



Better Facts, More Humor

by Richard W. Rahn

IN A CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS MATTER, AND SO DOES DUE PROCESS

Are you aware that the White House, congressional offices and most major media employ “fact checkers”? Given the amount of misinformation these organizations spew, a reasonable conclusion is that the fact checkers are often biased, ignorant, or ignored.

Mr. Trump frequently seems to speak in a fact-free zone. The mainstream media quite correctly notes many of his errors; yet, rather than being able to take advantage of the president’s mistakes, they turn right around and tell whoppers of their own — which enables him to call them “fake news.”

The new tax bill is a case example. Minority leaders Pelosi and Schumer kept engaging in the claim that the tax bill only benefits the “rich.” The actual facts were presented in the web sites of reputable organizations, such as the Tax Foundation, where the first and secondary distributional effects of the changes were presented. But many in the mainstream media preferred to either repeat the Pelosi/Schumer talking points as fact, or assemble little panels of know-nothing “experts” to give their opinions, rather than facts. The mainstream media then reported that the majority of taxpayers thought the tax bill would not help the middle class.

Real reporters present actual facts to their readers/listeners, which they keep separate from their opinions. Misinforming their

audience and then reporting that the people believe the misinformation makes journalists look like fools. Many of these same journalists claim that the president is mentally unfit to serve, yet they ignore the hysterical rant of Mrs. Pelosi against the tax bill, which made her look truly unhinged.

Sen. Al Franken resigned last week, as far as I can tell not because he had engaged in some criminal offense — but behaved in ways that offended some number of women before he was elected to the Senate. I am no fan of Mr. Franken’s politics or much of his humor (which is moronic), but it should have been up to Minnesota voters as to whether or not he continued to represent them. A recent poll has shown that a majority of Minnesotans believe that he should not have resigned.

In a civil society, institutions matter. Much of what the political class does offends me — spending other people’s money on activities that are not authorized by the Constitution, for example. The Democrats are probably going to regret giving the Washington power elite the right to decide who will be an acceptable representative rather than the voters.

Many in the “me too” movement say the woman must always be believed. Not so. There are studies showing that women tend to be no more honest than men, but that is not the real issue. We are all individuals and have equal rights regardless of our sex or race. It was only a few decades ago that courts in many parts of the U.S. would discount the testimony of a black witness when it conflicted with that of a white — because whites were considered to be more honest.

As a result, many blacks suffered from a miscarriage of justice because they were not treated as equal individuals. Likewise, when it comes to allegations of sexual harassment, every individual has the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. To do otherwise will lead to more abuses like the Duke Lacrosse team. The claim is made that it can be uncomfortable for a woman to have to

name those she accuses — in public, and often that is true. But being uncomfortable does not override due process and the presumption of innocence. Think of those a few decades ago who testified against members of the mob — that took real courage.

People in private organizations are not subject to all of the due process protections, because of important principle of “employment at will” that are in the public sphere. But in recent years, a number of Human Resource departments have become weaponized by individuals within the organization — sometimes management, sometimes others.

Employees quickly learn they can gain points by accusing other less favored employees of racism or sexism — whether justified or not. I know of one case, where the new CEO, apparently jealous of his more accomplished predecessor, told the former CEO he was not welcome at the headquarters, because some unnamed employee felt uncomfortable about an alleged comment from him. The former CEO was not told what the alleged comment was nor who had made the complaint. Basic due process and justice were denied.

The solution to the problem is for responsible managements to abolish anonymous witch hunts, which undermine organizational cohesiveness. Secondly, to realize that individuals have very different views of what is funny and what is not. The next time someone says something you find offensive, realize that we are all insensitive at times, take a deep breath, assume that they meant no harm, and let it be. For a better world, rather than getting angry, take the failings of others with good humor.

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