



Republicans at Highest Levels Really Want to Do Away with Democracy for All

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While Tea Party movement followers ran around Nashville last week dressed up in their Paul Revere period costumes, blathering about their heroic struggle against Obama's Islamosocialist tyranny, the right-wing elite that nurtures them, and their paid libertarian ideologues, have been openly advocating the abolition of America's democracy in favor of a free-market junta, because, as they say over and over, voters cannot be trusted to rule themselves.

Here, for example, is how one popular libertarian pundit summed up the attitude: "To be a libertarian in a modern democracy is to say that nearly 300 million Americans are wrong, and a handful of nay-sayers are right." It's a quote so common among the Republican and libertarian vanguard that it's almost irrelevant which one of them said it -- I'll get to this guy later, but suffice to know that he's a tenured professor, and sitting pretty in the same billionaire-funded world of think tanks, institutes, and PR machines that launched the Tea Party.

That's the dangerously authoritarian part of the Tea Party that we've forgotten about lately.

It's evident even in Republican Rep. Tom Tancredo's shocking "[Jim Crow speech](#)" that kicked off last week's Tea Party Convention -- when the out-of-the-closet xenophobe unveiled his Big Idea on how to preserve America's freedom, he wasn't just advocating more bigotry, but also a plan to roll back America's overly-free democracy, replacing it with a rule of elites that uses "civics literary tests" as the justification for denying voting rights to tens of millions of "wrong" Americans, like minorities and people with funny accents.

That's what made the whole period-costume fetish party so surreal: the sight of all these people re-enacting the Founding Fathers revolutionary fight for democracy, while at the same time cheering on a plan that overthrows American democracy and restricts power to a vanguard elite -- which presumably includes the kinds of draft-dodging rednecks and bipolar government-parasites like Tancredo.*Most of the gullible rank-and-file fools at the convention who snickered gleefully at Tancredo's "I have a dream ... of denying democratic rights to poor black kids's families and brown kids' families..." speech didn't understand that in all likelihood, they too would have their "irrational" voting rights canceled, because their masters despise them. And they don't even hide it. As incredible as it seems, these Republican and "libertarian" ideologues have been arguing that the real

problem in America's democracy is that too many people have voting rights, leaving America at the mercy of "irrational" or dangerous voters who elect the wrong people. They have argued that the only way to save America is by overthrowing this democracy and replacing it with an enlightened, free-market dictatorship.

One reason you don't hear much about this is because most of them zipped up their mouths by the middle of 2008, when there was a real fear of a populist uprising and a new New Deal. But the Republican right-wing elite wasn't always so shy; right up through the financial collapse, many boasted as publicly as possible about their dream of overthrowing the democracy and replacing it with a free-market dictatorship.

Take one recent example: Republican ideologue Kevin Hassett, a top economic adviser to Bush and McCain and who heads the right-wing American Enterprise Institute's economic policy department where so many brilliant free-market ideas are incubated. In 2007, Hassett boldly questioned whether democracy is really the best way to preserve America's free-market preeminence, in a Bloomberg column headlined, "Does Economic Success Require Democracy?":

"Dictatorships are not hamstrung by the preferences of voters for, say, a pervasive welfare state. ...The unfree nations will grow so quickly that they will overwhelm free nations with their economic might. ... Meanwhile, democracies may copy many of the market-friendly policies of the dictatorships, but it seems unlikely that free citizens will choose to reduce their own political freedoms."

This is a constant meme among libertarian free-market ideologues: Americans have too much freedom to decide their own freedom. Hassett worries that time is running out for the Republican free-market elites, who are locked in a suicide pact with the boneheaded majority of American voters, a mass of idiots too short-sighted to grasp how unregulated capitalism is the best thing for them. Instead of acting in their own interests and voluntarily voting to hand power over to a Chinese-style Politburo, we idiots keep on grunting for socialist policies like Medicare, Social Security, and unemployment insurance when we're too weak to face unemployment on our own.

You'd think Hassett would have been driven into a cave after that column, but then again, this is the same guy who co-wrote one of the biggest embarrassments in finance literature: *Dow 36,000*, a book released 10 years ago predicting the Dow would soar to 36,000 in no time. We're dealing with a professional huckster here, but that's sort of the point-- selling the gullible fools one kind of snake oil in 2000, pitching them another kind of libertarian snake oil today.

From the Republican elite's perspective, abolishing democracy is a matter of self-defense for the rightwing billionaire class, which they expect everyone to sacrifice their lives for.

Bill Archer, an old free-market colleague of Tancredo's, let loose the Republican elite's loathing for democracy in a *Wall Street Journal* [article back in 2001](#), bleating over the

fate of his billionaire sponsors: "Politicians may find it easier and easier to raise tax rates that apply only to a minority of middle- and upper-income earners in order to finance new government spending primarily benefiting lower-income individuals. The result will be class warfare at its worst and a sort of tyranny of the majority."

You got that? Freedom is when an elite minority pushes the tax burden down the class ladder; tyranny is when the struggling majority votes to put a cramp in the super-rich's Marie Antoinette lifestyle. Which is pretty much what another major inspiration in the Tea Party movement, Grover Norquist, once said. A few years ago, the notorious tax-slashing Republican lobbyist who heads Americans For Tax Reform told a [Republican Log Cabin conference](#):

"Democracies are dangerous. Look what happens in California where they pick on the richest ten percent." Yup, that's dangerous all right. Norquist, who helped shape Gingrich's 1994 Republican Revolution and who practically owned Washington during Bush's first term, has always pitched himself as a radical libertarian whose goal is to "shrink the government until it's small enough to drown in a bathtub." Why does he want to shrink and murder government? Because government technically can be used by us -- the majority -- to one day threaten Grover's rightwing billionaire circle's monopoly on power and wealth. Kill off the American government, and the American people are left naked and powerless against the super-rich elites.

Bryan Caplan, a George Mason professor, and one of the last up-and-coming libertarian ideologues before the 2008 crash, is one of the newest and most degenerate models in the libertarian cadet system. A graduate of the familiar Milton Friedman School of Hucksternomics, Caplan laid out this increasingly shrill hatred of American democracy back in 2007 in a book titled [*The Myth of the Rational Voter*](#). Here's how Caplan described his book:

The central idea is that voters are worse than ignorant; they are, in a word, irrational -- and they vote accordingly. Despite their lack of knowledge, voters are not humble agnostics; instead, they confidently embrace a long list of misconceptions. Economic policy is the primary activity of the modern state. And if there is one thing that the public deeply misunderstands, it is economics. ... So what remedies for voter irrationality would I propose? Above all, relying less on democracy and more on private choice and free markets... Another way to deal with voter irrationality is institutional reform. Imagine, for example, if the Council of Economic Advisers, in the spirit of the Supreme Court, had the power to invalidate legislation as "uneconomical." Similarly, since the data show that well-educated voters hold more sensible policy views, we could emulate pre-1949 Great Britain by giving college graduates an extra vote.

But Professor Caplan also tsk-tsks his billionaire sponsors for their misguided soft-heartedness in their dealings with the rest of us: "As long as elites persist in unmerited

deference to and flattery of the majority, containing the dangers of voter irrationality will be very hard. Someone has to tell the emperor when he is naked. He may not listen, but if no one speaks up, he will almost surely continue embarrassing himself and traumatizing spectators." And just in case you're wondering if there's some nuance you've missed, Caplan drops the high theoretical mumbo-jumbo and lays it in terms any lughead could understand, during a Q&A at the Cato Institute:

Turning to Caplan, [the moderator] asked, "Bryan, is low turnout even a bad thing?" "No," he replied to some laughter. "Low voter turnout is actually a blessing in disguise. One of the two key things that predicts turnout is actually higher education, and more educated people generally have more sensible views about policy."

As to whether people should perhaps just be more properly informed, Caplan said, "If you can either encourage people who don't know what they're doing to not vote or at least not encourage them to vote, or you could have massive public education to raise the level of awareness in everyone up to the level of a Ph.D. -- if there are even such resources in the universe -- I think it's better to just encourage people to be lazy. Say, 'You know, if you don't really know what's going on, it would actually be the more responsible thing not to participate.'" That latter option, he said, is "much cheaper."

And here's what's frightening: His ideas are celebrated as sheer genius by establishment outlets. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* praised Caplan's book in 2007, calling his blueprint for a Pinochet-like dictatorship, "the best political book of the year"; while the *Harvard Political Review* wrote, "While one may quibble with his specifics, the overall argument is convincing and applicable across a variety of fields ... Forces the reader to take a second look at our nation's unshakable faith in the wisdom of the electorate."

Caplan is the one whom I quoted at the beginning of the article, sneering at the 300 million Americans whom he'd like to disenfranchise and would if his Republican billionaire sponsors decided to pull the trigger.

This is a guy who should be chased out of town and out of our hemisphere. But instead Caplan's what passes for "bold" and "thinking outside the box" in our degenerate era.

And besides, Caplan sits on the shoulders of giants when he talks that way -- giant elitist assholes like Ronald Reagan, the hero of the Republican Party and a good part of the Tea Party movement. In a 1965 speech, he revealed his and his party elite's loathing of American democracy, which he argued is the surest path to dictatorship and poverty:

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover they can vote themselves largesse out of the public treasury. From that moment on the majority ... always vote[s] for the candidate promising the most benefits from the treasury with the result that democracy always collapses over a loose fiscal policy, always to be followed by dictatorship."

Reagan sees us, the electorate the same way that the humans hiding in their vulnerable fortress saw the zombies in Land of the Dead: it was only a matter of time before we'd learn to use the democracy weapon, bust down the fence and pour into their hard-earned mansions, devouring and destroying everything with our socialist voting tendencies.

And the Gipper stood on the shoulders of other giants, like the crackpot midget Milton Friedman, whose free-market theories shaped the last three decades of our lives. What few people talk about is Friedman's theory about democracy, and our fitness for it: in his mind, we majority of Americans are capable of rational behavior in the free marketplace (because he thought we behaved according to his models), but we are irrational when we act in the political marketplace (because we hadn't always voted the way he'd like us to).

Or take Friedman's free-market rival, Friedrich von Hayek, the Kaiser of Libertarian Crackpots, who famously praised General Pinochet: "Personally I prefer a liberal dictator to democratic government lacking liberalism." The same Pinochet whom Friedman happily served in the 70s.

What about the \$23 trillion Republican bailouts? Well, again, we're too stupid to understand. The thing is, those bailouts had to be done their way in order to save us from the Road to Serfdom. It's hard to explain, but basically, the anti-government conservatives in the Bush Machine saved us from that Road to Serfdom by turning us into serfs. You see, all along it was the Road that they warned us about, not serfdom -- that road is really treacherous, and government funded, and just a bad place to be. We weren't rational or strong enough to wean ourselves off of big government. So they saved us with their tough love, and stole the \$23 trillion bailout for themselves before we could get our hands on it -- which no doubt we would have done. In their hands, that \$23 trillion debt makes us serfs, which is not as bad as the other alternative: we take the \$23 trillion ourselves, leading us down the road to serfdom. Confused? If we were capable of studying economics, we'd understand the scientific logic of this reasoning.

Just as it took years for Milton Friedman's ideas to go from the circus freakshow to respected state religion, so this budding libertarian idea of abolishing democracy to save America, given the stakes and the forces behind it, shouldn't be dismissed. They're thinking about it. So should the rest of us.

***Note:** In 1969, when Tancredo was finishing his four-year stint as pro-war College Republican campus activist, he received a note in the mail from the Draft Board calling him up for duty in Vietnam -- so the wobbly-kneed invertebrate ran screaming and crying to the draft board appealing for an exemption from the very same war told everyone else to die in. After making a total abject ass of himself squirting before the draft board and pissing into his pants, Tancredo finally succeeded in disgusting them so thoroughly that they gave him the coward's exemption he sought -- ruling him unfit for duty due to "anxiety bouts" and "panic attacks." It was the only government job he ever turned down -- after that, Tancredo spent his entire life sucking on the taxpayer teat, first as a junior high school

teacher, then a state legislator, then a Department of Education federal employee (where he spent most of his time firing his colleagues), then Congressman, and finally, a Republican Party foundation-welfare queen.

Read more of Mark Ames at eXiledonline.com. He is the author of [Going Postal: Rage, Murder, and Rebellion: From Reagan's Workplaces to Clinton's Columbine and Beyond](#).

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