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Ron Paul vs. the Naysayers

Posted By [Justin Raimondo](#) On February 25, 2010 @ 11:00 pm In [Uncategorized](#) | [4 Comments](#)

As someone who has recently been described as "[objectively fascist](#)," I hesitate to declare "tomorrow belongs to me," but if [Bill Kristol's disdain](#) for those "kids" at the CPAC conference who handed Ron Paul an [impressive victory](#) is any indication, the [sclerotic](#) neocon establishment has given up on the youth vote – even the conservative youth vote – and the future belongs to us Paulians.

There are several reasons for Kristol's curious indifference to the future of the movement of which he is alleged to be a [leader](#): he's not just trying to minimize Paul's impact – although there's that, too – but is at least [partly sincere](#). While condescension is part and parcel of the neoconservative style, this "oh they'll get over it" attitude also reflects the experience of his own intellectual and familial forebears: his father, the late [Irving Kristol](#), was famously a Trotskyist in his youth, an experience he [wrote about](#) and saw as [nothing but positive](#). In discounting the radicalism of youth, Kristol is merely reiterating the [storied history](#) of his own mini-movement. How many far-leftists of the 1930s – his own father among them – started out as self-described revolutionaries dedicated to the overthrow of American imperialism, and later became vehement [cold warriors](#)? Oh, don't worry, they'll get over it!

This confession of intellectual and political bankruptcy comes at a time when the American right resembles the left in the 1930s. With the world economy [collapsing](#) all around them, and fired up by the inspiration of [the Russian Revolution](#), far-left movements sprang up like mushrooms after a rainstorm, each vying for the role of the American revolutionary "vanguard." There were [Stalinists](#), and [Trotskyists](#), [Social Democrats](#) and [Lovestoneites](#), [Cannonites and Shachtmanites](#) – this latter being the particular strand from which [the neocons of today](#) are [derived](#).

Out of the factional turmoil of the Left in the 1930s arose the intellectual and political establishment of the next decades: the outcome of its obscure internal disputes, argued in the arcane lexicon of Marxist theory, were later reflected in the mainstream intellectual trends and politics of much broader sectors of the American public.

Indeed, the neoconservative movement itself [arose](#) from this ferment, arriving at the seat of power at the end of a long [intellectual](#) and [political](#) hegira about which entirely too much has been written – including by [myself](#). In the course of this odyssey, a lot of ideological baggage was thrown overboard, but, in the end, the neocons' strategy of traveling light enabled them to achieve their goal: [power](#). By the time they moved into their Washington, D.C., offices, riding on the back of [the Reaganites](#), and [ensconced themselves](#) in key positions during the Bush years, they had dumped every principle overboard but one: the necessity of exercising American military power on a global scale. They are and always have been [the War Party](#) [.pdf]: internationalists, either proletarian or Wilsonian. They're [the type](#) you see at military parades, cheering just a little too loudly: down through the years, the one consistent neocon theme has been the hailing of one army or another as the savior of humanity. Whether the Red Army or the US Army was purely a matter of circumstance and convenience.

A sect whose strategy is to [cultivate the elites](#) and whisper in the ear of the king has no real use for any but a certain kind of youth. The sort who, from a very early age, is a master of the main chance, a consummate opportunist, a little [Peter Keating](#) type fixated on climbing the ladder all the way to the top without regard for niceties. Neoconservatism, after all, is about power: the [exercise](#) of it, and indeed the [worship](#) of it, particularly in its military manifestation. It is the young who fight the wars, and the oldsters who send them off to die, and so the War Party is naturally concentrated in an older demographic.

Aside from distrusting and disdainning the younger generation as a matter of preference and principle, however, Kristol and his fellow neocons aren't interested in the future of the movement they claim to lead because, to them, "movement" conservatism is [just a convenient vehicle](#), one they hitched a ride with in the 1980s. True, it has brought them quite a [long way](#) toward [their goal](#) – but they can always jump on another bandwagon, one that's

moving faster, and it won't be long before they're sitting in the driver's seat. To heck with the future, they want power *now*.

The Obama administration had barely arrived in Washington when the latest incarnation of Kristol's old PNAC organization, now going under the moniker of "[The Foreign Policy Initiative](#)," held a [joint conference](#) with the two preeminent sources of mid-to-low-level appointees, the [Center for a New American Security](#), and the [Center for American Progress](#). Neocons [go where the power is](#), which is one reason why, as an organized movement, neoconservatism can hardly be said to exist outside of Washington, D.C., and Manhattan's Upper West Side.

The movement spawned by Ron Paul, however, is a completely different sort of creature: it is, indeed, the exact opposite of neoconservatism in every respect. It is [populist](#), while the neocons are elitists: it is [born of the heartland](#), whilst the neocons are clustered in two of the nation's biggest cities. The defining difference, however, is that, while the neocons worship power, and dream of attaining "[national greatness](#)," the Paulians are the self-described enemies of power, and dream only of taking their old republic back.

Paul's appeal to the young is generally characterized as unlikely, and he himself [emphasizes this](#), making the point that it's not about him it's about the ideas of [liberty](#), [non-interventionism](#), and the [decentralization](#) of political authority in America. He's "boring," he's not a glamorous "personality," and yet he's treated like a rock star by the young.

The reason, I think, has to do with his personality, as well as his ideas, insofar as one relates to the other: Dr. Paul is the one politician I've seen, the one leader of an ideological trend, who has gotten more radical as he's gotten older. The Ron Paul of the late seventies and early eighties, while [hardly](#) a warmongering neocon, was far from the acerbic critic of American interventionism he is today. What I love about the congressman they call "Dr. No" is how, in his many interviews on television and elsewhere, he [invariably](#) manages to bring up the war question – one that previous libertarian presidential wannabes only raised when directly asked. Not only that, but this persistence is rooted in an overarching critique of statism as a system: what his intellectual mentor, [Murray Rothbard](#), dubbed the [Welfare-Warfare State](#).

Youth naturally looks for a way to explain the way the world works, and the best of them seek ways to make it work better. To any young person looking for a comprehensive worldview these days, the intellectual landscape is nearly completely barren.

On the right we have the desiccated ideologues of neoconservatism, whose concerns are so far removed from those of any ordinary youth that their leading spokesman has no trouble writing off nearly everyone on the right under thirty, aside from those directly in Rupert Murdoch's employ or somehow or other on the neocon payroll.

On the left – well, there isn't really a "left" anymore, at least not one I find recognizable. Gone are the New Lefties who used to "solidarize" with the struggles of the Third World against colonialism: likewise, the Old Lefties who used to quote Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky are nearly vanished. In their place we have a "progressive" movement determined to force poor people to pay for health insurance they can't afford. As [Fafblog](#) put it:

"As disappointed as we might be in Barack Obama – in his little failings, in his petty slights, in his odd betrayals, in his unseemly habit of dancing naked through the streets of Oslo smeared with the blood and entrails of Afghan children – we also know that the alternative would be far worse. Why, with a Republican president, we might be at war with [Iraq](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Pakistan](#), [Yemen](#), [Somalia](#), and [possibly Iran](#), or facing some hideously draconian corporatist scheme to [compel poor people to buy private insurance](#) they can't afford, with a government that not only [excuses the torture regimes of the past](#) but [dramatically expands them](#) while giving itself license to [murder anyone it likes](#) anywhere on the planet. With Barack Obama, on the other hand, we have all that plus a man who can sparkle wittily on late night television. Now, I think that has to be worth at least a couple thousand dead Muslims, don't you?"

Faced with the grim choice of [Charybdis and Scylla](#), no wonder young people on the right – and the left – are turning to the Paulian vision of constitutional government and a foreign policy [based on the Founders' warning](#) against entangling alliances and militarism. As the economic and social crisis ramps up, and the intellectual bankruptcy of the Kristols and the regime apologists becomes all too apparent, that the youth of America are rallying to the one

pure banner of unreconstructed idealism should hardly come as a surprise. No more of a surprise than the [smear campaign](#) unleashed by the anti-Paulistas, and not just the neocons but their "libertarian" enablers.

The Beltway libertarians, especially those at *Reason* magazine and the Cato Institute, have been overtly hostile to the Ron Paul phenomenon from the beginning. I've written about this at length in this space, and I won't reiterate the dynamics of the debate except to say that the Paulians get under the skin of the Reasonoids and the Cato-ites for many of the same reasons they're hated by the neoconservatives: principally, their populism. In particular, Paul's application of the theories advanced by the economist Ludwig von Mises that explain the business cycle as due to central bank credit expansion – and the policy prescription that flows inevitably from that, expressed in the Paulian slogan "End the Fed!" – has them nervously explaining at Washington cocktail parties that they're not *that* kind of libertarian.

Reason has become a [major vehicle](#) of the most scurrilous sort of anti-Paul propaganda, an effort to smear the Good Doctor as a racist and anti-Semite. The anti-Paul mini-movement was spearheaded, during the presidential primaries, by Jamie Kirchick, Marty Peretz's [Renfield](#), and [Matt Welch](#), then the newly-minted editor of *Reason*, who isn't and never was any kind of libertarian.

Welch's condescending, disdainful attitude toward the movement he's marketing his magazine to comes through loud and clear in [this Bloggingheads episode](#), in which the topic is Paul and the apparent success of the Paulian movement.

This is the very same Bloggingheads dialogue during which Eli Lake, his sparring partner, describes me as "objectively fascist." This was said after Welch explained why there would always be "at least an arm's length" between *Reason* and Antiwar.com, although both are explicitly libertarian institutions, because we supposedly object to even rhetorical support for "freedom-seeking people around the world." As anyone who has read my articles on events [inside Iran](#), and the [former Yugoslavia](#), would know, this is utter nonsense: I only object to the cooptation of such freedom-seeking movements by the US government, which invariably uses them as an instrument of its interventionist foreign policy – and promptly dumps them when they are no longer useful.

Lake, a former "reporter" for the *New York Sun* – a newspaper that once called for [banning](#) an antiwar march in New York City on the grounds that the marchers were engaged in sedition – has since graduated to the Moonie-owned *Washington Times*, where he's survived the recent purges and is now, as he himself puts it, a "credible reporter" on national security issues.

So how did I earn the "f"-word designation? Am I a follower of the doctrines espoused by Benito Mussolini? Am I an advocate of organizing industry into government-controlled "syndicates," a system in which the individual is subordinated to the all-powerful State?

Well, no, not exactly: according to the oh-so-"credible" Lake, I'm "objectively fascist" because [I have written](#) – "with great glee" – that Israeli intelligence had some foreknowledge of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and because I think that there was an Israeli cell working inside the Pentagon during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.

[Here is my answer](#) to the first allegation, which he dismisses as an "anti-Jewish" canard. Until Carl Cameron repudiates his four-part series broadcast by Fox News in December, 2001, which made the very same claim, and which, furthermore, disclosed crucial evidence pointing to that conclusion, I will continue to raise this question without apology. I challenge Lake to deny the veracity of this report: if I'm "anti-Semitic" for citing Cameron's work, then what about Fox News and Cameron – are they "anti-Semites," too? Or is it just little old me?

As to the second allegation, that an Israel-loyal cabal infiltrated the Pentagon, I own up to that one, too: has our "credible" security expert ever heard of a man named [Larry Franklin](#)? One can engage in a technical and legal argument over whether Franklin and his handlers – AIPAC honchos Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman – committed espionage in pilfering sensitive and closely-held national security secrets, and handing them over to Israeli government employees, but surely they constituted a cell that operated inside the Pentagon's policymaking component. The cabal was centered in the department overseen by [Douglas Feith](#) – whose resignation, under mysterious circumstances, was preceded by a full-bore FBI counterintelligence investigation into the neocon network of which Franklin was a part.

Welch, for his part, didn't disagree with Lake: instead, he said he wouldn't agree with him "more out of politeness than anything else." The best response to that bit of snarky cowardice was posted in the comments by a reader, who wrote:

"Hey, Welch, how come you didn't call bullshit on your pal when he started in with the "objectively pro-fascist" crap? Didn't you [used to think](#) that was stupid? And here was your chance to repudiate the whole concept, but you passed. Why?"

Follow the above link, and you get to a piece by Welch in which he takes Christopher Hitchens to task for popularizing on the neoconservative right the tendency of leftists to label their enemies "fascists, and I quote:

"Hitchens' biggest new fans are especially fond of extrapolating from George Orwell's [old saw](#) about pacifism being "objectively pro-fascist," sometimes as [headlines](#) on links to Hitch's latest. But as [Eric Blair's modern popularizer](#) knows too well, Orwell — whose original essay, it should be mentioned, was referring to British pacifists during Hitler's bombing siege of London — [repudiated](#) his 'objectively pro-fascis' line before the War was even over, in an [essay about propaganda](#) that's well worth your time.

When it comes to Antiwar.com, and Ron Paul, however, the normal rules don't apply. It's only natural that Welch, who started out his career as a "[war-blogger](#)" along the lines of Charles Johnson, would fear and loathe not only Antiwar.com, but also Rep. Paul, whom *Reason* has also kept "at arm's length. No sooner had the "objectively fascist" post appeared on "Hit and Run," the *Reason* blog, then it was time to post, the very next day, a [remarkably ignorant hit piece](#) aimed at Paul by David Harsanyi, a third-rate neocon columnist for the *Denver Post* and author of the forgettable book, *Nanny State*, a hackish reiteration of material plenty of libertarian authors have covered more comprehensively elsewhere. Senor Harsanyi doesn't like the Nanny State, except when it's slaughtering those naughty Afghans and Pakistanis, in which case it ceases being a Nanny State and starts becoming *his* State.

In any case, the Harsanyi hit piece was the usual neocon smear-job: really just name-calling wrapped in a penumbra of disdain for the "crazy old uncle" and his "delusional" "conspiracy theorist" followers. In [a follow-up](#), he claims Cato Institute president and founder Ed Crane had a conversation with Paul in which the latter supposedly said that the mailing list of *The Spotlight* — a now defunct weekly newspaper run by professional anti-Semite and nutball of renown Willis Carto — always brought in the best results in his direct mail campaigns. As to whether Crane will step forward and claim this smear as his own, only time will tell. But this, I think, settles the question of where the impetus for the anti-Paul smear campaign is coming from: it is emanating from the Beltway "libertarians" of Crane's ilk, who envy Paul and revile the hardcore libertarian tradition he represents.

Yet these are minor bumps in the road, more instructive than substantial: when the history of the libertarian movement in this era is written, it is Paul and his supporters who will be honored as pioneers, and the Ed Cranes and Matt Welches who will be reduced to a footnote. The intellectual emptiness of their "libertarianism" is all too apparent: they have reduced the freedom philosophy to an affectation. Paul, on the other hand, has expanded it into a mass movement, one that is reaching more people every day with its unabashedly radical message.

Yes, the future belongs to us — if we can muster the focus to ignore the naysayers, and take it.

Read more by Justin Raimondo

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