THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT

The NFL Leaves America

by John and Andy Schlafly

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"I didn't leave the Democratic Party," Ronald Reagan famously said when he began his political career in the 1960s. "The party left me."

Now the same is being said by many former fans about the National Football League. Americans who grew up admiring NFL football in the 1960s, '70s, '80s, and '90s, can candidly observe that the NFL has left them.

Donald Trump, like Reagan, was elected President with the votes of millions of former Democrats, and Trump did NFL football fans a favor by using his bully pulpit (on Twitter) to expose how un-American America's pastime has become. As with other issues in the public eye, Trump's smackdown of the anti-American stance by the NFL is welcome change.

Behind the scenes, the NFL had already been pandering to the radical Left for years. Entirely dependent on the liberal media for profits, the NFL cares more about maintaining its massive revenues than it does about American values.

With attendance and viewership in decline, the NFL has increasingly embraced gambling as a way of boosting its own profits at the expense of those vulnerable to that addiction. Its decision to move the Raiders to Las Vegas will make football seem more like a game of roulette or blackjack than family entertainment.

Near Detroit, the now-roofless Pontiac Silverdome sits as a colossal piece of litter that contributes to the blight of that once successful center of automobile manufacturing. Other cities, from Saint Louis to San Diego, have been harmed by the NFL taking big subsidies from local taxpayers and then, before public bonds are paid off, skipping town to a more profitable deal somewhere else.

Halftime performances at the Super Bowl, in front of the largest television audience of the year, have gone the way of commencement addresses at colleges where no conservative performers are allowed and no conservative messages permitted. Bizarre occult themes are imposed on the captive audience during these shows.

This is not the same NFL where Pittsburgh Steelers owner Art Rooney ordered his head coach not to cut Rocky Bleier from the team after Rocky returned from Vietnam, where he was wounded in combat. That patriotic decision created one of the many genuine heroes who played during the golden era of the game, and Rocky Bleier caught the extraordinary winning touchdown pass in the 1979 Super Bowl.

Today, the NFL is more likely to cut talented players in order to pander to liberals, as in the exclusion of the Bible-quoting Tim Tebow. Burgess Owens, a member of the Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders in 1981, was a dynamic speaker at our recently concluded Eagle Council in St. Louis where he explained how special the NFL was then, and how different it is now.

Phyllis Schlafly applauded Pete Rozelle, founder of the modern NFL and inventor of the Super Bowl, for respecting our traditions by not scheduling football games on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Rozelle also kept gambling out of football during his nearly 30-year tenure.

The current NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, has played footsie with gamblers by making deals with weekly fantasy football games, which are thinly disguised gambling, while fans are deciding not to fill stadiums in several major markets like San Francisco and Los Angeles. Goodell's spokesman is Joe Lockhart, who managed the White House press during Bill Clinton's impeachment, and who recently sold his 9-bedroom Washington, D.C. home to Barack Obama for $8.1 million.

Today's NFL has become a massive entitlement program for billionaires, one of the worst examples of corporate welfare. Like others who enjoy lavish lifestyles based on government handouts, many NFL owners are ungrateful to the American system that makes their success possible.

Of course not all players put their game above the American flag. Pittsburgh Steelers' lineman Alejandro Villanueva, a former Army Ranger, gave us all something to cheer about when he stood alone on the field to honor the American flag and the National Anthem while his teammates cowered in the tunnel.

But then even he had to pay a price for being patriotic, as his own head coach and teammates began criticizing him for it. He was apparently forced to apologize for supposedly embarrassing his teammates.

President Trump's Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin summed this issue up well on one of the Sunday morning talk shows, remarking that NFL players "can do free speech on their own time." They do not have to insult our Nation in taxpayer-built stadiums before captive audiences.

Congress should hold hearings on how much taxpayer money is flowing to support the anti-American conduct of the NFL, and state legislatures should consider passing laws to cut off that money at the local level. While people have a right to be unpatriotic, Americans should not be forced to support them.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, ***The Conservative Case for Trump****, was published posthumously last year.*