

IS THAT ALL THERE IS? Or
What Ever Happened to Hope and Change?

Stephen L. Bakke – October 30, 2010



(If you want to “cut to the quick”, skip the next few inches of “intellectual?? pretentiousness and philosophy” and start reading at the top of page 2. Then just read until you get bored.)

I remember (I do!) a course in college in which we studied abstract concepts presented by 19th century philosophers which included Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre (I looked ‘em up). The subject was “existentialism.” What!? It is said that we will use everything studied in college – eventually. Well, “do tell!” – it finally happened to me regarding “existentialism.” Simplified, existentialism deals with understanding the free will of humans to make decisions in the context of a world they don’t understand, and in which there seems to be no obvious good or evil, right or wrong – and which thereby results in disillusionment and resignation. That’s my understanding anyway. Remember **the hit song “Is That All There Is?”** It was popularized by **Peggy Lee’s 1969 recording.** The writers were Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Here is its incredibly sad and (for the writers and singer) directionless final verse and chorus (**This is tough, dark commentary!!**):

*I know what you must be saying to yourselves.
If that's the way she feels about it **why doesn't she just end it all?**
Oh, no. Not me. **I'm in no hurry for that final disappointment.**
For I know just as well as I'm standing here talking to you,
when that final moment comes and **I'm breathing my last breath,**
I'll be saying to myself,
Is that all there is?*

*Is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing.
Let's break out the booze and have a ball.
If that's all there is!*

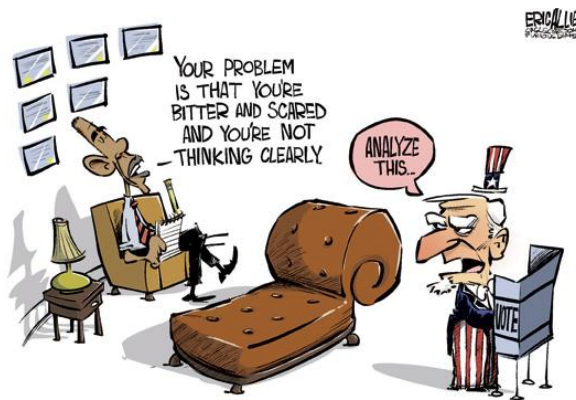
So why do I bring this up now? To a certain extent, I do feel we, as a society, have moved in the direction of less certainty as to right and wrong, and increased confusion deciding between good and evil. But the important thing for me in this commentary is to bring the above concept to bear on predictions for the elections to be held next Tuesday. Given the absence of a benchmark for citizens to make judgments, maybe the concept of existentialism is playing a part in the gigantic wave of opinion, and changing opinion, sweeping our country.

After the euphoria of the last election where even many sober cynics saw a glimmer of “hope and change,” I propose they are (perhaps existentially) changing their minds while asking “**IS THAT ALL THERE IS?**” Here are some things to consider when trying to explain why this question is being asked and why there has been this change.

Americans are reacting to the following:

- **Citizens don’t like being insulted and called ignorant.** Not many months ago Obama was a messiah, a rock star, a true phenomenon. But this has changed and organizations such as the New York Times, and even Obama himself, explains this away using unflattering descriptions of the citizenry. The President recently stated during a fundraiser: “Part of the reason that our politics seems so tough right now, and facts and science and argument do not seem to be winning the day all the time, is because we’re hard-wired not to always think clearly when we’re scared.”

And if that slam on typical voters wasn’t enough, Sen. John Kerry recently stated: “We have an electorate that doesn’t always pay that much attention to what’s going on, so people are influenced by a simple slogan rather than the facts or the truth or what’s happening.” **According to Obama, if Democrats lose, it means voters are irrational, not because of anything the administration or Congress has done.**



- **American’s love to be motivated, and react to positive thinking and encouragement – NOT disparagement and gloomy evaluation.** Remember Reagan’s style? He said that we are the best! We are the world’s best hope for freedom! America, while not perfect, is

EXCEPTIONAL! What have we gotten from the current administration? Michelle Obama stated early on that this (Obama's candidacy) is the first time she has ever been proud of her country. **Good “bleepin” grief!**

Some believe Obama has developed a style to lead “by low expectations.” He doesn't impress me as having a bold resolve for national security. Consider the apparent resignation in his comments to Bob Woodward that: “We can absorb a terrorist attack ... 9/11 ... we absorbed it and we are stronger ...” He seems to be saying that we need to simply accept terrorism as an inevitable reality. And he “rolled over” for the Russians in the nuclear negotiations. **There's not much resolve in those words and deeds.**

Commentator Allen Hunt has a suggestion: “for the next six months, begin every week with a short address telling Americans five things that are great about America and its people. Then watch as Americans begin to believe in themselves again. After all, that is what good leaders do. Inspire.” **Americans love to be proud and resolute – let them!**

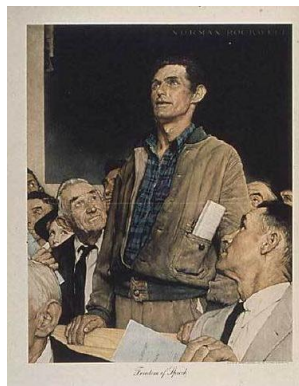


- **Citizens are becoming savvy about when they are being “spun” and misled.** Witness the empty claims of undue and inappropriate influence of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. There were claims that inappropriate amounts of foreign money was funding a significant portion of the Chamber's contributions to republican political campaigns. Additionally, there was an implication that the Chamber actually gives more than their fair share of political donations.

That couldn't be farther from the truth. While the U.S Chamber is one of the largest political contributors, it is not the largest. Furthermore, of the top contributors, labor unions comprise the majority of the contributors and they give far more than the other large contributors combined. In fact, by far the largest contributor is AFSCME which represents public employees. Since public employees overwhelmingly support democrats, and taxpayers pay their salaries, it's easy to conclude that they are using public money to support the current administration.

Other “giving giants” for the Democrat Party include SEIU, NEA, and AFL-CIO. Democrats would like the public believe that republicans are “rolling in dough,” but democrats receive more dollars from PACs than do Republicans, and overall, the DNC leads the RNC in raising money. **Citizens don’t like being “spun.”**

- **Once again I say: citizens don’t like to be misled!** Consider that the stimulus legislation was sold, to a significant degree, based on the claim that it was primarily for “shovel-ready” ready projects. Obama recently “snuck” this into a conversation: **“There’s no such thing as shovel-ready projects.” Somehow that was intended to imply that voters’ expectations were unrealistic as far as the effect of the stimulus on the economic recovery. Hey! He started that rumor! We didn’t!**
- **Obamacare? Where do I start?** Since I have covered this topic many (almost 40) times before, and will again in the future, I just want to remind everyone that: the new legislation will cause costs to go up; a significant percentage of people with insurance will not be able to keep their current coverage; and on and on More on that later. But just as important, we must look at the way it was passed: many have admitted that legislators didn’t even read the legislation; the public didn’t see it until votes were taken; subsequently there have been threats against companies which have made decisions relative to employees coverage that make the legislation, Congress, and the administration look bad. **Americans have seen through this charade since early in the Obama Administration. Remember the wonderful town hall meetings of 2009?**



- **Americans don’t like their President to be a compulsive divider.** Remember that he was to be the first post partisan, post racial president of the modern era – perhaps ever. Well ... how does that perception “wash” with the statements he recently made on the Univision Hispanic network? Not well I say! He encouraged voters to “punish our enemies and ... reward our friends who stand with us on issues that are important to us ... We don’t mind the Republicans joining us. They can come for the ride, but they gotta’ sit in back.” **Please recall the “Alinsky Style” for community organizing – any similarities?** I dealt with Alinsky in an earlier report on the book “Rules for Radicals.”

Obama taught and implemented Alinsky's method several years ago on the streets of Chicago. It's all about dividing. **And Americans don't like dividers and demagogues!**

- **Americans are quite fond of the old motto "E. Pluribus Unum" (out of many one).** We are losing our unique ability to assimilate immigrants under one government, one language, and one culture. **Under the guise of political correctness, democrats, and in particular President Obama, have promoted multiculturalism to the extent that it has begun supplanting E. Pluribus Unum – and Americans don't like it!**
- **Obama implored us to judge him by the people he surrounds himself with – and they have – they are uncomfortable with what they see.** Without going into detail here, refer to my earlier article on "Obama's Dirty Dozen." 'Nuff said.



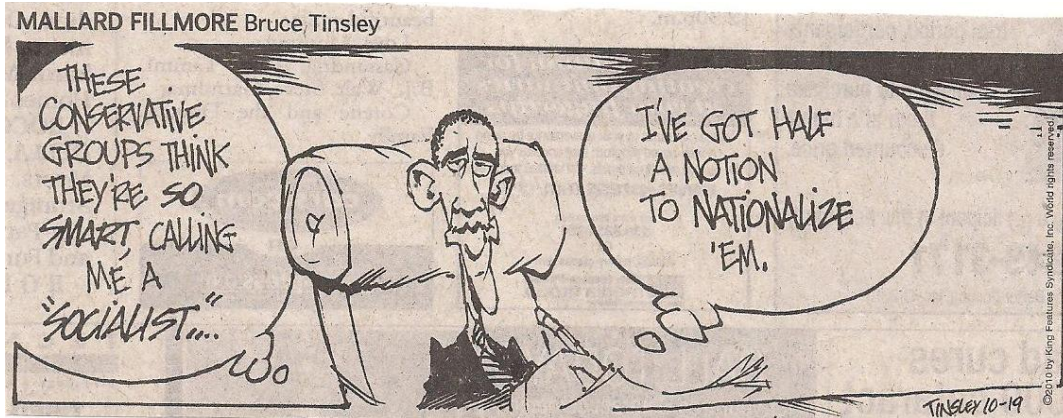
- **Our current administration has floated more than just vague hints that they consider the United Nations as one of the most important global institutions. I agree that it once had potential, but what has it done lately.** They created a body to support women's rights and included in it was an Arab nation noted as an oppressor of women's rights. Anyway, there are strong indications that the administration, including Obama, considers the U.N. as a greater force for good than the United States. **Americans are not comfortable with anything that represents a denial of American Exceptionalism.**
- **The Supreme Court has always managed (for the most part) to "stay out of the 'fray'" – as they should.** And Obama understood they were duty and tradition bound not to react and fight back when he "called them out" during his last State of the Union Address. They had merely done something Obama disagreed with. Their job is to make decisions based on our Constitution and not based on whether they (or the President) agree with the Constitution. Obama didn't agree with their election reform decision and "called them out." He knew they wouldn't publicly fight back and proceeded to embarrass them. **Americans don't like this kind of "backstabbing" – even if they don't like the Court's decision. Bad move Mr. President – you lost votes on that one.**

- **Tax policy and demagoguery go hand in hand with this administration!** Obama's imaginary tax cuts for the middle and lower class are misleading. First of all, **almost half of U.S. taxpayers pay no federal income tax to begin with!** And another example is that the S-Chip bill (part of health care reform) was funded by dozens of billions of increases in tobacco tax – which primarily impact low income individuals. **This topic could go on and on, but Americans are seeing through much of this “shell game.”**
- **American's value their tradition of leading the world in business and innovation.** There is so much we could discuss on this topic. Just suffice it to remember that Obama's science adviser, John Holdren, preaches the virtues of “de-development.” By this he means that technological advances need to be reversed, or at least toned down for numerous reasons, including environmental. **Americans are stubborn and resist relinquishing our position as leaders of the free world. Americans still believe the United States is EXCEPTIONAL!**
- **We don't like inconsistency! (Some call it hypocrisy.)** Recall the recent segment Obama did with Jon Stewart on The Daily Show. He showed his frustration with meeting opposition in Congress, particularly the Senate in which he served. **Obama endorsed the idea of changing Senate rules requiring 60 Senators to vote to end a filibuster and approve legislation.**

This comes from a former Senator who, while serving (ever so briefly) in the U.S. Senate, enthusiastically joined in a democratic filibuster to block legislation which would have reigned in “Fannie and Freddie” several years before the “s___ hit the fan.” At that time, **Obama is on record as proclaiming that he defended his position joining in the filibuster on the basis that our founders' intent was to make it difficult for Congress to implement any significant legislation.** I agree with his statement, but was he then an “originalist for convenience only”? I think so! **American's see the inconsistency.**

- **Post racial presidency? Forget it!** I know I'm one of the “goofey few” who actually watch C-Span. Not just C-Span1, but also 2 and 3. (Just say I'm doing it for others.) Recently there has been live coverage of the contentious hearings of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. At issue here is the fact that the Justice Department decided to drop charges against the Black Panthers who stood, with billy clubs in hand, and intimidated voters in the 2008 elections. That is all on film and an undisputed fact. Verdicts and punishments were soon to be meted out, but charges were mysteriously dropped. The Justice Department is obviously “stonewalling” the investigation. But what do they have to hide? It seems that the current Justice Department has decided to pursue voters' rights violations only if the alleged victims are defined as minorities. Violations against non-minority voters will apparently be overlooked. There is much testimony that

supports the fact that this is the (unspoken) practice. **Americans don't want uneven and preferential (hypocritical) applications of our laws and public policy.**



- As my last point here (add to the list with your own ideas), I want to emphatically state that Americans, including Obama supporters, are slowly but surely **realizing that “hope and change” included taking over many of life’s choices they have always made for themselves – and they don’t like it!**

Jonah Goldberg provides a very good summary: “Obama is stunned and disappointed to discover that people who can be won over by a Pepsi-style ad campaign might be lost by 20 months of economic decrepitude, nearly 10 percent unemployment and the worst summer unemployment rate for young people since 1948. Or, perhaps they lost their ardor because Candidate Obama and President Obama are very, very different people **It never dawns on (Obama) that were it not for the un-seriousness of those voters, he might still be a one-term junior senator from Illinois.**” I agree! Another way to say it is that “blaming Bush no longer works.” There are many problems and issues that Obama didn’t “inherit.” **Americans aren’t as stupid as the democrats think, or hope, they are!**

The world view that held Obama in such quasi-religious fervor was delusional all along. Americans, many who supported President Obama in the last election, are now joining that hollow, pathetic (perhaps existentialist) plea: **IS THAT ALL THERE IS?**