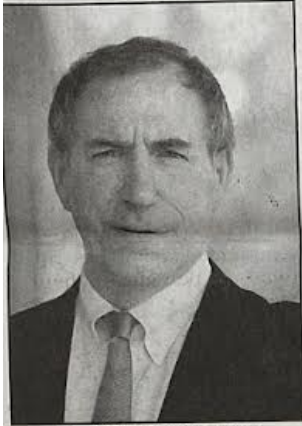


Quid Est Veritas: A Great Nation?



By Patrick Weadon

Mitt Romney, former Massachusetts governor and 2008 Republican presidential candidate, is one of the favorites to win his party's presidential nomination for the 2012 campaign. And, like most people contemplating a run for the presidency, Romney has written a book. It's entitled "No Apology" and is due to be released next month.

The book's premise is that America is a "great" nation and we have a duty to embrace our "Top Dog" position in the world. But some of what Romney has to say proves unequivocally that even accomplished politicians can sometimes be clueless. For instance:

"America's status as a leading nation is in danger and if the country as a whole is unable to work through the challenges it faces... I suspect the United States will become the France of the 21st century."

Romney may have good reason to believe that America is "great," but the fact is, at least at this point in history, France is a much better country than the United States if you measure by "quality of life." No, France is not nirvana or utopia. The French, like all modern societies, have their problems and it is a fact the human condition is such that no one, no matter where he lives, can ever completely escape the pain and suffering of this vale of tears. Still, by any measure, for the average person, France is a far better place to live.

To illustrate, let's compare two situations. First let's look at someone working at Wal-Mart today in the United States. On average, Wal-Mart employees barely make enough in salary to pay for food and rent, much less health care. Money for child care and college tuition is out of the question. If they are lucky

they get 10 vacation days and a smattering of sick days. In short, every day, due to the economy, millions of our fellow Americans work in conditions that can only be described as "wage slavery." They have little reason to hope for a better future.

The average worker in France, however, has far brighter prospects. Everyone in France, whether a ditch digger or a CEO, has access to a superb universal health care system. They even have 24-hour doctors, in a service called SOS Medecins, which will come to your house day or night for a house call - for free. They offer preventative medicine. Physicians get bonuses if their patients remain healthy and utilize the system less. Those in the United States who tell you universal health care is a recipe for disaster are wrong — France proves it. A "great" nation takes care of the health of ALL its citizens; we currently do not.

In France, childcare is provided for about \$1 a day and their system employs some of the best and mostly highly trained professionals in the world. Workers in France are guaranteed five weeks vacation and a 35 hour maximum work week. College tuition is heavily subsidized, so if a child is smart enough, he will get a college education regardless of his economic situation. A "great" nation allows those who are smart enough to attend college and allows its citizens time to spend with their families; we currently do not.

During the Vietnam War some of the more reactionary elements in our nation would urge those who did not like America to "Love it or leave it." With this in mind there are probably many people reading this who would be prompted to ask a similar question. Namely, "If you like France so much, Pat, why don't you stop trashing America and move there?" The answer is I do not want to move to France; instead I want my countrymen

to have what the citizens of France have, namely a chance at a decent life for themselves and their children.

Romney's major point was the United States is a great nation and we benefit from being the world's hegemony. I love my country, but a truly great nation takes care of its people and does not cast them aside in the name of rugged individualism and misguided concepts of "freedom." In the United States if you are poor or sick, it's your fault. In France, there is a realization that robust government programs are necessary to ensure a level playing field for all its citizens.

The fact is truly "great" nations create the conditions for citizens to reach their potential. Anyone who thinks the United States is living up to this standard is delusional. The French are not perfect, but at least they are more concerned about human dignity than they are about being number one. I'll take human dignity over hegemony any time.

Census Assistance Centers Set To Open

The Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities and six of its senior centers will host U.S. Census Questionnaire Assistance Centers for seniors and the general public from March 19 through April 19. Facilities will be staffed by Census Bureau employees who can answer questions or help residents fill out their Census forms. The facilities will offer privacy to the participants in order to protect their information as required by federal law.

The centers will be open Monday through Friday at the following: Department Headquarters at the Heritage Office Complex, Annapolis, 12:00-3:00pm; Arnold Senior Center, 9:00am-12:00pm; Pasadena Senior Center, 9:00am-12:00pm; and Pascal Senior Center, 1:00-4:00pm.

If any citizen receives a correspondence, e-mail, or telephone call and questions its legitimacy, call the U.S. Census Bureau at 1-800-923-8282. To learn more about the U.S. Census Bureau and the 2010 Census, visit www.census.gov.

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