



A Closer Look

Patriotism

There really is a limit that commentators have a duty to recognize.

MIKE FREDENBURG

NOW I DON'T want to question his patriotism," said the popular afternoon conservative talk show host, speaking sincerely about candidate Obama's long-standing left-wing views on the military. Anyone who listens to or watches conservative media has likely heard similar disclaimers — conservative television and radio personalities tripping all over themselves in their eagerness to declare that they are not questioning the patriotism of the various left-wingers they happen to be talking with or about. I suppose they fear that questioning someone's patriotism might bring denunciations flying that the questioner is either uncouth or uncivil or both. Folks at your county club might look askance. You might be compared to Joseph McCarthy and of employing his tactics.

But despite these possible consequences, we should press ahead to consider the consequences of allowing these hard-left characters to wander the American political and social landscape with their patriotism unquestioned by mainstream conservative punditry. After all, if you loudly exclaim that you do not question a man's patriotism, you certainly imply that he, in fact, is patriotic.

The central question seems to be whether the definition of patriotism can be stretched to cover leftists without destroying patriotism as a concept with any meaning. In order to answer it, some agreement must first be reached on a definition of genuine patriotism as it exists at the intellectual level and at the level of the human heart. I herewith offer some thoughts on such a definition for readers to consider. First, foremost, true patriotism should not include any part of jingoism.

Michael S. Fredenburg is a conservative writer and political activist living in the San Diego area.

People naturally tend to overestimate the positives of their own country while overestimating the negatives of other countries. True patriotism should be founded on as realistic a perspective as possible of the negatives as well as the positives of your own country, knowing that you might be just a bit biased, despite doing your best to avoid it. So to be a real patriot you must maintain a realistic view of the world.

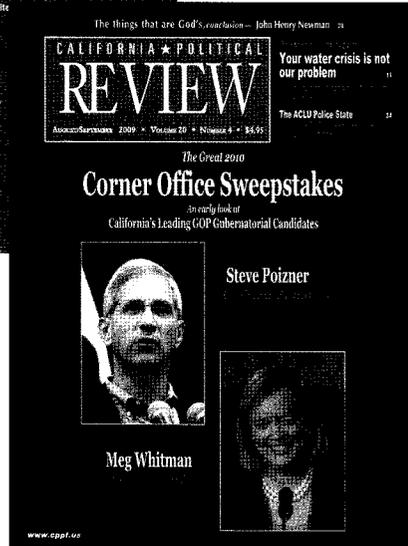
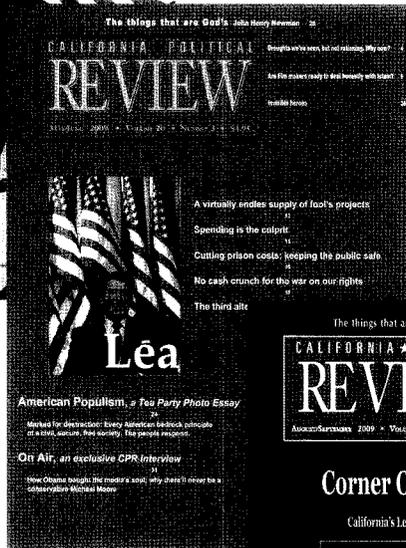
Fortunately, we live in the United States and have much for which we can be truly proud. We are blessed to live in a nation that has spent more of its treasure and sacrificed more of its lives to defend the freedoms of peoples all around the world than any other nation in history. Someone who cannot acknowledge this statement is no patriot. The United States, in general, has been a force for good and stability in the world and the world owes the United States a debt it most likely can never repay. Consider the record: World War I, World War II, the defeat of the Soviet Union, and now taking on the brunt of the war against radical Islam. If you refuse to acknowledge this plain truth you are no patriot.

Of course, honesty demands as well that true patriots (in contrast to jingoists) acknowledge sins committed by Americans past and present — that Americans, being human, are sinful and thus have accumulated a record that includes profound failings of which we cannot be proud. As much, of course, can be said of every other nation and people on earth.

But if your grasp of reality is such that you see America as among the most evil, unjust nations ever to exist, then you are not capable of being a patriot. If, for instance, you are convinced that American history boils down to the white races oppressing and exploiting people of color, you cannot be a patriot.

All of these truths, which, frankly, are really too ob-

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vious to require stating, can easily be put into the form of questions that should be asked of left-wing politicians and celebrities. If they are true to themselves in their answers, they will be self-identified as outside any reasonable definition of patriotic, a truth it is important to acknowledge, and no shame or support for any charge of incivility or of having breached the rational rules for normally "couth" behavior.

BY THE WAY, a particular subset of leftists deserves special consideration: those that believe their military service gives them impunity to adopt extreme leftist views and rhetoric about America automatically free of any question that they are unpatriotic on account of what they say and do. Is it possible for a veteran to be unpatriotic? Absolutely! A wide range of people go into the military, and they do so for a wide range of reasons. Not everyone who enlists does so out of patriotic fervor. That being said, conservatives very much respect mili-

tary service and should bend over backward giving veterans the benefit of the doubt when such circumstances as we have been discussing arise.

But no veteran who holds the distorted leftist views described above should be called patriotic (either explicitly or implicitly) no matter how illustrious a military career he or she may have recorded. A real-life example of a man who disgraced his country and is no patriot is former Marine and current Congressman John Murtha. Congressman Murtha gave aid and comfort to the enemy by recklessly accusing members of Kilo Company, Third Bn, First Marine Regiment of going on a rampage and slaughtering 24 Iraqi civilians in cold blood long before there were any facts to validate (or invalidate) his charges. Notwithstanding Murtha's past service to his country as a Marine, his actions and words were those of a traitor, not a patriot.

We conservatives should stop letting the left intimidate us with their co-option of the language. It does not serve the conservative cause or our country to have

WHAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD ABOUT GUN CONTROL

By SAM PAREDES

The recent ceremonial signing of another new law, this one requiring ammo dealers to log all handgun ammo purchases, take the purchaser's thumb print, make all handgun ammunition unavailable without the vendor's assistance, and banning purchases by mail-order, brought us Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, law enforcement officials, and bill author Assemblyman Kevin deLeon all orating eloquently, long, and mendaciously about a "new day for crime fighting."

Assemblyman deLeon let the cat out of the bag, however, admitting that the bill is merely step one towards creating a statewide database of ammunition purchasers. The Legislature's left-wing, anti-gun leadership (and law enforcement) want background checks and a da-

tabase on all ammo purchasers. No doubt a waiting period is also in their thinking.

The governor said he is a Second Amendment supporter but could not see why registering and being thumbprinted infringed anyone's rights. When a reporter asked how long ago he'd purchased ammunition, he sheepishly admitted it had been at least 10 years. He talks about things he knows nothing about.

For the record, the speeches and public arguments for this bill are shamelessly dishonest. Its supporters know it will hinder no criminal because they know that it just reen-

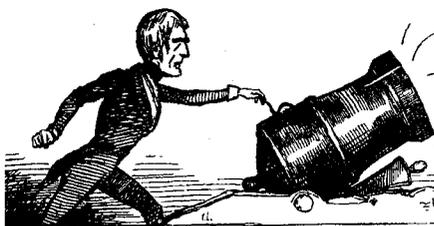
acts a failed federal policy dumped in 1986 by Congress as completely ineffective (according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms).

AB 962 harasses law-abiding political enemies of the freedom-hating left. The thumb print angle is particularly heinous in this regard, designed solely to make Americans exercising their most basic rights feel that they are involved in something slimy and shameful.

California stands to lose millions of dollars in sales tax revenue, as happened under a similar law regulating spray paint, which did as much to eliminate graffiti as this law will do to decrease crime.

Ammo will be bought legally in Nevada, Arizona, and Oregon. The governor appears to be giving in on bad law to gain support for his water, education, and other policies. The term for that is not polite to use in public.

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