

TWELVE IMPORTANT COMMENTS BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE RADICAL WRONG," VICTOR DANIELS

Be careful not to “swallow whole” what anyone tells you—not me, not anyone else, nor “the authorities” of any group or party. . . .Ask yourself what the vested interests of the authorities or the party are—interests that might be measured in wealth, power, ideology—or even just people’s wish to gain and keep the approval of others in their circle. . . . Consult your own direct experience.

Remember that every party’s program is flawed. . . . You always have the right to think for yourself about what makes sense, what seems true, and what does not.

Democracy is in real danger! This . . . is a watershed moment. We can save what is left of our democracy or lose it. If we lose it now, we may lose it forever, for there are those who are trying to enthrone themselves as permanent overlords. Today they are on the attack like sharks that smell blood in the water, [due in large part to the flood of special interest money that recent Supreme Court decisions have unleashed into campaigns.] prattling about democracy even as they dismantle it.

The Constitution. . . and how it has been realized, and distorted. Some people think they know exactly what the Constitution really means, and furthermore, they think it means exactly what they want it to mean. . . . Fortunately, there is one indisputable authority on the Constitution’s overall intentions. It is that document’s introduction, the Preamble. The Preamble states the central principles of the Constitution, which the body of the document spells out in detail. When it was written, “the People” meant property-owning white male citizens. As amended since, the “We the People” to whom the provisions of the Constitution apply now includes all women, all Native Americans, all African Americans, and all other citizens regardless of ethnicity or property ownership. Given that reality, obviously the provisions of all lines that follow the word “Union” apply to **“We the People,”** that clearly means **All of We the People** – not just **Some of Us People**. In subsequent lines,

“establish justice” implies equal justice for all – not greater justice for those who can afford pricey lawyers or buy the favors of legislators or regulators.

“insure domestic Tranquility” can occur only if most people believe that the government has indeed established justice and furthers the general welfare. Promoting the welfare of the few at the expense the rest of us is sure to give rise to domestic anger, disturbance, and protest rather than tranquility.

”provide for the common defence” means protecting our own country – not conducting wars in which we invade other countries or endorse clandestine operations to replace democratic governments with tyrannies.

“promote the general welfare” gives clear approval to such programs as bank deposit insurance, Social Security, Medicare, building and maintaining highways, preventing disasters, providing disaster relief, etc.

“secure the Blessings of Liberty” suggests that the people must be free from oppression and exploitation both by government and by any other institution or organization, including corporations

“to ourselves and our Posterity” means carrying out the principles above in such a way as to avoid harming, and if possible to benefit, the interests and prospects of future generations.

Which side of the American Revolution would today's right-wing extremists have been on? Ironically, anyone who examines their words and platforms with an unbiased eye will [probably] conclude that if today's right wing radicals had been alive in 1776, many –perhaps even most-- would have been cheering loudly for the Redcoats, hoping for the continued rule of the British Crown, and opposing the American Revolution with all their might.

The "Tea Party"s huge distortion. The original 1773 tea party patriots would probably soil their undergarments if they could see how their name is being used today. . . Participants in the real 1773 tea party were protesting not against the British government itself, but against that government's alliance with the era's largest corporation, the East India Tea Company, and the monopoly Parliament granted to it for importing tea to the colonies, In sum, the 1773 tea party was a protest against corporate lobbying and influence on government policy that was jacking up prices and putting hundreds of small enterprises (independent ship-owners and mom and pop tea importers) out of business. Its action in the harbor was *against the company whose payoffs were buying the government's backing, and against the British government's support of the company's monopoly*, which worked just about the same way as today's corporate political donations to Congress. . . . The tragedy is that ordinary citizens who make up the cadres of “Tea Party” members, who for the most part have been duped by Big Money and Big Business oligarchs, are acting against their own interests as well as those of the nation. Be careful about whom you follow, and what their interests are.

Key principles of economic well being. Daniel Gilbert's research found that . . . at lower levels, happiness increases rapidly as income rises, but after about seventy thousand dollars it levels off and increases only very gradually with additional wealth. . . . Gilbert's results replicated similar studies carried out

earlier by others. They also parallel a major change in economic thinking. In old economic reckonings, the food needed by a starving child and a Cadillac coveted by a driver who wants to trade up are equally valid aspirations. But growing minorities of economists . . . speak of ***the utility of consumption***. We can make this distinction:

Primary goods and services are needs for food, water, warmth, shelter, health care, and the opportunity to explore and discover.

Secondary goods and services are things we think we need that bring us reasonable comfort and pleasure. Most of these are not true needs, but wants, like a classier car. Due to our social comparisons, however, they may function psychologically like needs.

Tertiary goods and services are (1) items we think we "should want," but don't truly care about, and (2) items we know are sheer froth and indulgence, but we want them anyway. (When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping!)

Philosopher Alfred Anderson says, "No amount of compensation to one person can compensate for injustice to another." . . . We ought to restructure our economy so that everyone gets the primary goods and services they need (and contributes to providing them for others) before others start getting large amounts of tertiary goods and services. Figuring out how to do this will, [require] . . . a deep and profound rethinking of the ways our culture and communities and society are organized. And then we need to undertake an economic transformation that will take us beyond the immense current problems of structural unemployment caused by robotization and offshoring, and declining markets resulting from declining wages and personal assets of most people. Neither traditional capitalism nor socialism addresses these problems effectively, nor do any approaches suggested by the Republican and Democratic parties. And hardly anyone in the U.S. and the other rich countries is thinking about how to do these things in the context of the whole world economy in which problems of poverty are even more severe in many other nations than in our own. Meeting these problems creatively and successfully is one of the daunting challenges of our time.

Religion and Government: Paine, Jefferson, and Madison make the situation perfectly clear. Some of today's Radical Wrongers have convinced themselves that our founding fathers held the principle that, "My religion and others that agree with it have the right to get our views made into laws that everybody has to follow or else they should be arrested and get thrown into jail." . . . There is usually a heavy loading of self-righteous energy behind that view. . . . In reality, that attitude is one of the things the founders fought against most strongly. . . .

Many authors of bills that take away women's reproductive rights and restrict their health care options hypocritically mouth comments about "freedom!" Apparently they mean their own freedom to tell others how to live. ***A key element of religious imperialism is an attempt to forge laws and political institutions that constrain others in ways that promote the beliefs and practices of one's own sect.*** . . . the Radical Wrong's reproductive agenda

appears to be to crush such independence and autonomy as women have attained, and throw the advances women have made toward equality of status and opportunity into the garbage can. It looks to me suspiciously like contraception and abortion are the cover stories, barefoot and pregnant is the agenda, and iron-fisted male domination of women's lives and destinies is the goal.

In sharp contrast, the *Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice* is a nationwide alliance of more than *forty* mainstream Protestant, Jewish, and other religious groups which hold that "**every woman must have the right to consider all options when she faces a problem pregnancy and the freedom to allow her to come to a decision that is in harmony with her own moral and religious values--without government intrusion.**" . . . The abortion debate in America is not a conflict between the 'God-fearing' and the 'Godless' but is instead a struggle between those determined to undermine religious freedom and those determined to preserve it." . . . As for the idea that government ought to dictate whether a woman can choose whether to be pregnant is a "conservative" view, forget it. Barry Goldwater's wife Peggy was co-founder of Arizona Planned Parenthood in 1937. . . . In 1964 [former Democratic President] Harry S. Truman and [Republican President] Dwight D. Eisenhower served together as bipartisan honorary co-chairs of Planned Parenthood.

Casualties in War. Whether we are talking about an American, an Afghani, or an Iraqi, every person killed or maimed in war is someone's father or mother, husband or wife, sister or brother, daughter or son. The loss, pain and grief of some unknown family in a far-off land is no less than your loss and pain and grief would be if it were a member of your own family.

How your politics affects you. Your beliefs are tied to attitudes. Your attitudes lead to electrochemical events in your brain and to tension or relaxation in your body that produces or reduces stress. Your attitudes and somatic reactions lead to actions. Repeated again and again, all these personal events shape your personality and character, affecting who you are and who you become. . . . If your usual political stance is hostile, judgmental, and reactive, you become a more hostile, judgmental, reactive, shallow human being. If your political stance is caring, compassionate, and constructive, those qualities grow in your character.

Much confusion disappears when we use the following basic yardstick of ethical behavior: In every situation, and with every issue ask, "Who or what is being--or will be--helped or harmed, in what ways, how, when, and under what specific circumstances, by doing this or that?" . . . There is also the corollary principle, "How can we minimize, and do nothing to contribute to, unnecessary and avoidable suffering?" I call asking and answering these two questions "**The moral and ethical Rock of Gibraltar,**" because I know of no other principle that seems as widely applicable as these two taken together.

Our present crossroads. In near and distant tomorrows, will the words and work of our nation's founders and great later thinkers still mean anything at all? Or will they just be fancy words that echo through the years as if bouncing off the walls of a deserted warehouse, as though they were still relevant, long after . . .we have left them to become empty symbols, standing like abandoned tombstones in the landscape of our history? . . . In past times of crises, America has usually risen to the challenge, and met its moral responsibilities as a world power. So the question is: Are we merely an empire in decline now, like ancient Rome in its latter days, or can we still be the New Atlantis that the great idealistic souls who founded our nation once envisioned?

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