PS for 10/26/89

Catastrophic Liberalism

Liberalism lately has been taking its lumps. But hope springs eternal for the liberals who lust for more of our money to spend and more control over our lives. They've been riding the gravy train for so long that they just can't bear to accept the reality that they belong to a bygone era.

For most of the Reagan years, the liberals deluded themselves with the notion that Ronald Reagan's enormous popularity was due to his TV talents as a Great Communicator, and that, since George Bush lacks those talents, he would be easy to defeat. Bush's smashing victory in November 1988 threw the liberals in disarray, and they are shaking their heads in disbelief at his 70 percent approval rating in the polls today.

The key to George Bush's rise in popularity was his taking the "no tax increase" pledge during the New Hampshire primary, and then keeping his promise after he was elected despite daily pounding from Congressional liberals and the media elite. Those who didn't grasp the significance and power of the anti-tax revolt in Middle America now have two more opportunities to learn this important lesson.

First was the stunning defeat of the federal pay raise following an authentic grassroots uprising. (Can you believe – some Congressmen are trying to resurrect this odious idea?)

Second was the amazing reversal of the Catastrophic Care Act, which passed a little more than a year ago in an ecumenical euphoria that encompassed such unlikely bedfellows as Ronald Reagan and House boss Jim Wright. The liberals are whining that Congressional repeal was forced by "special-interest politics": the organized seniors who are too selfish to pay the tax.

To borrow the famous 1944 expletive of General Anthony McAuliffe, "Nuts." The real reason Catastrophic Care took a tumble was that, (as reluctantly admitted back on page 10 of *New York Times*, the seniors woke up to the fact that the Act would cost the *average* senior $145 per year for benefits he could buy in the private sector for $62 per year, and most of the seniors didn't want those particular benefits anyway.

Hallelujah! The American people are wising up to the fundamental dishonesty of bleeding-heart liberal spending plans. They are devices to enrich and empower the bureaucracy while only trickle-down crumbs accrue to the supposed beneficiaries.

But, like a con artist selling a “gold” brick, the liberals are back with a new way to fleece the taxpayers: a federal babysitting bureaucracy.

The liberals were overheard mumbling to each other in the House cloakroom last week. Angry at the senior citizens for forcing a reversal of Catastrophic Care, the liberals are more determined than ever to set up another costly bureaucracy-building plan, and they think they can get away with Catastrophic Child Care because “babies can’t fight back.”

As passed by the House and now hanging over America’s families like a sword over Damocles, the liberals’ daycare bill (H.R.3, Hawkins-Downey) would massively discriminate against parents in favor of bureaucrats and regulators. Parents who give their children family care would become second-class citizens, while those who place their preschool children in secular institutional daycare slots (politically selected by the bureaucracy) would be subsidized.

H.R.3 is a bureaucratic bonanza for those who want to feed at the public trough. It would set up 38,000 local child development councils, 150 new regulations on state governments regarding daycare, and an intricate fabric of requirements to transfer regulatory control from the states to the federal government.

Stung by President Reagan’s remark that we can’t have a daycare bill that licenses grandmothers, the liberals now say that grandmothers won’t have to be licensed, just regulated. To receive H.R.3 daycare funds, a grandmother caring for her own grandchild would have to comply with federally mandated regulations about home construction, safety, nutrition, injury prevention and treatment, child abuse prevention, and health, and also submit to government inspections.

How many grandmothers do you know who will put up with that kind of control by busybody regulators (most of whom never raised any children on their own)? Of course, this would raise the cost of daycare for everyone and reduce the quality of child care.

Obviously, H.R.3 is designed to discourage child care by relatives and neighbors, which is the type of care most preferred by employed mothers. H.R.3 thus

discriminates against both fulltime mothers and also against employed mothers who don’t want the government to tell them who should care for their children.

Congress should come out of its cocoon and face the real world where Americans want tax relief instead of new spending proposals. The problem isn’t just Catastrophic Care for seniors or Catastrophic Child Care. The problem with Congress is Catastrophic Liberalism.