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Better Late Than Never

January 18th, 2010 at 10:02 am by [David Frum](#) | [25 Comments](#) |

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Last week, NRO's Ramesh Ponnuru [chided](#) me for suggesting that "anger, paranoia, and extremism" beset the "talk radio right."

This week NRO provides space to Daniel Griswold of Cato to apply a mild but firm rebuke to Fox's Sean Hannity for showcasing ... well my phrase "anger, paranoia and extremism" serves pretty well.

Griswold is concerned that Fox [helped](#) to launch a new book by conspiracy fantasist Jerome Corsi.

Boosted by a friendly Fox News interview with Sean Hannity in October, the book has been selling reasonably well. The people buying it are presumably the same conservative-leaning folks who opposed Obama's election and are now fueling the Tea Party movement. Libertarians and conservatives who value free markets and limited government, however, should keep their distance from this bestselling prophet.

Griswold worries:

While Corsi takes passing shots at government spending and climate-change legislation, his real target is "free trade," "globalism," and international agreements such as NAFTA and the World

Trade Organization. The villains in his book are trade agreements, trade deficits, growing Chinese foreign-currency reserves, and oil imports, all of which threaten to undermine the U.S. dollar, American independence, and the middle class. Orchestrating our decline is a cast of characters from around the globe, both familiar and obscure, working in public and in secret.

Griswold does not do justice to the nuttiness of Corsi's fears of a Nafta superhighway, a road that will supposedly expedite the shipping of containers from Mexico through the middle United States to Duluth and thence across the border due north to ... Quetico Provincial Park, a pristine nature reserve almost 1000 miles from the nearest Canadian factory.

Nor does Griswold deal with Corsi's previous adventure in 9/11 [denialism](#) or his insinuations in his 2008 book, *ObamaNation*, that candidate Obama was a practising Muslim. Yet that book too was heavily [promoted](#) on Fox, and that time without criticism from NRO. On the contrary, NRO gave [considerable space](#) to those who wished to criticize criticism of Corsi.

As an NR alumnus, I've been waiting hopefully for the moment when NRO would resume its historical vocation of countering "anger, paranoia, and extremism" on the right. It's good to see these positive signs, however tentative. Welcome, friends: we've been keeping your seat warm.

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I would not expect what congeals as conservative political activism in the future to give globalism and free trade a blank cheque. What was settled policy in Reaganesque conservatism in the 80s will almost be certainly re-examined due to the different circumstances of a different age.

- [2 COProgressive](#) // Jan 18, 2010 at 1:36 pm

Griswold wrote of Corsi;

"The villains in his book are trade agreements, trade deficits, growing Chinese foreign-currency reserves, and oil imports, all of which threaten to undermine the U.S. dollar, American independence, and the middle class."

While not a fan of Corsi at all, there is a modicum of truth to what Corsi writes. Many years ago I watched the Milton Friedman series on PBS "Free to Chose". In one segment he spoke of the cost of labor and the shift of the manufacturing for locations that had high costs of labor to locations that had lower cost of labor. A lightbulb lit in my head then that the American Middle class was doomed in a global marketplace. America, with its high standard of living, could not compete with countries with labor rates of 1/10th, 1/20th or 1/50th of the going rate here.

It was only a matter of time before jobs started to flow out of our country and we would see the downward forces on our own labor rates and the underpinnings of the American middle class melt away.