid-etched moniker that even has its own variation:

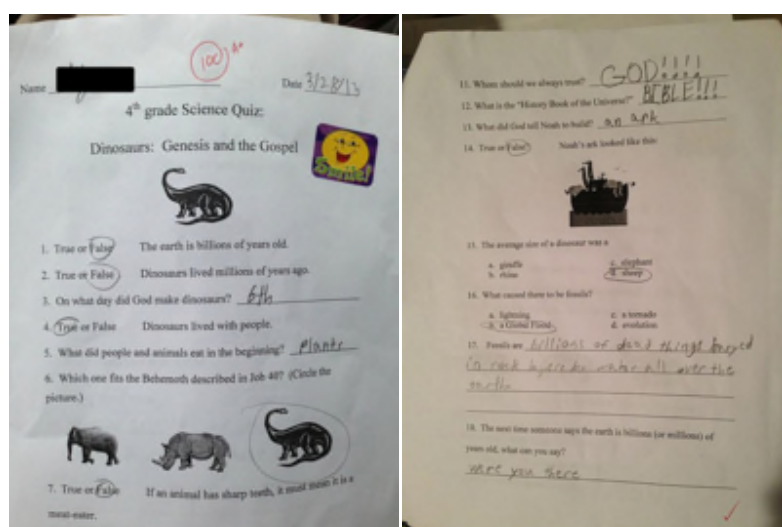
- "The Great Divider" and
- "The Divider-in-Chief"

These nicknames are based on the unwavering belief that not only has Barack Obama divided the United States of America, but that from day one, it has been his conscious intention to do so. As difficult as it may be for readers of this or any other moderately progressive blog to swallow this contention, there is, in fact a soupçon of truth to it. Not that President Obama has gone out of his way to drive a wedge between rich and poor, believers and non-believers, North and South, for clearly, he has not. Rather, the truth of the matter comes in the very nature of contemporary society. There *are* vast chasms separating people in this country -- and I am not referring just to the obvious gap between rich and poor. No, I am referring to the seemingly unbridgeable gap that exists between what we might call citizens and resident aliens. And here, the term "resident alien" does not mean legal, non-citizen inhabitants of America. Rather, it means alien, as in "extra terrestrial" or "from some other planet." Simply stated, there are folks out there who are -- in the words of Robert Heinlein ". . . as weird as snake's suspenders." What's worse, the nuttier, the weirder these people and their contentions are, the more followers they collect. And, I dare say, few if any of us know any of these "resident aliens."

Need proof?

Exhibit A:

Take a good look at the following two pages from a South Carolina Christian school fourth-grade science quiz (if the print is too small, just click on each photo to enlarge):



The quiz speaks for itself: children are being taught that not only were dinosaurs created on the sixth day of creation, but that they were about the size of sheep and coexisted with human beings. Moreover, when eight-year old Olivia McConnell urged the South Carolina legislature to make the Woolly Mammoth the state's official fossil (43 out of the 50 states do have [official fossils and dinosaurs](#)) legislators insisted that the quid pro quo for enacting the resolution would be adding the words " . . . as created on the Sixth Day with the beasts of the field."

How many of those reading this piece know someone who fully believes that dinosaurs were contemporaneous with *homo sapiens* and were created on the Sixth Day?

Exhibit B:

I would imagine that few -- if indeed any -- readers of this blog are familiar with the names [Rick Wiles](#), [Erik Rush](#), [Larry Klayman](#) and [Rick Joyner](#). The four are well-known to those we might refer to as "resident aliens." They all have a constant presence on talk radio and publish nationally syndicated columns. "So what's the big deal about them?" you may well ask. Consider that Wiles, who is listened to by millions every week, has breathlessly informed his audience that:

- North's Korea's threat of attacking America with nuclear weapons is because we are expanding rights for gays.
- The massacres at Columbine and Sandy Hook -- as well as 9/11 -- were all carried out by "MK-Ultra mind control assassins." (Think either *The Manchurian Candidate* or George Clooney's [The Men Who Stare at Goats](#).)
- The situation in America is so dire that Barack Obama and his administration must be overthrown by a military coup. (In Wiles' words, "*I warned in 2008 that Barack Obama's mission is to instigate a second Civil War in America. His regime is deliberately ripping the country apart and if the US Military doesn't take action soon to arrest Barack Obama and remove him and his regime from the White House, there will be no country left for the military to defend. We are on the edge of collapse as a nation. Jesus Christ is America's only hope. Let us pray that Almighty God delivers us from this very real tyranny that seeks to persecute the saints of God.*")

Likewise, Fox News Commentator Erik Rush has repeatedly called for Obama to be overthrown "by any means necessary" -- even if they aren't legal. ("*This administration, much of the Congress, and the creatures who support the same in blissful, belligerent ignorance must be neutralized if this nation is to survive in any*

semblance of its intended form. And it must be done by any means necessary, because such criminals have proven that they are not dissuaded by trifles like legality. . . ")

Last year, Larry Klayman called for the president to be overthrown on November 19. At the time, Klayman convened a "citizens' court" in Florida which "convicted" the president of lying to election officials about his eligibility to be president and "sentenced" him to 10 years in prison. Klayman argued that since Barack Sr. was not an American citizen, Barack Jr. is not a "natural-born citizen." Unless Obama "surrenders" himself to the custody of "the citizens of the United States and Florida," Klayman called for a march on the White House to bring an end to Obama's "*Muslim, socialist, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, anti-white, pro-illegal immigrant, pro-radical gay and lesbian agenda.*"

Lastly, Rick Joyner declared to his many followers that "*Since there's no chance at all for the right people to win office, nothing short of a military coup will save this country Raise up those who will save us,*" Joyner said. "*Because the system is so broken... I believe our only hope is military takeover. Martial law.*"

To all those who say that Barack Obama and his administration are responsible for the wide divide in America, guess again. There *are* forces in this country -- forces fueled by paranoia, fear, fundamentalism, and Dominionist theology, and underwritten by those who may or may not believe what these "resident aliens" are spouting -- that indeed make America a divided nation. The mere fact that every week millions are hearing calls for martial law, for an armed coup in America, for the replacing of democracy, literacy and science with God's law, is enough to get even the most laid back and disinterested amongst us to get off the couch and join a crusade -- a crusade meant for the citizenry, and not for the resident aliens amongst us.

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April 22, 2014

I'M SHOCKED . . . SHOCKED!"

This past Friday, April 18, the Obama Administration delayed a decision on construction of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, citing a Nebraska state court decision that invalidated part of the project's route. The latest hold-up in the unusually lengthy review of the \$5.3-billion oil pipeline will undoubtedly push any decision until after the November midterm election. Putting the pipeline on hold -- perhaps permanently, perhaps not -- certainly sits well with environmentalists, a group whose support the Democrats will need come November.

Not surprisingly, Republican lawmakers were incredulous and loudly cried foul that the president would actually put politics ahead of what they claim are the pipeline's positives: jobs galore, a further step towards American energy independence and lower prices at the gas pump. To hear the wails of the conservative marching and chowder society, one would think that this is the first time in American history that a president has done something like this -- and that the administration is against jobs galore, American energy independence and lower prices at the gas pump.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) told reporters "It is crystal clear that the Obama administration is simply not serious about American energy and American jobs Apparently radical activists carry more weight than Americans desperate to get back on the job."

The entire Republican media machine has expressed incredulousness that the president would actually take the "unprecedented step of putting political gain ahead of national policy." Listening to their feigned shock brought to mind



Casablanca's Captain Renault (Claude Rains) who, managing to keep a straight face announces himself "*Shocked! Shocked to find out that gambling is going on in here!*" even as Emil, the croupier (Marcel Dalio) is handing him his nightly winnings.

Did the administration's decision to delay the Keystone XL until after the November midterm elections have

anything to do with politics? Of course it did. Or, as Cousin Linda would say, "*Ya think?*" And, were the shoe on the other foot -- and the issue was, say, extending unemployment benefits or restoring cuts in food stamps -- (something guaranteed to raise the hackles of the conservative base) McConnell, Boehner, Cantor and McCarthy would do the same thing: put politics ahead of policy. It's just in the nature of modern high-stakes politics. Then again, so too is the simulated incredulity.

Much of the incredulity -- expressed by virtually every Republican and many at-risk Democrats -- is based on a couple of "facts" which have been trumpeted *ad nauseum*:

1. That delaying the Keystone XL will cost the U.S. upwards of 120,000 jobs, and
2. That the Keystone project will hold down gas prices for American motorists.

With regards to point number one, any big construction project requires workers to build it. How many? The U.S. State Department's analysis says 3,900 would be employed directly if the job is done in one year, or 1,950 per year if work is spread over two. TransCanada Corp. puts the number higher, saying the project would support 9,000 construction jobs directly.

There would be additional, "indirect" work for companies supplying goods and services, including concrete, fuel, surveying, welding materials and earth-moving equipment required for the project, and "induced" jobs resulting from money spent by workers and suppliers, such as ranchers providing beef for restaurants and construction camps. Counting up everything, the State

Department estimates a total of 42,100 jobs could be created. Nonetheless, House [Republicans are still claiming](#) the project would create 120,000 jobs. But that's based on outdated information. The House Energy Committee's GOP majority website extrapolates from figures [given by TransCanada two years ago](#) – for a much longer pipeline than is now proposed.

So these jobs – direct, indirect and induced – will total somewhere around 42,000 . . . for a maximum of two years. So far as *permanent* jobs are concerned, that's a whole different story. It takes but a handful of workers to operate functioning pipelines. Best estimates for the number of [permanent jobs range from 35 to 85](#), which is a far, far cry from the 120,000 the Republicans have been claiming . . .

Then there is the claim that the Keystone project will hold down gasoline prices for U.S. motorists. Foes have claimed that it would do the opposite, at least for Midwestern motorists. It is likely that neither claim is valid. The State Department's analysis concluded that either way, the Keystone project would have ["little impact on the prices that U.S. consumers pay](#) for refined products such as gasoline." That's because Gulf Coast refineries that process heavy crude could continue to get it from Venezuela or the Middle East, as they do now, if they can't get it from Canada, the report said. And even if the Keystone isn't built, Canadian crude still ["could reach U.S. and Canadian refineries by rail."](#)

Other independent experts have said essentially the same thing. Curt Launer, a managing director at Deutsche Bank, has been quoted as saying, ["Keystone wouldn't have a significant impact either way](#) on overall North American energy prices." Another expert, Morningstar analyst David McColl, was quoted in the same article saying the Keystone would have "no material impact" on gasoline or diesel prices. And even TransCanada doesn't include lower gasoline prices in [its list of the "economic benefits"](#) it claims would result from building the pipeline. . .

As things stand today, "truth" and "facts" are highly relative things. There was a time not too long ago where certain truths were held to be both self-evident and irrefutable - like "life liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (for people, not corporations). And because of this bedrock principle, a real conservative like Winston Churchill could write, *"The Truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is."* Today, I am sorry to say, his attitude is as *démodé* as garters and spats. And as for facts -- even those of a statistical nature -- today they depend largely on the promulgators; if you agree with their politics or values, you tend to accept their facts. But if you disagree with their politics and values, more likely than not you presume that they have fudged the facts, thereby inventing their own version of the truth. We see this all the time. As but one example, unemployment numbers put out by the Bureau of

Labor Statistics during a Democratic administration are disbelieved by Republicans -- and frequently -- vice versa.

In other words, the above-referenced statistics put out by the State Department are likely to be acceptable to Democrats and a tissue of lies to Republicans.

Unlike the fictional Captain Renault -- or Senator McConnell -- I will not feign shock at the administration's putting politics ahead of policy. That's the way of the world. However, when it comes to discounting facts and truths because one doesn't agree with the politics of those promulgating those facts, I find myself becoming frustrated and mighty weary.

It makes me long for the days of garters and spats . . .

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April 27, 2014

SEDITION IS NOT A FASHION STATEMENT

Prior to this week, the only folks named Bundy I was familiar with were the brothers [McGeorge](#) (1919-1996) and [William](#) (1917-2000), lions of the post-war American foreign policy establishment and charter members of our version of the *Alamache de Gotha*; serial killer [Ted](#) (1946-1989); and the fictional [Al](#), women's shoe salesman, husband of Peg and father of Kelly and Bud. This week I, like everyone else on the planet, have become



familiarized with a fifth Bundy: the 67-year old Nevada racist rancher-cum-sovereign citizen-cum-multi decade tax-scofflaw Cliven. This Bundy has achieved his 15 minutes of fame by refusing to pay more than two decades worth of back taxes he owes the federal government for grazing his cattle on federally-owned land. (Note: In 1978, Congress set as the minimum fee for grazing cattle on Bureau of Land Management -- BLM -- lands \$1.35 per "animal unit month." An animal unit is the equivalent of a 1,000-pound cow, based on an average consumption of 26 pounds of dry forage per day.) Bundy's reason for not paying more than \$1 million in grazing fees at \$1.35 per cow? "*I believe this is a sovereign state of Nevada. And I abide by all Nevada state laws. But I don't recognize the*

United States government as even existing."

(BTW: Am I the only one who finds it a hoot that Mr. Bundy's spread is on the outskirts of "Bunkerville," Nevada? Wonder if its eponym was Archie?)

Two courts ruled in favor of the federal Bureau of Land Management and against Cliven Bundy; he was ordered to pay his arrearage or suffer seizure of his cattle. This is precisely what the feds did. This past April 5, agents of the BLM brought in armed federal agents and began removing Bundy's cattle. Bundy's son Dave was arrested for refusing to leave. That night, Bundy sent a message: "They have my cattle and now they have one of my boys. Range War begins tomorrow." Then the media circus began in earnest. Bundy supporters picked up their shotguns, loaded up their pickups and made their way to Bunkerville, ready to shoot it out with federal agents if necessary -- all in the name of freedom and liberty. One of Bundy's supporters, former Arizona sheriff Richard Mack told reporters, *"We're actually strategizing to put all the women up at the front. If they are going to start shooting, it's going to be women that are going to be televised all across the world getting shot by these rogue federal officers."*

At this point, Bundy's supporters began to include the likes of Sean Hannity (who called him " . . . a friend and frequent guest of the show"), U.S. Senator Dean Heller (who called him "a patriot"), and Texas Governor Rick Perry ("I have a problem with the federal government putting citizens in the position of having to feel like they have to use force to deal with their own government"). On April 12, the government announced that it would return the seized cattle because of its "grave concern about the safety of employees and members of the public." The right cheered the victory.

Then Cliven Bundy began getting a few other things off his chest . . . like his views on African Americans:

"I want to tell you one more thing I know about the Negro," he said. Mr. Bundy recalled driving past a public-housing project in North Las Vegas, "and in front of that government house the door was usually open and the older people and the kids - and there is always at least a half a dozen people sitting on the porch - they didn't have nothing to do. They didn't have nothing for their kids to do. They didn't have nothing for their young girls to do. "And because they were basically on government subsidy, so now what do they do?" he asked. "They abort their young children, they put their young men in jail, because they never learned how to pick cotton. And I've often wondered, are they better off as slaves, picking cotton and having a family life and doing things, or are they better off under government subsidy? They didn't get no more freedom. They got less freedom."

Following Bundy's racist rant, many of his conservative fans began abandoning ship. For it turns out Bundy is not, as many of his allies and supporters claimed, a "true patriotic conservative." It turns out that his words and actions are those of a "sovereign citizen," a member of a group [the FBI characterizes](#) as "A growing domestic threat to law enforcement." People like Cliven Bundy believe that the only legitimate source of authority in America is the local sheriff, and as such, are not required to obey any laws or directives (or pay any taxes) emanating from any other entity. When one researches the "sovereign citizen" movement in America, one discovers, just beneath the surface, racism, anti-Semitism, [Christian Identity](#), violence and a go-it-alone mentality

reminiscent of both the [Whiskey Rebellion](#) (in which George Washington had to send armed militia to Western Pennsylvania to put down a rebellion) and the [posse comitatus](#), whose roots go back to the late 1870s.

In short, Cliven Bundy and his ilk are part and parcel of America's domestic terrorist class. Those who lend even verbal support to them -- as many conservatives did up until recently -- brings to mind William Jennings Bryan's quip about folks who are like the Platte River: "Six miles wide at the mouth and six inches deep."

The question is, why would anyone with half a brain lend even an ounce of verbal support to people who are terrorists, anti-Semites and seditionists? Possibly because in modern western society, style often masks substance.

A couple of examples from my old neighborhood:

- Back in the mid-1930s, a group of leading Hollywood stars including Gary Cooper, Victor McLaglen and George Brent sponsored such paramilitary groups as the "Light Horse Calvary," the "Hollywood Hussars," and the "California Esquadrille," all of which professed the intent to "save America" and "uphold and protect the principles and ideals of true Americanism." (To their way of thinking, the enemy they were seeking to "save America" from were the liberals and socialists, not the Nazis.) Toward that end, they drilled in their spare time (mostly in Griffith Park), wearing fancy uniforms, riding horses and receiving instruction in military tactics from retired army officers. But when it came time to actually go to war, few if any of these paramilitary heroes enlisted. They talked the talk, but didn't have the stones to walk the walk.
- In the early- and mid-1960s, there were three easily recognized social castes at school. One was either a "greaser," a "surfer" or a "soc" (pronounced 'sosh,' and short for "social"). "Greasers" had oily, greaser hair and wore oily Levis, motorcycle boots and "Sir Guy" shirts. "Surfers" had bleached-blond hair and wore light beige levis, madras shirts and huarachi sandals. "Socs" wore perfectly pressed khaki trousers, blue oxford cloth button down shirts, and maroon Sperry Topsiders without socks. In cool weather, greasers wore black leather motorcycle jackets, surfers grey hooded sweatshirts and socs blue Brooks Brothers blazers. And yet, if anyone challenged a greaser to join in a rumble behind the polo field, a surfer to shoot the curl at Rincon, or a soc to ask a Doheny or a Chandler out on a date, we would crumble, for in the end, we were all just privileged upper-middle class Jewish kids *playing* at being greasers, surfers or eastern preppies. For us, being a greaser, a surfer or a soc was a fashion statement devoid of substance.
- Today, lots of otherwise middle-class kids and adults have adopted the dress, the walk and the patois of the ghetto. I can't begin tell you how many times I have heard people address one another as "dude," "dog," or "homey," or referred to

their "posse in the hood." If they're my students, I feel compelled to inform them that living in "the hood" -- for those who do -- is not a fashion statement; it is a grueling impoverished and often highly dangerous reality that would scare the daylights out of them.

In similar fashion, I have to believe, that those who were giving their verbal "attaboys" to Cliven Bundy and *his* posse; who thought they had found a patriotic political soul mate in this gun-toting, cowboy-hatted freeloader, crumbled when they began to learn what thought process was actually roiling just beneath their hero's ten-gallon Stetson. Sovereign citizenship is *not* a fashion statement any more than Cliven Bundy is the sort of fellow you'd want to invite to your next political fundraiser. Bundy and his ilk are dangerous seditionists for whom the government of the United States is an evil enemy that must be overthrown and whose citizens -- with the exception of certain white Christians -- are spawns of Satan.

From where I sit, there's nothing fashionable about that . . .

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