

“You Call This Torture?” and “Cruz Control”

Some people have been wondering about the timing of Sen. Dianne Feinstein’s release of her committee’s report condemning the CIA’s interrogation of Islamic terrorists. After all, the practice of waterboarding had ceased several years ago, so why bring it out when one knew it would lead to the U.N. condemning the practice and insisting that those who took part be indicted and tried by the World Court? They also had to know that it would endanger the lives of our spies around the world.

There is nothing odd about the timing. One, the Democrats had to release it before the end of the year when the GOP would take control of the Senate, and relegate the report along with Mrs. Feinstein to the nearest dustbin. But, two, and even more essential to the Democrats, was that it be released on the very same day that Jonathan (“The American people are stupid and had to be conned into supporting ObamaCare”) Gruber would be testifying before a Republican-controlled House committee.

Anyone who believes that was just a coincidence must also believe that it was coincidental that Clinton ordered the bombing of a benign Sudanese pharmaceutical plant in the midst of the Lewinsky scandal. You can carve it in stone that there is no such thing as a coincidence in Washington.

As for the report itself, I would like to point out that our constitutional rights and protections do not apply to our enemies and even the Geneva Conventions don’t protect illegal combatants, aka terrorists. As for those who keep hollering about the Conventions, the fact is that they were first drawn up in order to guarantee for both sides that one’s captured soldiers would be treated humanely by their captors. However, in the case of Islamic terrorists, one, they are not

signatories to the Conventions; and, two, they not only don't have POW camps, but they torture and murder those, including civilians, who suffer the misfortune of falling into their hands.

In short, the Conventions were never intended to be a suicide pact.

Furthermore, while I don't happen to believe that most Americans are blood-thirsty, even if our legitimate motive hadn't been to extract information from those villains who were waterboarded or deprived of sleep, I doubt if many of us would have minded their being gnawed on by rats. That would especially have been the case with the memory of 9/11 and of innocent people leaping from the roofs of the Twin Towers to escape the flames fresh in our minds.

I know it's not entirely fair to just pick on Feinstein and her liberal cohorts. After all, John McCain has long been a loud critic of enhanced interrogation techniques, and because he was a POW during the Vietnam War, he is believed to hold the high moral ground on this issue. Unfortunately, Sen. McCain has never seemed capable of differentiating between the Vietcong torturing Americans for the hell of it and the CIA torturing jihadists in order to extract information that could prevent a repeat of 9/11 or lead to the extermination of Osama bin Laden.

I realize that Fox pundit George Will happens to agree with Sen. McCain, but that's because he believes that whereas others merely rent the moral high ground, he holds the actual deed.

When it comes to Sen. Feinstein, whom I have heard even some conservatives describe as a non-partisan grown-up in the Senate, I have to question the integrity and even the patriotism of someone who thinks it's essential to rehash events from long ago that serve no other purpose than to give

America a black eye and endanger those currently trying to protect the homeland.

On top of that, the self-righteous senator has managed to ignore every scandal connected to Obama, ranging from Operation Fast & Furious, through the Benghazi massacre, the IRS targeting of conservatives, the Affordable Care Act, Obama's bias against Israel and his promoting the alleged rights of illegal aliens while ignoring those of American taxpayers.

At the very least, you would think that a U.S. senator would object to a president who, for all his denials of having the power and authority of an emperor, has chosen to ignore the separation of powers enumerated in the Constitution that both he and Mrs. Feinstein have sworn to defend. In addition, he has made it a practice to lie to the American people and has turned Robert Gibbs, Jay Carney and now Josh Earnest into real life Pinocchios to fabricate on his behalf whenever he had a round of golf to play, a fund-raiser to attend or simply wasn't in the mood to face the press and do his own lying.

In other news, I wasn't even slightly surprised that Harvard, Columbia and Georgetown, law schools have all agreed to allow students who claim to have been traumatized by the grand jury decisions in Ferguson and Staten Island to postpone taking their exams, knowing that college administrators have the spines of jellyfish.

Still, can you imagine how these self-indulgent young milksops will react when a few years down the road a judge or jury rules against them? Will they burst into tears, faint dead away, take to their beds with a case of the vapors or merely insist on a re-trial?

Finally, the way Bowe Bergdahl has disappeared from the radar, in spite of his news-worthy exchange for five high-ranking jihadists, you might think he had been aboard Malaysian

Airline flight 370.

Is it any wonder that Obama has come to believe he can get away with absolutely anything when even the newshawks at Fox never ask about the Army's alleged investigation of Bergdahl's desertion?

In my opinion, it isn't only members of the military who should stand trial for dereliction of duty.

Cruz Control

I know that for a lot of my readers what I'm about to say is sheer blasphemy, but I wish that Ted Cruz would stop seeking the spotlight. More and more he reminds me of a creature from a sci-fi movie, but instead of turning into a giant fly, Cruz morphs into a giant moth. The only difference is that in his case, it's a TV camera not a flame that serves as the object of his obsession.

I realize that for a great many conservatives, Cruz represents their ideal, but that's because they place a premium on symbolic gestures, no matter how futile they happen to be. In fact, they celebrate that very futility because they believe it confirms the senator's purity of purpose. I, on the other hand, who am every bit as conservative as Cruz, believe that politics should be rooted in reality and that before setting out on a crusade, one should not only have a specific and achievable goal in mind, but should be aware that failure often comes at a very steep price.

In Sen. Cruz, I see a man possessed of such naked ambition that his primary goal is self-promotion. I don't happen to care for showboats in any field. I never liked football players who pranced around after sacking the quarterback or

spiked the ball after scoring a touchdown. I never liked Barry Bonds or any other baseball player who stood in the batter's box watching in awe as his home run cleared the wall. In short, I admire professionals who get the job done with a minimum of fuss and self-aggrandizement.

Cruz, on the other hand, seems interested in maximizing the fuss even if it accomplishes nothing more than garnering him TV exposure. In 2013, his prominent role in closing down the government achieved nothing except that it helped the Democrat, Terry McAuliffe, win the gubernatorial election in Virginia.

This year, Cruz was at it again. This time, his pigheadedness allowed Harry Reid to get liberal zealots Sarah Saldana appointed to head up Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Tony Blinken to be the new deputy secretary of state. In addition, Cruz provided Reid with the opportunity to appoint a number of left-wing judges to the federal bench and saddled us with a surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, an anti-gun zealot who believes that the Second Amendment is the single greatest threat to the health of Americans.

Ted Cruz is an egotist who subscribes to the loony notion that whatever furthers his personal agenda is what's best for the nation. It's a psychosis he happens to share with Barack Obama.

I understand that some of my readers regard it as traitorous when I attack Republican politicians, whether it's a conservative like Ted Cruz or an idiot like John McCain. I happen to believe that if you can't write honestly about those in your own party, nobody should trust you when you write about your political opponents. On the other hand, I happen to sympathize with all of them, Republicans and Democrats alike. I mean, imagine if your employment depended entirely on really dumb people deciding every two, four or six years, if you get to keep your job. It's no wonder that most of them wind up as

crazy as poodles.

Recently, I was reading about painters and it got me thinking about the astronomical prices that some paintings fetch. It doesn't bother me that some people can afford to pay \$75 million for a single work of art any more than it bothers me that some people own their own jet planes or own mansions on three or four different continents. I readily admit that there are some very wealthy people I despise – people such as George Soros, Ted Turner, Tom Steyer and Warren Buffet – but it's not their bank balance I resent, but the issues and individuals they choose to promote with their money.

I understand that the cost of most things is determined by the price people are willing to pay for them. It's just that while I understand why mansions and jet planes cost a fortune, I'm at a loss when it comes to paintings.

After all, the paint, frame, canvas and varnish, are not very expensive, so that doesn't explain it. And unlike sculpting, which requires intensive labor, painting is so easy, it can easily be done while sitting in a chair.

One painting can't cost more than another because of its rarity because even an amateur's work is unique. Also, most paintings aren't even what you would call aesthetically beautiful. And what's more, even the greatest forgery, no matter how faithfully rendered, is essentially worthless once it's found out. In a way, that's something of a shame. After all, whereas the original painter merely used the materials at hand, the forger is required to duplicate it centuries later, while disguising the fact that his own work only dates back to last Thursday.

So what is it that makes some paintings – paintings such as Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," Van Gogh's "Sunflowers," Gainsborough's "The Blue Boy" or Edvard Munch's "The Scream" – worth tens of millions?

All I can come up with is that they're famous. In a sense, they're the equivalent of our own celebrities, people like Paris Hilton, Justin Bieber and people named Kardashian, who are famous for no other or better reason than that they're famous.

In a logical world, or so it seems to me, a painting of a bowl of fruit would be worth far less than an actual bowl of fruit because you can't eat a painted banana.

**Burt's Webcast is every Wednesday at Noon Pacific Time.
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“I Used To Be A Democrat” and “Do Liberals Ever Listen To Themselves?”

It's true that for a long time, an inexcusably long time, I was a registered Democrat. But even then, I never called myself a liberal. Because I came of age in the 1960s, I associated liberals with the punks I knew who called cops “pigs,” called soldiers “baby killers” and used any and all means to dodge the draft, and then had the hypocrisy to announce they did so because they were avowed pacifists.

Being in my 20s myself, I knew these people and I knew it was fear of battle or being bossed around by top sergeants, typically tough guys from the South, that motivated them to head off either to Canada or to one of the many left-wing

shrinks who were willing to lie about their mental disorders and or verify they were homosexuals.

Fifty years later, they're still hypocrites, but instead of being college students, they're running colleges, TV networks, movie studios, solar panel companies and the New York Times. And, what's more, they continue to lie. Most recently, a sample of journalists lied to a pollster about their political affiliation, a mere 28% admitting to being Democrats and 50% claiming to be registered Independents.

Inasmuch as we already know that at least 90% of those in the news game always vote for liberals and that their campaign contributions are even more lopsided than that, you have to wonder why they even bother lying about something as transparent as their political bias. All you really have to do is turn on the network news or pick up a daily newspaper, Time magazine, the New Yorker, Vanity Fair or any of the slick glossies devoted to fashion and cosmetics, to realize that they should, by all rights, be paid directly by the DNC for their propaganda efforts.

Ever since I heard the head of the NBA drop the hammer on Clippers owner Donald Sterling, I found myself wondering where Commissioner Adam Silver, who is nearly as spooky-looking as James Carville, got off thinking he had the authority to take the team away from its rightful owner. I mean, who the heck does he think he is? Harry Reid?

Even I know that California is a community property state, and I certainly knew that Sterling had a wife named Shelly because I kept hearing that she was suing her husband's ex-paramour for the return of the two million dollars the old fool had lavished on her in the form of cash, cars, condo and, unfortunately for the big mouth, a cellphone.

If I know anything about Jewish wives and, regrettably, I do, Commissioner Silver would have an easier time trying to pry my

dog's chew toy away from her than taking the Clippers away from Mrs. Sterling.

It doesn't happen too often, but every once in a while someone forwards something to me from the Internet that I haven't seen before and that actually grabs my attention. In this case, it was a series of ways that one could easily identify a liberal. I mean aside from asking them if they happen to be journalists, judges, social workers, teachers, professors, illegal aliens, actors, musicians or convicted felons.

Here it is, with a few of my own modifications: (1) A liberal is someone who thinks Republicans are waging a war on women, but that the Muslim world isn't. (2) A liberal is someone who says to a pregnant woman: "Don't smoke, it'll hurt your baby," but tells her it's quite okay to abort that same baby. (3) A liberal is someone who thinks Fox News lies, but Obama doesn't. (4) A liberal is someone who lives in a gated community or behind a high wall, but says that a border fence won't work. (5) A liberal is someone who wails about "corporate welfare," but thinks it's great that Obama bailed out General Motors to save union contracts and blew a billion tax dollars on certain-to-fail green energy companies in exchange for campaign contributions. (6) A liberal is someone who protested the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and proclaimed the Patriot Act fascistic, until Barack Obama took office.

Finally, Pope Francis is at it again. He has now called upon the governments of the world to redistribute their wealth to the poor in order to put an end to what he calls the "economy of exclusion," by which I assume he's referring to capitalism. What he doesn't bother explaining is that it is capitalism that allows the poor in America and the industrial West to live in, relatively speaking, the lap of luxury when compared to those who live in places where capitalism is just a rumor.

As my friend Jim Bass says, "Let him put his money where his mouth is, and start auctioning off the Vatican's treasures."

For my part, the more socialistic blather I hear bubbling out of his mouth, the more convinced I am that he should be identified as Pope Francis (D-VC).

DO LIBERALS EVER LISTEN TO THEMSELVES?

Seriously, is it possible that liberals actually believe the nonsense they go around spouting? I mean, I understand that as majority leader of the Senate, Harry Reid has to appear to be in sync with Barack Obama, but when in the wake of swapping five anti-American jihadists with unpronounceable names for one calling himself Bowe Bergdahl, Reid said, "I'm glad to get rid of them," did he not understand that most of us completed the thought with "and put them right back on the battlefield where they can resume killing our soldiers"?

For his part, Obama, after comparing himself to such wartime presidents as Washington, Lincoln and FDR, said that an exchange of POWs is typical policy at the end of a war. That must have come as surprising news to the thousands of troops still risking life and limb in Afghanistan. As for the Taliban, they're still giggling over Obama's announcement in 2012 that Al Qaeda was decimated.

The real tragedy of the swap is that we couldn't sweeten the deal by tossing in Obama.

How sappy are liberals? Well, Nobel Prize-winning economist/NY Times propagandist Paul Krugman said, "The VA is proof that socialized medicine works." Anybody care to bet that Krugman doesn't go to the VA for his medical needs?

Most of us have gotten sick and tired of hearing Obama state that he didn't know about a scandal brewing until he read about it in a newspaper, even when, as with the VA, he was yakking about that very problem six years ago. But even if that were the case, it would put him a leg up on most voters who, unless they watch Fox, read certain blogs or tune in talk radio, have to rely on smoke signals for their news. That

should help explain why Democrats continue to win elections.

As for Sgt. Bergdahl, we are told by his parents and some of the schlemiels in his hometown that he spoke like a social worker and acted like a saint, but how many social workers try to join the French Foreign Legion? And how many saints not only desert their comrades on the battlefield, but leave hoping to sign up with the Taliban? It's rather reminiscent of Edward Snowden, who betrayed America because of his alleged love of freedom and open societies, and then scooted off to China before receiving sanctuary in Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Next, why is it that when liberals argue for an ounce of prevention as opposed to a pound of cure, it's only when they're bemoaning the evils of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, but never when the subject happens to be abortions?

When Paul Ryan mentioned, with some good-natured annoyance, that he keeps getting confused with ex-congressman Anthony ("I'll show you mine if you let me show you mine") Weiner, Weiner, otherwise known as Carlos Danger to all the women he cyber-stalked, had the gall to say, "That's the final insult. How much more can I bear?" One can only assume he meant "bear" and not "bare." But see what I mean about liberals not listening to themselves?

The people they should be listening to are folks like Thomas Sowell, who has raised the question: "What is your fair share of what someone else has worked for?" He's also the fellow who said, "I have never understood how it is greedy to want to keep the money you have earned, but not greedy to want to take somebody else's."

Another thought liberals should heed goes this way: If you've got minimum skills, minimum education, show minimum motivation and provide a minimum contribution to the workplace, why the hell should someone be forced to pay you more than you're obviously worth?

When it comes to the stagnant economy, a problem that Obama only pays lip service to when he's trying to distract people from one of his endless scandals and his numerous end-runs around the Constitution, Katie Pavlich, writing in Townhall magazine, points out that 47.6 million Americans are now receiving food stamps from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program via their SNAP cards.

Because numbers alone generally make people's eyes glaze over, she reminds us that during the Depression, thousands of desperately hungry people lined up to receive free food at soup kitchens. Even if we weren't around at the time, we've all seen those grainy, heart-wrenching, black and white photos of hopeless men in overcoats, wearing hats and caps, lined up to get their slabs of bread and bowls of gruel.

Thanks to modern technology, we are spared those scenes today. But, as Ms. Pavlich, points out, if we assume that an average of 916 people can stand in a double-stacked line a quarter of a mile long, the current recipients would be standing in one that was 12,827 miles long. Only a saint wouldn't try to take cuts before the gruel congealed.

The EPA seems to have accepted the challenge by the IRS to prove itself the most contemptible, most power-hungry, agency of the federal government. With their endless regulations, it seems their sole mission is to bring to a grinding halt the age of the American entrepreneur, the American farmer and whatever still remains of American industry.

And at the rate they keep expanding the list of endangered species, soon the only one left unprotected will be the American taxpayer.

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