Opinion



Bruce Rauner with his wife Diana Rauner during his introduction at his gubernatorial inauguration ceremony in Springfield, Illinois, Jan. 12, 2015 (U.S. Air National Guard/Staff Sgt. Lealan Buehrer)



by Michael Sean Winters

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @michaelswinters

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

July 10, 2018

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Reported by Politico, Illinois governor and multi-millionaire Bruce Rauner profits from ICE detention center contracts. The guy is a gazillionaire, so maybe this was just part of some investment portfolio, but the land of Lincoln looks more and more like it is headed back to blue this November.

Also at Politico, the summer reading list of 13 movers and shakers. I encourage everyone to read Professor Joseph Stiglitz's entry — Robert Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism*, a book I read last year. Stiglitz observes:

> Published in 2005, the book feels as though it was written yesterday. Most disturbing is the observation that in Germany fascism only succeeded because of the connivance of business and other conservative (but non-fascist) interests. At every stage that Hitler could have been stopped he was supported by the rich and by the conservatives. It reminds me of how so much of the U.S. business community put aside Trump's racism, misogyny, protectionism, nativism, and total ignorance of and disregard for the basic of democratic rule of law, as they licked their lips over the prospects of tax cuts for the rich and corporations — this in a country already marked by the highest level of inequality among the advanced countries and a declining life expectancy. So too social conservatives prioritized their social agenda, including the end of abortion, over anything else he might say or do — despite Trump being a poisonous role model.

At Mirror of Justice, law professor Kevin Walsh registers his complaints about my article on Amy Barrett last week. Walsh gets BIG points for using a word you don't see every day — gallimaufry. Splendid. Less splendid are his apparently utilitarian intellectual bearings; e.g., how else to read his "short answer" to the question, "Why be an originalist?" in which he states, in parenthesis: "Short answer: Because it's a practically reasonable way of achieving the kind of benefits that the positive law of a written Constitution offers." So, I will consult the links he provided and offer a more fulsome response. I will also report that a noted historian of the founding and early republican era sent me a kind note praising my Barrett article, and I tend to believe historians before lawyers about what the founders did and did not intend.

Advertisement

Less welcome than Walsh's article was this post by Fr. John Zuhlsdorf and this article at LifeSiteNews. Both, and a slew of unspeakably nasty emails, were upset with an admittedly bracing literary device I used, invoking the image of Madame DeFarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*. I was surprised because there is one issue on which I tend to agree with conservatives more than liberals, namely, the repugnance of anti-free speech attitudes and enforcement of politically correct language. I suggest Fr. Z and his friends go to a local, secular, liberal arts campus, find a "safe zone" and have a meeting of the Conservative Snowflake Society.

At America, Jesuit Fr. Jim Martin asks whether we should sing patriotic songs like in church. His answer: Probably not. My answer: Definitely not given the options. The most commonly sung is "America the Beautiful," which should be avoided because it is cliché-ridden and the music sounds too oom-pahish on an organ. The national anthem is unsingable and too militaristic for church. The Brits have certain songs like "I Vow to Thee, My Country" that are both patriotic and appropriate for a church. Our only equivalent, and Fr. Martin notes it, is "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." We should have more hymns like that.

Every once in awhile, the separation of America into two distinct countries, one blue and urban and affluent with consequent political attitudes, and the other red and rural and poor, hits a bump. In Colorado, Planned Parenthood is relying on the Trump administration to help bust its union, SEIU Local 105. This is the easiest call in the world for me: I am standing with SEIU. But, think of the ironies that abound on the other side.

Iowa had more pivot counties — counties that voted for Obama twice and then flipped to Trump — than any other state in the union. At Working Class Perspectives blog, Christopher Martin looks at how the urban/rural divide, which carries with it an income and educational status divide, was the key to Trump's win. Newsflash to Democrats: There really are "forgotten men and women of America," and Trump spoke to them.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

Editor's note: Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest: Sign up to receive free newsletters and we'll notify you when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic

columns.