

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



March 01, 2015

CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS ARE ALL A BUNCH OF MARXISTS

By now, it seems like the 2014 midterm elections were a hundred years ago. One has a vague memory of Republican candidates from Maine to Arizona promising voters in dead earnest that electing them to take over both houses of Congress



was the only thing that could possibly save America from the horrors of unholy. They swore on a stack of Good News Bibles that when (not if) they took back the Senate, things would finally be different -- that gridlock and infighting would cease; that Congress would finally get back to the serious work of creating jobs, strengthening the economy, solving the issue of what to do about all those millions of illegal immigrants and putting iron back into

the American spine. Both the House and Senate, they promised voters, would get back to functioning with a purposive seriousness not seen since the days of Reagan and Bush; their theme song would be *Heigh ho, Heigh ho, it's off to work we go!*

Well, they got their wish; the GOP took control of both houses of Congress this past January. And tomorrow, March 2nd, the 114th Congress begins its third calendar month. Has Congress become more active, muscular and mature as

they promised? Have gridlock and infighting ceased? Have the Republican caucuses stopped passing symbolic pieces of legislation which serve only to ignite and incite their base? What song have Boehner, McConnell and their minions been singing? Is it *Heigh ho, Heigh ho*?

Judging from a brief analysis of what the nascent 114th Congress has -- or has not -- accomplished in its first two calendar months, it would seem that the Republicans have yet to adopt that ditty from Disney. For what have the new Republican-led House and Senate accomplished? Next to nothing.

- The first week in session was marred by a failed coup to overthrow House Speaker John Boehner. Additionally, that first week saw two bills introduced to overturn the Affordable Care Act.
- The second week brought a Department of Homeland Security funding measure that had the House and Senate in a standoff over provisions targeting Obama's immigration executive actions. This political food fight lasted until just a few minutes before DHS funding was to lapse.
- During the third week, Republicans fought over an abortion bill, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which mired the party in a no-win conversation about defining rape. Eventually, the legislation was pulled, but the incident left hurt feelings both among antiabortion activists and House Republican women members who complained about the measure in the first place.
- Congress did manage to pass the Keystone XL pipeline, knowing full well that President Obama would veto it. And, they *have* held countless hearings on virtually every facet of the president's foreign policy and continued beating that dead horse called Benghazi.
- And of course, there is Speaker Boehner's inviting Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to address a joint meeting (*not session*) of Congress, which, so far as I can tell, is nothing more than a partisan ploy -- a naked attempt to "convince" Jewish voters that Republicans are far more pro-Israel than Democrats.

Indeed, far from singing Disney's *Heigh ho, Heigh ho*, the Republicans have taken to singing a Marxist refrain. "Marxist?" you say. "How in the world can anyone accuse the likes of Senators Cruz, Rubio, and Paul, or Representatives Gohmert, Webster and Yoho of being anything but true blue patriots?" Well, simply stated, one obviously cannot . . . *if* the Marx we were referring to was Karl.

But it's not: it's Groucho, and the tune is not Pottier and de Geyter's *L'internationale*, which begins:

Stand up, damned of the Earth
Stand up, prisoners of starvation
Reason thunders in its volcano
This is the eruption of the end.

But rather Ruby and Kalmar's *I'm Against It* from the 1932 Marx Brothers' film *Horse Feathers*, which begins:

I don't know what they have to say,
It makes no difference anyway,
Whatever it is, I'm against it.
No matter what it is or who commenced it,
I'm against it.

But wait; isn't this the exact same tune Congressional Republicans have been singing ever since the first day Barack Obama moved into the White House? What of all those pious promises they made in 2010, 2012 and 2014 about getting Congress off its ineffectual rump and doing the nation's business? Here in 2015, it seems that the only things the House and Senate have become adept at are blocking anything and everything the opposing party seeks, and then blaming the other guys for their collective failure to get anything done. The party which Democrats and progressive pundits labeled "The Party of No" as far back as 2010, has -- despite now having majorities in both chambers -- has barely budged; if anything, it has morphed into "The Party of Hell No!"

Someone should explain to Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, their lieutenants and committee chairs that they are still acting as if they were in the minority; that singing the old Marxist refrain all but guarantees that it will be a cold day in Hell before they win another national election. The internecine disputes between Tea Party, Libertarian and so-called "Establishment" branches of the Republican Party are on full display for the entire nation to see. And what the nation sees is a party at war with itself; a fractious clique incapable of keeping its fingers off hot buttons issues let alone coalescing around positive approaches to nettlesome national problems.

Oh sure, most representatives -- whether Republican or Democrat -- need not worry about losing reelection . . . so long as they do not offend their activist base. For let's face it: redistricting has all but guaranteed that liberals represent districts with liberal-to-moderate majorities and conservatives represent those which are conservative-to-off-the-wall. But when it comes to

national elections, those who sing the Marxist refrain are going to find the road far more rutted and steep.

Groucho -- who like his brothers was a dyed-in-the-wool liberal Democrat -- nonetheless understood the *modus operandi* of the modern-day Republican Party when, as Professor Wagstaff, he proclaimed:

Your proposition may be good
But let's have one thing understood
Whatever it is, I'm against it!
And even when you've changed it
Or condensed it
I'm against it!

Copyright©2015 Kurt F. Stone