

GOP Exposed with Shutdown

Written by Walter Fields

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Watching the proceedings in the House and Senate chambers tonight brought me back to the mid-1970's and Watergate. I was in middle school when President Nixon first trampled the Constitution for personal gain and political power, and by the time I was in high school he was making that awkward salute as he boarded Marine One on the south lawn of the White House after resigning in disgrace. My thought then, as is my thought tonight, is how can anyone intelligent enough to reach the highest level of public service in America be so stupid?

It was my hope that I would never see such arrogance on the part of our political leadership again in my lifetime but congressional Republicans have outdone themselves with their current stunt. Yes, and let's be clear that this is a stunt, the brazen behavior of adults who are beholden to moneyed interests and feel little need to uphold the oath that they swore upon when taking office. What the Republicans in Congress are doing is more than holding the functioning of the government hostage. They are purposely creating chaos for the ultimate goal of trying to win the Senate and the White House in 2016. It is an offensive political maneuver to gain power when it cannot be accrued electorally or their agenda achieved legitimately through the legislative process.

This fight is not about the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, but it is about the intended effect of the landmark health care law. Republicans, particularly those that sip tea, have been incensed since the President managed to get health care reform passed and signed into law. The measure represents the ultimate rejection of right-wing histrionics and the collective will of the American people for a federal government that sees its responsibility as caring for the public welfare. Caring is the operative word because the current Republican congressional leadership has made clear that it cares little for the American public, including seniors, children, families and military veterans that live in their districts and states. And their indifference applies to their own Republican constituents. Their goal is securing power by any means necessary and control of the federal government for their own narrow, corporate interests.

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Similar to Richard Nixon, the current crop of right-wing Republicans roaming the halls of Congress see themselves above the law and unaccountable to the American people. They rail against government but spend millions to get elected. They decry the bureaucracy of Washington DC but spend their days affixing red tape to the very processes they claim to loathe. Hypocrites without equal, the Republican Caucus assails the Affordable Care Act as evidence of an Obama driven socialist agenda, an abuse of federal power, all while they receive government subsidized health insurance, transportation (chauffeured car service) on the public dime and a pretty generous compensation package and retirement benefits. The reason why there is such low regard for Congress, despite the chirping of right-wing zombies, zealots and headless talkers, is that the American public has come to its senses. The people are fed up as the latest CNN poll attests. Just 10 percent of those surveyed think Congress is doing its job. Beyond the mindless drones who believe the poison they are fed over the Fox News Channel, people with common sense, Republicans as well as Democrats and political independents, know BS when they see it. And the GOP is in the manure business right about now.

Willing to shut down our government like spoiled children taking their toys home after not getting their way when playing with friends, Republicans on the Hill, driven by their maniacal Tea Party wing, are willing to throw the nation into utter chaos for the sake of settling a score that they have already lost. The GOP is the modern day equivalent of the Dixiecrats of fifty years ago, unwilling to abide by the Constitution they claim to cherish and more than willing to harm those that simply want a government committed to creating a fair and just society. Like those southern Democrats of yesteryear, it will take some courageous folks who register or identify as Republicans to take on the zealots in their party. If not, there will not be a Republican Party in the not too distant future given the nation's rapidly changing demographics, the population growth of people of color against the backdrop of the GOP's racially-coded politics, the return of African-Americans to southern states and the declining white birth-rate. They simply can't birth enough hate in the future, and the manufactured type loses out when the discourse involves facts and not conjecture, fabrications or outright lies.

Like Nixon on the steps of the helicopter waving farewell, Speaker John Boehner is waving goodbye but he is too clueless to realize it. The Tea Party has emasculated the Speaker to the point that he appears to be in an almost catatonic state, physically present but mentally unaccounted for. This is the man who is second in the line of succession to the presidency but cannot even stand down the extreme elements in his own party. Like President Nixon, the Speaker of the House has shamed the nation and needs to surrender the gavel before he causes America any further embarrassment or harm.

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