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QUOTE FOR THE DAY

“None of this had to happen. (Afghanistan) The decision to withdraw was tragically unnecessary.” Joseph I. Lieberman, revered elder of the Democratic party.

CAN'T PUT A GOOD SPIN ON THIS ONE

This issue is consuming the 24/7 news cycle and we are all inundated with information. Afghanistan, a topic that the polls said just a month ago was only of interest to 12% of people in the U.S., now takes up four to seven pages a day in the NY Times, and 62% of the American public now think the Biden administration is doing a terrible job of handling the end game of the war. And then, yesterday, 13 of our troops lose their lives, 15

are wounded and about 60 civilians are killed by an ISIS-K suicide bomber.

So many – Republicans and Democrats have echoed Mr. Lieberman. Yes, Trump also wanted to leave, but on terms where we, not the Taliban, dictated the pull out conditions.

To evacuate Bagram airbase in the middle of the night and not tell the Afghan government or our allies was unforgiveable. To evacuate our military before U.S. citizens and our Afghan supporters is just the worst. Mike McCaul (R- Texas) said, “Biden will have blood on his hands. People will die and people will be left behind.”

Our top military, from the Secretary of Defense to the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff to the top commanders in Afghanistan, advised the president not to do this and he ignored their counsel. It is so surprising and damnable that not a single one of them resigned rather than capitulate to the president’s poor judgement.

Reinforcing Mr. Lieberman’s statement, Brett Stephens in the NY Times pointed out that we had taken no casualties in the last eighteen

months. With our small forces “largely devoted to providing surveillance, logistics and air cover for Afghan forces. Any American president could have maintained this position almost indefinitely- with no prospect of defeating the Taliban, but none of being routed by them either. In other words, we had achieved a good enough solution for a nation we could afford to neither save nor lose.”

It’s all about geopolitics. We bluster that Afghanistan will be forever a “Pariah state” under the Taliban, while China and Russia are already making nice and talking about mutual support agreements.

And then, one has to really feel sorry for that nice press secretary, Ms. Psaki, as, day after day, she has to report the Biden administration’s outright falsities. The most blatant being that Biden said Al Qaeda was out of Afghanistan.

How is such a statement possible when it is widely known in intelligence circles that Al Qaeda is active in 15 of the countries 34 provinces, AND, they are totally intertwined with the Taliban’s top military leader, Khalil

Haqqani. Word has it that the Taliban has asked Al Qaeda to keep a low profile until the U.S. is gone.

So who can predict what the days ahead will hold as the Taliban continue to dictate the terms of our ignoble defeat. Here's what we do know according to Mr. Stephens, "Every enemy will draw the lesson that the United States is a feckless power with no appetite for defending the Pax Americana that is still the basis for world order. And, every ally- Taiwan, Ukraine, the Baltic States, Israel, Japan- will draw the lesson that it is on its own in the face of its enemies." And, our major European allies, all in shock, disbelief and condemnation of the steps taken by the U.S. in Afghanistan.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

My eyes glaze over as I see the daily thousands of print words about how this process is going. I will try, in very condensed fashion, to give an update.

So the \$1 trillion hard infrastructure bill has passed in the senate, all done, right? Not so

fast. The 96 member progressive caucus (never knew there were that many) in the congress say they will not vote to send the bill to the president unless the \$3.5 trillion societal infrastructure bill goes to the president for signature at the same time. Two problems with that. One- they have to get all 50 democratic senators on board, which is going to be a squeaker, and, two, in the congress, they have to get about two dozen moderate democrats to also demand that both bills have to go to the president at the same time. The moderates are demanding that the hard infrastructure bill go to the president now, with the \$3.5 Trillion bill to come later. The progressives don't trust the moderates, believing that, while they are agreeing to sign on for the \$1trillion bill, at a later point they may balk at/refuse to sign the \$3.5 trillion package. This is a real conundrum for the democrats and has the potential to undo everything.

An example of the difficulty with the \$3.5Trillion package is that many of its components call for contracts to be awarded on a priority basis to minority owned firms. This simply won't work for Sen. Manchin (W. Va.) whose state has a large segment of poor

white people and white owned small businesses.

The latest is that the progressives have promised the moderates a vote will take place no later than 9/27 on the bipartisan \$1 trillion bill, but they are committed to get all parties on board to sign the \$3.5 trillion bill by the same date. Strange things happen in politics, but to accomplish this, it will be right up there with the greatest of miracles.

Your scribe has previously praised president Biden for his efforts on the societal infrastructure, but problems arise from the sheer number of projects being proposed, and, are some of them even proper for the purpose for which they are intended? Example: \$110 Billion for free community college for everyone who has graduated high school. What a travesty! A huge percentage of high school diplomas are awarded to students who don't come within two years of meeting twelfth grade reading and math requirements. Point being, before high school graduates get to go to community colleges they must have bonafide academic credentials. But, oh, how Americans love free stuff. A huge percentage of Americans

want **FOUR** years of college for free; whites- 51%; Asian Americans- 66%; Hispanics- 71% and blacks- 78%.

But, wait til you hear this one: The Governor of Oregon has decreed that high school seniors will no longer have to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing and math in order to graduate. The Governor says that action was taken to benefit minorities who, “don’t test well.” Sounds a lot like eugenics, “They just don’t have the mental capability.”

As a critic said of this policy in the DailyMail, “Will somebody explain why this is not the most blatant racist law condemning minorities to a lifetime of work at McDonalds.” And, “These same politicians preach about systemic racism being the cause of the wealth gap.” How about education?

So there are aspects of the societal infrastructure bill that I have problems with, added to which every congress person and senator will try to add on his/her favorite little project having nothing to do with the focus of the bill – you know – just a few million here or there- just a drop in the bucket- the same

political wheeling and dealing that goes into any large bill; witness \$350 million to prevent collisions between vehicles and wildlife. Have a look at these stats: there were 150 deaths last year due to these types of accidents. That's an allocation of \$2.3MM per death to study the problem. C'mon man- is that a sensible item in this bill? Every aspect of this program must be examined under a microscope- no more \$300 hammers and \$600 toilet seats.

At the end of the day, I believe we really need a societal infrastructure bill. The perfect metaphor is the condominium that recently collapsed in Florida- poorly constructed and poorly maintained. All buildings of the same age are now being frantically examined to avoid similar calamities.

Isn't that the U.S. today? We had a significant collapse of our social structure during the year following the death of George Floyd, but you know, it wasn't just about his death and a number of other deaths at the hands of the police, it was about huge disparities in health care, education, housing and recreation in our poorest communities, which have exacerbated health problems, hobbled access to necessary

academic achievement and opened the flood gates to crime and murder. We need a societal infrastructure bill to avoid further collapses of our society. That said, the ball is now in the Democrats' court, and it's going to be a major struggle to bring both the hard and the societal infrastructure bills to the president's desk at the same time.

Your faithful scribe,

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