

Coolidge & Cuckoos

I always knew I liked Calvin Coolidge, but I thought perhaps it was merely because he was a quiet man who, unlike most of our presidents, wasn't infatuated with the sound of his own voice. I also liked the fact that he was apparently devoid of that thing called charisma, which is generally what politicians have in place of character.

But, thanks to economist/historian Amity Shlaes, who proved in her book, "The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression," that although FDR didn't create the Depression, he did a great deal to prolong the agony until World War II finally brought it to an end, Coolidge emerges as a heroic figure.

She points out that even though Ronald Reagan was a tax cutter, reducing the top marginal rate from 70% to 28%, the federal budget increased by close to 40% during his administration. As I have often observed, Republicans are only anxious to decrease spending when the Democrats are in power.

But you could never say that about Coolidge, a man who said shortly after assuming office upon Warren Harding's death: "We must have no carelessness in our dealings with public property or the expenditure of public money. Such a condition is characteristic of undeveloped people, or of a decadent generation."

He also said such sensible things as "Collecting more taxes than is absolutely necessary is legalized robbery," "I should like to be known as a former President who minded his own business" and "It is much more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones."

Speaking of bad bills, when I wrote about the 20,000 pages of administrative rules for ObamaCare, my friend Art Hershey sent an email alerting me to the fact that the Social Security Act,

or Economic Security Act as it was called in 1935, was just 63 pages long. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which dealt with minimum wages and overtime pay, ran 64 pages. And the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a scant 10 pages.

Nancy Pelosi wasn't just whistling "Dixie" when she announced that Congress would have to enact the Patient Affordable Health Care Act of 2010 (aka ObamaCare) before anyone would know what was in it. Three years later, we are still finding out about all the vile snips and snails and puppy dog tails that are concealed within its 2,700 pages.

It's very possible that you might have missed the news, as I had, that GE Capital made the following announcement in 2008: "As a responsible lender, we regularly review our lending policies and products to meet changing conditions and requirements. We have adopted a policy to cease providing consumer financing programs for merchants whose primary business is the sale of firearms."

One of my readers, who shared this with me, sent GE a message that read, "As a responsible consumer, I regularly review my buying practices to meet changing conditions and requirements. I have decided to cease purchasing GE products. Any firm that tries to manipulate the free marketplace for political reasons doesn't merit my support and trade."

The next time you go shopping for light bulbs, you might keep this exchange in mind.

Finally, I must confess I have often longed to be invited to join a think tank. Imagine how delightful it must be to sit and think, and be paid to do it. I've gone through life sitting and thinking, but nobody has ever paid me to do so. In fact, on those few occasions when I've actually worked in an office, if my boss passed by, asked me what I was doing, and I had told him I was thinking, I would have been canned on the spot. But at a think tank, the same answer would probably

garner me a raise.

As the old sage said, beware of what you pray for. As often happens, there are exceptions to the rule. In this case, the exception would be Ron Paul's Institute for Peace and Prosperity. Among the nutballs the former goofy congressman has gathered around him are John Laughland, Eric Margolis, Butler Shaffer, Lew Rockwell, Dennis Kucinich and Andrew Napolitano. With the possible exception of the last two, these are hardly household names. But each, in his own way, would have been right at home at Lewis Carroll's famous tea party along with the White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter.

Among this collection of kooks are to be found people who defend Serbian war criminal Slobodan Milosevic; moved to try George W. Bush for war crimes; support Hamas; opposed America's intervention in World War II; and edited Rep. Paul's racist and anti-Semitic newsletter. You remember – the newsletter bearing his name that Ron Paul insisted he barely ever looked at during the 20 years it was published, reminding some of us of Obama's absurd contention that he snoozed through 20 years of Jeremiah Wright's vile sermons.

Less a think tank, I'd suggest, than a stink tank.

For those of you who merely know Judge Napolitano from his rather arrogant pronouncements on the law for Fox News, it turns out that he is one of those loony conspiracy theorists known as 9/11 truthers. In other words, he doesn't think that Muslim jihadists were behind the attacks that killed 3,000 Americans. Instead, he believes it was an inside job by the George Bush administration.

Maybe it's just me, but I have never trusted anyone whose hairline starts half an inch above his eyebrows. It suggests to me that the brain was surgically removed and the head was then stitched back together.