

Hope

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Hope is not free. One might think hope is free because we are told it is, but it is not. Hope is not a pure good. We are admonished to see hope as essentially good, but it seems that hope is also a tool of manipulation.

President Obama has announced that he will be giving a speech, on nationwide TV, concerning jobs and the economy - on September 8, 2011. There is controversy over the timing of this speech with some questioning its motives and its political impact. With Republicans and Democrats vying for the 'great prize' of the US Presidency, its easy to see why they would game even this simple question of 'hope'. I, for one, am tired of hope.

Hope is an expression of a willingness to believe that something may come - not necessarily something better. Definitions of hope describe the act of wanting 'something' to happen - there is nothing in these definitions that provides a moral or spiritual positive (or negative).

Hope is amoral. One can hope for horrible things. One can hope for the destruction of enemies and one can hope to be rewarded for wrong doing. If the world were to embrace hope it would simply mean that the world was embracing 'wishful thinking' - but towards what end?

Rush Limbaugh is infamous for 'hoping' President Obama would fail. His reasons are more subtle than the blunt interpretation to be found on the left, but it is still a 'hopeful' thing without much substance. Hoping for hopes sake is fairly hopeless - I think.

For the dictator, hope is for friends, fear is for enemies - and there is rarely a clear line between these groups.

What the United States, and its people, needs more than 'hope' is action. And not the dumb action of shooting in the dark, but actions based on reason - actions based on

common sense. A man without food doesn't need hope, he/she needs food. A person in fear does not need hope, they need to feel secure in themselves and their life. A country whose economic system is collapsing can live without hope as long as the nation can see that 'the people in charge' have some notion of how to solve the essential problems facing us. Once again, there are 'needs' here, but hopeful ones only in the sense of expectation.

Hope is NEVER an end in itself. How President Obama got away with 'Hope and Change' as a slogan still boggles the mind. Neither hope, nor change, says much. Hitler could have run on the same slogans and there would have been NO intellectual inconsistency. Like a true demagogue, President Obama used the words 'hope' and 'change' to mask agendas known only to himself. More troubling than this, it appears that the best and brightest in this country went along for the ride despite the emptiness of it.

What do we do? How do we shake people from their personal 'depression' in order to protect the nation from social and economic depression? Here is an idea - not a hopeful one, but a good one.

We should create a series of national competitions.

I would choose 2 national goals around which to organize and judge these competitions.

The first competition would be a 'race to mars'. The competitors will be judged on their ability to achieve their target but also on their ability to show that their approach is practical and sustainable - a basis for first phase colonization. This may seem like 'space fixation', but make no mistake, a true 'space race' involving all Americans and not just a few would create positive disruption in the field of technology. In fact, a race to Mars would probably negate the need for competition number

2 (described below). Sure, it may seem pie-in-the-sky, but this is the basis for creativity and our future will be powered by matter, energy and visions of 'what can be'.

The second competition would be for a true alternative energy to the current extraction of fossil fuels. No matter how optimistic a person might be about unconventional sources of fossil fuels, we are only postponing the inevitable by 'fracking' for gas and drilling 30K feet below the ocean for oil (or, converting tar sands in Canada to a rather dirty oil source). We need a real economic alternative. Solar/Wind would NOT have added 6 billion people to the planet in 100 years (fossil fuels did). Sure, there are a lot of ideas on the table, but we need incentives to get the ball rolling and to develop strategies before the next energy crunch (assuming this is not the end game we are living through - TODAY).

I don't wish to spread the fear of Peak Oil. The topic is well addressed by others - with both fear and science. But if we want to stimulate the US economy, why don't we do it creatively - recursively - allowing for free individuals to develop solutions and compete fairly. No special back room deals for Google, GE or General Motors - no cronyism. I believe Americans would be willing to accept this kind of stimulus and it has the added bonus of being a 'payment' in the future - a bet on the future rather than more good money thrown in after bad. In a way, it is a cheat - since the competitors start 'paying out' in innovation long before the prize is won.

Maybe 10 billion dollars per prize seems like too much (maybe it is too small given the gravity of it). Consider all the trillions of wasted dollars from our first stimulus plan and the 'free money' we have given to the banking system - wouldn't it have been better spent on plans for the future rather than simply repairing a broken past? I think we should consider a 'stimulus' that actually does

more than stimulate blind hope and corruption. We need the 'multiplier effect' of the human mind. Sure, its government money, but it is 'our' money and I would like to see a truly creative approach to what appears to be an economic chasm before us. Sure, we could keep resuscitating the 'too big to fail' (too large to succeed) companies - but, in fairness, WE DID THAT ALREADY and IT DID NOT WORK!

This is merely the sketch (rough at that) of a fair plan that would not restrict outcomes to a favored few (like Buffet's recent sweet heart deal with BoA or the UAW bailout of GM), but rather a form of 'aid' that actually helps all Americans and allows our citizens to do more than 'hope'. This is a plan that does not pick 'winners and losers', but instead leaves it to the playing field of life - what is more American than that?

Our children and our families NEED more than sullen hope
Mr. President, our nation needs to dream.