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The American UnPrincipled Project

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 18, 2009 NCR Today

We are disposed, in this culture, to defer to expertise, to respect the seriousness of academic credentials, and to accord academics a place of honor and prominence in our political and social discourse. But, it is difficult to do so when academics engage in silliness.

Professor Robert George of Princeton University has begun something he calls the American Principles Project. The website announces its commitment in patriotic platitudes: ?The United States of America does not need new principles. It needs renewed fidelity to the principles set forth in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution?.If these timeless principles are to be restored and our national commitment to them renewed, then a new voice is needed in American politics, a voice that is unafraid to stand up for what is right and speak out against what is wrong.? Lucky for the future of freedom and democracy that Professor George?s voice is so handy, so we can restore America?s principles, although I confess I was unaware they had been stolen.

This patriotic project, alas, has descended into silliness. The lead post [1]today has an article by Emmett McGroarty analyzing President Obama?s speech to Congress last week. The article includes this enormity: ?Several substantive points in his speech bear analysis, not the least of which is his call for a ?public insurance option.? One problem with that call is that the term ?public insurance? is deceptive. In reality it would be a benefit scheme similar to Medicare and Social Security. But those programs have created a crisis that severely threatens the ascending elderly generation --the baby boomers.?

In fact, those programs averted a crisis. Social Security helped millions of elderly Americans climb out of the poverty to which the free market had consigned them. Medicare helped millions of elderly Americans live longer and fuller lives by giving them access to the achievements of modern medicine, achievements that the market did not available to them. And, then there is that finish, the poor baby boomers. The problem is that the boomers allowed themselves to be deceived by Reaganomics into thinking that social solidarity could be done on the cheap. It can?t. But, the answer is not a return to Hooverville. And, if you think the answer lies in the market, I hope you bought some Miami condos in 2007.

The American Principles Project is, well, not very principled. Or, better to say, its principles have nothing particularly to do with the Founding. Professor George?s D.C. footprint is just another voice of right- wing foolishness you can find on Fox News just as readily. He may invoke John Marshall and Alexander Hamilton, but his project reads more like the latest episode of Glenn Beck.

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Links:
[1] http://www.americanprinciplesproject.org/topics/miscellaneous/343-health-insurance-and-government-benefits-101.html