Opinion
News



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

September 26, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Here at NCR, Colman McCarthy penned a column praising his friend David Koch. The column was so untethered from reality, I would not have published it. For example, McCarthy seems unaware that Koch's anti-militarism was rooted in his isolationism and that while one can obviously be a good Republican and a good Catholic at the same time, libertarianism is at odds with Catholicism root and branch. In discussing why liberals oppose the Koch Brothers, McCarthy opines:

> *... as if members of the Senate past and current, like Robert Dole, Sam Brownback, Mitch McConnell, Mitt Romney and Joni Ernst, and such groups as Heritage Foundation, the Reason Foundation and Cato Institute are threats to the nation. Sorry, I'm not buying that one.*

I suppose "buy" is the correct verb when discussing the Kochs. I admired Dole, to be sure, and always thought Romney was a good man. The verdict is out on Ernst. But, yes, Brownback and McConnell are a threat to the nation in their coddling of President Donald Trump, and the three "thinktanks" McCarthy cites have led the effort to deny climate change and otherwise frustrate Catholic social teaching. McCarthy quotes David Koch, after escaping with his life from a plane crash, saying,

"I felt this experience was very spiritual. That I was saved when all those others died, I felt that the good Lord spared my life for a purpose. And since then, I've been busy doing all the good works I can think of." Does McCarthy think that the Kochs' efforts to make it harder for poor people and minorities to vote was among those good works? What about their efforts to interfere with the academic freedom of major research universities? To deny the need for government regulation of industries with a track record of poisoning our air and water in pursuit of profit?

In the New York Times, Anna Flagg looks at a new study from University of California-Davis that shows the "Secure Communities" program Trump has revived — to coordinate local police efforts with those of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency — do not actually make our communities secure by lowering the crime rate. But the president is not about to let a little thing like evidence get in the way.

At Politico, David Siders on the way the Democratic National Committee's benchmarks for debate participation have actually had a greater effect than the initial debates themselves. I do not entirely agree with his analysis: No system is going to be perfect. But, the fact these flailing presidential campaigns continue to drain the pockets of those who might otherwise be giving to a congressional or senate candidate is reason enough to raise the bar higher and higher after each debate. It is crazy that having finally gotten to one night with 10 candidates, the October debate is already likely to involve 12 candidates spread across two nights.

At Get Religion, Julia Duin reports on some of the kookiness — and the nastiness — at last week's Religion News Association convention in Las Vegas. I was shocked to find this out:

> *As someone who has put together more than one of these panels, I'll remind folks that the RNA doesn't pay for peoples' travel or hotel expenses to the conference and thus panels are made up of people who can get there on their own dime — or have groups willing to fund them.*

This is how you get Fr. Frank Pavone representing the pro-life position on a panel — at a convention for reporters.

Advertisement

At Crux, Christopher White looks at some of the opposition to Pope Francis and, specifically, the upcoming Amazon Synod. As he notes, one of the groups, Societies for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, was opposed to any outreach to indigenous peoples in the region when Pope John Paul II undertook it and, indeed, they are only one shade more orthodox than the Lefebvrists. I shall have more on the synod Monday.

At Working Class Perspectives, Christopher Martin looks at class bias in the media. He criticizes "the kind of narrative that emerges with the built-in blind spots of a news organization focused on stories for upscale readers, listeners, and viewers." But, it is not only the affluence of the readers that creates the bias. It is the affluence of the reporters. Most jobs in the media pay abysmally and so those who work full-time must come from, or marry into, families of means or they need to pursue other professions.

[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 and we'll let you know when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.*