

# **HERMIT HERALD**

## **ISSUE 130**

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### **QUOTE FOR THE DAY**

**“Great innovations should not be forced on slender majorities.” Thomas Jefferson**

### **IS THAT THE CASE TODAY?**

**Much has been said and written about president Biden’s \$3.5 trillion social infrastructure plan being too ambitious given his extremely thin majorities in the house and senate. Comparisons are made to FDR and LBJ who initiated huge new programs, but had very strong political support.**

**Fast forward to today and what do we have? We have very tenuous political support. But wait a minute- that’s in the halls of congress. How does the American public view these proposals? Is there support or not for a \$3.5 trillion program? A new I&I Tipp poll finds that 88% of Democrats support the program**

**with 9% opposed. Among Independents (the largest voting sector) 45% support and 51% oppose. Among Republicans, 19% support and 79% oppose. It would appear that the public has the same dilemma as the politicians. It's a sticky wicket, and as uncomfortable as it is, perhaps an affirmation that the congress and senate reflect the views of their constituents.**

**Parenthetically, it should be noted, that an August, 2021 Fox news poll reflects that 59% of Democrats have a favorable view of Socialism compared to 40% in February, 2020.**

**Better be careful what you wish for. Your scribe has six relatives living in Denmark (said to have the happiest citizens on the planet) Here's what you have- fantastic safety nets for all of society and one of the highest levels of education in the world- except- you only get to university in a highly competitive, merit only system. Your child who just graduated medical school specializing in neurosurgery can perhaps aspire to eventually making \$150,000, a little different from the million dollar plus compensation for a mid career Harvard trained surgeon. And then there's the taxes-**

**the rates are sky high in Denmark for everyone, going as high as 56% on ordinary income, with there being substantial taxation on almost everything else. Several years ago, one of my relatives bought the smallest size Volkswagen. In the U.S. that car was just over \$30,000; in Denmark, just a tad over \$70,000.**

**Immigration in Denmark- forget about it. The country is living proof that socialism cannot coexist with open borders. It is probably harder to move to Denmark, become a Danish citizen and become a recipient of the country's generous support programs than any country in the world. And, lastly- a precondition for citizenship- you must prove you can speak the language fluently- not just read street signs and menus. Most everyone in Denmark speaks three to five languages, but for those who would seek to become Danish citizens, there is little appetite for those who would come in thinking to retain their Arabic, Mexican, Chinese, etc ethnicity. As if to say, " You're a Danish citizen now, be Danish." not a haven for diversity.**

**Apologies for the diversion into socialism, but just to reflect on as you ponder how far down that road the U.S. wants to go.**

**So, that brings us back to the present in the U.S. What I had hoped would be a Marshall like plan for our poorer communities; better and more hospitals; better and more housing; better schools, better qualified teachers and better and more recreational facilities (boys and girls clubs), has morphed into a safety net program, with the primary features being Universal pre K education, Child credits, subsidized child care and paid family leave. Eighteen academics who specialize in family policy, social work and economics were asked to consider which of the safety nets they would choose if they could only select one. This request came from Nancy Pelosi stating, “Overwhelmingly, the guidance I am receiving is to do fewer things well.”**

**Nine of the 18 experts said that universal pre K was the number one priority. Interestingly, from the many opinions on this issue, I read that it is less about the educational value of two years of pre K than with the fact that, by**

**having the children off to school, it gives both parents the ability to be out in the work force, thereby giving the family unit greater financial stability.**

**Only five of the eighteen, given only one choice, selected Child credit. Three voted for subsidized child care and one for paid family leave.**

**You can understand how these professionals come down on the side of pre k care. Norway, Iceland, Finland and Denmark – all very high on socialist policies- devote annual spending per toddler between \$29,700 and \$23,100. The United States? \$500 per child.**

**A huge problem for the Democrats who are driving this car is the moderates arguing against the progressives, who don't want to cut a penny from the \$3.5 trillion. But, wait a minute, how about a little financial chicanery- some smoke and mirrors to get most of their deal realized, while making it appear they have shrunken the package to a range of \$1.9 to \$2.3 trillion?**

**Actually, a piece of cake. Many of the programs proposed in the \$3.5 trillion deal were predicated on a ten- year budget forecast. So, guess what? If you reduce many of these programs to five- year deals, you save hundreds of billions of dollars.**

**Carl Hulse of the NY Times writes, “Democrats are in essence making a bet that even if some benefits must be made available only temporarily, they will become very hard to rescind. History shows that Democrats are probably correct. Federal benefits are rarely taken away once given.”**

**Other issues still being argued relate to who gets these “safety nets”. Is it just the needy, or is it everyone? Surprisingly, there are many in congress who think these benefits should be for all.**

**Then, there’s the non- child aspect of the larger proposal that is in jeopardy; housing aid. \$322 Billion had been included in the budget to bolster low- income housing programs. It’s really looking like it will be hard to salvage this part of the proposal. As Diane Yentel of the**

**Low Income Housing Coalition says, “Better health care or educational access doesn’t do much for families sleeping in their car or under a bridge, or for the millions more on the verge.”**

**We are all on a roller coaster in the black of night, like Disney World’s Space Mountain, and don’t know where the next turn will take us. President Biden’s overall approval numbers stand at an abysmal 38%. Your scribe predicts, however, that with some nimble numbers management, a \$3.5 trillion proposal that suddenly becomes a more acceptable \$2.2 trillion dollar proposal, will still contain a huge percentage of the \$3.5 trillion package. When the public sees the “safety net” in operation, Mr. Biden’s numbers will improve dramatically, and the rout the Republicans are hoping for at mid term will be no sure thing.**

## **AUTOCRATS OF THE LEFT**

**Dorian Abbot, a geo-physicist at the University of Chicago made a U Tube presentation last October making a case against the use of group identity as a primary criterion in selection**

**processes. As columnist Bret Stephens points out, “Abbot was immediately targeted for cancellation.” That lasted for about ten minutes when U. Chicago president Robert Zimmer stepped in with a firm statement of support for academic freedom.**

**The folks who would silence Abbot got another shot recently. He had been scheduled to deliver the prestigious Carlson Lecture at MIT. His detractors uncovered a sharp exchange Abbot had had with a colleague who had contended, “If you are just hiring the best people, you are part of the problem.” According to Stephens, Abbot’s view was, “If universities aren’t putting excellence above every other consideration, they aren’t helping democracy. They are weakening it by contributing to the democratic tendency toward groupthink and the mediocrity that can come from trying to please the majority.”**

**Like a horde of angry bees the “cancel Abbot” forces descended on MIT, and unlike the University of Chicago, the administration at MIT caved, rescinding Abbot’s invitation.**



**As Stephens says, “It is a reminder that our universities are failing at the task of educating students in the habits of a free mind. Instead, they are becoming islands of illiberal ideology and factories of moral certitude, more often at war with the values of liberal democracy than in their service.”**

**Interestingly, a Knight Foundation survey found that 63% of college students feel “The climate on their campuses prevents some people from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive.”**

**At the end of the day Princeton has welcomed Abbot to present his speech virtually. It has been so over subscribed that the virtual broadcast has had to be reconfigured to accommodate well over a thousand who have signed up.**

**As Stephens sums it up, “For academia to serve the goals of liberty, Coward Culture has to go.”**

**RELIGION IN TRANSITION**

**What an evolution, or, perhaps, revolution. Where are we going here? I have no advocacy, but am attempting to report on some major changes.**

**Dating from 1988 , the General Social Survey has been asking respondents about their belief in God. For decades about 70% of respondents have stated that they believed “God really exists.” Not so much any more, as by 2018 only 44% had a firm belief in God. Even worse with generation Z (who ever they are) only one third are believers.**

**Today, 40 % of youngest Americans claim no religious affiliation and just a quarter claim they attend church once or more per week.**

**Politics further skews what is happening in the religious sector as white evangelicals and Roman Catholics tend to wind up in the Republican aisle while black protestants are solidly in the Democratic camp. Problem is none of the religious groupings perfectly align with their supposed political affinities. Abortion, same sex unions and a number of**

**other social issues cloud the future of politics as it relates to religion.**

**All that aside, we learned in September that Harvard's new head chaplain is an atheist. But how can that be? Well, it turns out that Harvard has more than 40 faith leaders representing virtually all religions. On the one hand you can see the Lutheran chaplain thinking, "Well, I'm not going to vote for a Roman Catholic to be our leader, that's an acknowledgement of that religion's supremacy." On and on would go that argument whomever might be chosen as head chaplain. It therefore became an easy choice to vote for an avowed atheist, Greg Epstein. As noted by author, Robert Barron, "Emanuel Kant famously opined that authentic religion had nothing to do finally with dogma, prayer and liturgy. Rather, faith was all about the cultivation of morality."**

**Barron continues, "Even the most elemental of doctrines- belief in God-doesn't matter. One can still evidently be perfectly, 'religious' without it." Hence the elevation as head**

**chaplain for Greg Epstein, an enormously well respected member of the Harvard community.**

**As Thomas Jefferson said, “Our particular principles of religion are a subject of accountability to our God alone. I enquire after no one and trouble none with mine; nor is it given in this life to know whether your’s or mine, or friends or our foes are exactly in the right.”**

## **FOOLISH PEOPLE**

**Ok, someone will jump on me for criticizing people who are making “sensible asset accruing investments”, but, wow! When you think how people with this kind of money could have done so much to help others: Item; Michael Jordan’s sneakers go for \$1,000,000. Item; Banana taped to a blank canvas goes for \$125,000 (at what intervals are you allowed to replace the banana and how does it effect the value?) Item; The Danish Museum gave \$83,000 to an artist to produce two works of art displaying cash and its effect in today’s world. The artist hung two entirely blank canvases at the Kunsten Museum entitled,**

**“Take the money and run”- and he did. Item; the famous/infamous street artist, Banksy, who cleverly created a painting that shredded itself just after selling at auction three years ago was just resold at auction for \$25.4 million. It’s entitled, “Love is in the bin”. What a waste- what foolishness!!**

**AND THIS JUST IN**

**The East Lansing Public School District has just informed parents there will be neither Halloween nor Valentine observances at their schools. Halloween; because of concerns over hurt feelings of children whose parents don’t want them to participate, including the possibility that some children, “may become overwhelmed and sometimes frightened by the costumes.” As for Valentine’s day, “Some families and students do not feel comfortable with the idea of boys and girls exchanging valentines or participating in a celebration that focuses on love.” JEEZ!! Where is this country going?**

**Your faithful scribe, PB**

