



The Anti-Trump Right's Sad Quest for Respectability

Jack Cashill

August 8, 2016

Today I received a fundraising letter from conservative comic writer P.J. O'Rourke. On the envelope, above a caricature of O'Rourke, is one of his more celebrated quotes: "Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys." Ha, ha.

The last I heard from O'Rourke was in May, when he proudly declared, "I endorse Hillary Clinton for president." He added, "Better the devil you know than the Lord of the Flies on his own 757. Flying to and fro in the earth, with gold-plated seatbelt buckles, talking nativist, isolationist, mercantilist, bigoted, rude and vulgar crap."

I opened the envelope today to discover who on the right would use a Hillary endorser to raise funds. It was the Cato Institute, a D.C.-based think-tank "dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace." Which of these principles, I wondered, would a Hillary presidency ensure? The answer, of course, is none. She *is* the teenage boy with whiskey and car keys, but worse: she is the teenage boy who leaves the scene after a fatal DUI and gets the old man to bribe the judge.

We know this about Hillary. We know too that her party is pulling her hard to the left. She will not surprise us. Unlike Trump, she will appoint a judiciary fully indifferent, if not hostile, to the Constitution Cato claims to cherish. "More than five million copies in print," the Cato website boasts of its pocket-sized Constitution, "this edition's influence has been observed far and wide."

Starting January 20, 2017, that Constitution could well have no influence at all. Cato will still hold symposiums on federal privatization and publish reports like "The Case against a Carbon Tax," but if Hillary is elected, no one in power will pay their efforts the least bit of attention. They will spin away on their tiny wheels with less consequence than the proverbial hamster. The hamster at least gets some exercise.

But never mind. Like the rest of the NeverTrump crowd, the Cato people will be smug about their irrelevancy. They will tweet each other, "When Trump implodes, we'll have nothing to be embarrassed about" and go to Georgetown cocktail parties with their heads held high. Sigh!

I expected more of O'Rourke in part because we share an ethnic heritage. Using a metaphor we both understand, he has emerged as a lace-curtain conservative, and I remain just a shanty one. What he seems not to understand, however, is that from the perspective of the people who run Washington, we're all just a bunch of Micks.

Liberal bloggers certainly seem to think so. Here is what they had to say about O'Rourke on just one site after an appearance on the Bill Maher show:

"Ironic for such a racist, O'Rourke was married to Amy Lumet, Lena Horne's granddaughter."

"The funny thing was PJ sounded just like the old farts he ragged on in the 60's & 70's. How ironic."

"He's an ugly, unfunny douchebag."

"He was rude, incoherent, nasty and lying."

"Unbelievably racist, misogynistic and homophobic."

I have been praying for the wisdom to understand the lace curtain, anti-Trump right – the Weekly Standard, National Review, Commentary, even The American Spectator. But it was not until I saw the Cato mailer that my overriding sentiment crystallized. These people are pathetic, deluded, fearful. They are frightened someone will think them vulgar or nutty or, God forbid, racist. They are the "pussies" Clint Eastwood warned us about.

Instead of advancing our embattled causes this past year, they devoted much of their time to writing gleeful Trump-bashing editorials. The common core of these editorials might be distilled as "How could you all be so stupid?" The "stupid" include not only those who supported Trump in the primary, but also those of us, like myself, who supported Trump after our candidates fell by the wayside.

Willfully oblivious of recent history, the lace-curtain crowd fail to see that if their chosen candidate had been nominated – say, Jeb Bush or Scott Walker or Marco Rubio – the media would have customized an attack strategy to take down that candidate just as savagely. Even if Carly Fiorina or Ben Carson were the nominee, the media would have somehow managed to portray either of them as "unbelievably racist, misogynistic and homophobic."

It is futile, P.J. No matter how you debase yourself, to the D.C. establishment, you will always be a Mick. The difference between you and me is that as a shanty conservative, I never have to apologize for what I am.