



## ***Calum MacKenzie's View From The Shore:***

### **Mr. Obama, The Republican**

Pre-emptive notions for dealing with The Taliban in Pakistan and open admiration for Reagan's contributions to the political scene were the first clues that Mr. Obama was not the liberal that mass media pundits made him out to be. As we look closer at policy positions that have been enunciated, a real sense of *deja vu* looms.

**What we see is a landscape in which the differences between red and blue political factions are blurred.** Where an earlier Mr. Obama had held and espoused very leftist views, a more recent take shows centrist or even right wing ideologies being injected into the mix. He has moved a long way from positions held as community organizer. The tactics of being in an election campaign may play a big part in that epiphany and may even be reversed at a later date, but for now disappointment for early supporters lurks very close to the surface.

As a pacifist and one who believes in the efficacy of government- run social programs, I see many of the positions espoused by the Obama campaign as straight out of the Reagan-Thatcher-Mulroney playbook. Folks have been persuaded to view socialism as a dirty word much as Republicans view the term Liberal. The fabricated abhorrence of pinko-commie type programs down through decades -- via various shades of McCarthyism -- demands that socializing the recent costs of corporate malfeasance is equally despicable.

**The corporateocracy, being in its ascendancy until now, has always managed to privatize profits often subsidized by the taxpayer.** The denizens of main street are but pawns to be manipulated by small print, to nurse corporate greed to untenable heights. Some MBA schools foster greed as a virtue euphemistically referring to competition, pulling boot straps and the American way, while ignoring fairness, human rights, labour law, the environment, and world wide devastation that US-led policies have wrought.

The Dr. Milton Friedman MBA mantra of disaster capitalism seems to be "privatize the profits and socialize the costs". By joining the bailout crowd, hurriedly supporting Bush initiatives without hearings and sober second thought, blurring red and blue ideologies, Mr. Obama seems to have taken ownership of this line of thought.

**How can the US, the so-called bastion of so-called free markets, ever again dump on the USSR, North Korea, China, or Vietnam?** The very strategies which allowed these so-called rogue nations to survive are employed by both campaigns to salvage what's left of their political donors. The US corporate world has honed the instruments of usury to a fine edge and floated that vessel on a rising and deepening ocean of debt. As more and more debt was added, the ocean levels have risen to overwhelm financial institutions as well as their unschooled, "bait and sell" victims on main street.

Mr. Obama saw fit to vote for a series of corporate bailouts and a document steeped in earmarks which do nothing to ease the basic problems. This action shows a remarkable use of double standards, an abandonment of the principles eloquently stated over the last 18 months, support for no-change business-as-usual and a high degree of hypocrisy. That another 1.35 trillion is to be added to debt without thought to servicing that debt adds to the madness. The backroom boys who control the campaign donor purse strings are present on both sides of the aisle.

**Aside from the financial fiasco -- a republican character flaw down through history -- Mr. Obama has followed the business-as-usual format in offering unconditional support for the State of Israel.** In mentioning nuclear non-proliferation, he always manages to exclude both Israel and the US from participation. The large number of UN resolutions which Israel has ignored as well as the destabilizing actions by the Israeli armed forces in the genocide of Palestinians as well as in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are conveniently forgotten. Israeli expansion of settlements into Palestinian owned farm lands is never mentioned. As a Christian so-called, Obama must know that there are biblical commandments to which he should pay attention and adhere, but doesn't. To obey commandments selectively is also a republican trait.

It took some 500+ years for the US and several other members of the G8, to arrive at their present cultural sophistication, to develop their education systems, their judiciaries, and their social programs. It is extreme hubris, hardly fair and a gross mistake, for the US et al to assume that our political format and social systems can be imposed militarily on nations or regions which have a different 500 year history. Yet this is a path which Mr. Obama seems to favor. The legacy of the neo-cons and their project for the 21st century seem to be intact. The term US values and national interests is a euphemism for oil and business resources no matter who is hurt or how those values are stolen.

**The extreme wings of both political parties advocate lower taxes, and smaller government, knowing full well that when services now performed by government are privatized, the additional costs add to the national debt.** Taxes can only be lowered when services are cut or downloaded to state and municipal levels, both of which also wish to lower taxes. This house of cards, each one an IOU marker, will eventually crumble. Mr. Obama has offered lowering taxes for 90+% of taxpayers knowing full well that the only way he can do that is described earlier in this paragraph. In that way too, he is a republican. He is making a mockery of the "Yes we can" campaign promise, in effect shooting himself in the foot by defunding the Left via lowering taxes.

**Taxes are a citizen's membership fee to join society and partake of the benefits of membership.** Membership brings more than the right to vote and claim citizenship. Membership also entails helping the society to build, to improve, and to collectively look out for our fellow citizens. Taxation is a privilege to be enjoyed by rich and poor alike. The conventional wisdom in all election campaigns, of going after lower and lower taxation is a recipe for disaster which can only lead to the destruction of society as we know it. Mr. Obama should be careful what he wishes for. In most cases, those who earn more use more of a society's services and should have no beef at paying for those additional privileges through higher taxation.

As do the Republicans, Mr. Obama remains silent on a wide swath of issues. To what extent does he believe that corporate welfare should be allowed? Is the current series of bailouts a 'one of' situation never to be used again? Has he put in place a bottom line position on who benefits from the series of bailouts? When does he intend to address the massive, record breaking infusions of capital from central banks world wide and what is the plan for repayment and stabilization? How does he plan to reverse the movement of bad debt from the public, back to the private domain? What steps will he take to stop the bleeding and begin to fund the Left again?

As the stock markets become irresponsible and unaccountable, what will he do to remove the casino gambling attitude from investments? The US has some 10,000 banks. After the meltdown in Japan, the Japanese banking industry was reduced to three large banks. Will this scene also play out in the US where banks, like the multi-national insurance giant AIG, will be too big to allow to fail?

Those who claim to be ignorant of economics will take an easy route and demand that government get out of the way and let the market work. We now know that unregulated markets do not work and they have no decision making powers. Markets are stupid, uneducated, unsophisticated, rubes, easily manipulated by those in charge. Congressmen who do not have the necessary expertise to challenge the high flying financial gurus go along with the vote sometimes without even reading the legislation. Will Mr. Obama follow in those footsteps as he did last week to create more business as usual?

Stumbling from economic bubble to bubble via the high tech bubble, the housing bubble, etc., the economy which some would offer as science based, is shown to be a roller coaster and a circus. As government abdicates its responsibility to regulate the economy we enter another bubble of *laissez-faire* events which Naomi Klein called the shock doctrine of disaster politics. Those prevalent attitudes also have a history, culminating in the events of 1929.

**Just as those events produced a crisis which brought about change over the objections of the upper class, the current crisis will also show America's class structure in sharp relief.** Like the Republicans, Mr. Obama doesn't seem to address the serious divisions already evident in society. His call for lower capital gains and taxes is so republican. As folks have been persuaded to join the ownership society and take stock in the casino of contemporary capitalism, hope has been shattered.

Mr. Obama has not offered universal access to every level of superior education. As the US lags behind most other industrialized nations in educational norms, he has not taken a leaf from those advanced nations, in order to upgrade US schools. Mr. Obama has not offered to break the vice-like death grip of HMOs in the field of health care. Again socialized medicine as practiced in many other nations is universally available to all, is cheaper to run, and has superior outcomes. Similar failings are seen in dealing with the environment, energy policy, policing, out-sourcing, off-shoring, and a long list of other social programs all of which would benefit the entire population. Is that because Mr. Obama is a republican, perhaps unknowingly?

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**Mr. Obama has not taken the bull by the horns and asked the American people to grow up and start living within their means.** He has not educated his audience to the obvious benefits of left wing policies. He has not shown that government run social programs are good, egalitarian, universal, and cheaper. He has not shown that other nations have practiced socialism for decades without the wheels falling off and that the vast majority of the planet's population are ready for a steady dose of socialism to bring stability back to our societies. He has not shown that on every measure of happiness in a civilized society the Republican brand is inferior. He has not shown that he is willing to take on those in positions of privilege and suffer the gauntlet of their scorn and derision. Is that because he is a republican? I think so.

**Should Mr. Obama ever find the intestinal fortitude to set aside his republican tendencies and do the right thing, his popularity and legacy will surpass FDR and the greatest of US presidents.** He would also serve as role model for the rest of the world who have so admired things American right up to the days after 9-11. His modeling and his mentoring have the potential to set the entire world on a better course so that the people of the planet receive a greater share of the bounty that is still possible. Perhaps, just perhaps, with clear thinking, oration and charisma, he can show the leadership not only to expose the republican extremists for their errors and make them accountable, but guide his nation to truly be a shining city on a hill.

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[calum@hungrypeasant.com](mailto:calum@hungrypeasant.com).

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