

## THE NEW REPUBLICAN HERD



### GATHERING THE HERD

A new breed of lawmakers has lumbered onto Capitol Hill. They represent no one. They ignore their constituencies. They are blind to the issues that confront the nation. They cast their votes with no regard for the will of the people.

Their voting pattern is a window into their mindset and philosophy: **They don't vote with their hearts and they don't vote with their heads. They vote only in lockstep and only as directed.** One for all, and all for one, they **dutifully vote with their party.**

They are the new, mindless and obedient herd of George W. Bush Republicans.

Totally submissive, the GWB Republican herd methodically falls in line. Not unlike the suicidal terrorists they are taught to loathe, they follow their leader even if it means their own demise. They protect the corporations that poison the very air they have to breathe. They vote to eliminate the civil rights that are rightfully theirs. They vote billions of their own tax dollars to the Halliburtons of the world, even as they watch the quality of life around them crumble.

With each bill they pass, they and their nation suffer. With each law they support, they and the American people lose out. They seem to accept their own self-deprivation with stoic stupidity. How reminiscent of the pledge in Animal House who, after each paddle to his bottom, cried out: *Thank you, sir. May I have another?* And sure enough, they soon have another chance to perform to whip of their trainer.



### FOLLOWING THE HERD

The herd began to form early in the Bush presidency, but formed an unbroken tail to trunk link after 9/11. Every lie uttered by the Bush administration was sworn to and promoted by the steadfast herd of compliant Republican legislators. The path to war was cleared and paved by the bowing and scraping of the loyal Senators and Representatives, who never questioned, never challenged, never debated, and never wavered.

But the GOP herd is virtually powerless without its lemming voters. The lure to reel in the least informed and most vulnerable Americans began to take shape almost immediately, and reached its most frenetic moments right before the 2004 election.

The 2004 campaign was the perfect stomping ground for the GWB Republicans to set an example of blind obedience for their symbiotic lemmings. During that time, one after another of the herd lined up to support and campaign for a president with whom they disagreed on a wide range of issues. How degrading it was to see John McCain fawn over the very person who had

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launched such vile personal attacks against him in the previous election. McCain had disagreed and even challenged George Bush on issue after issue, yet he campaigned with him with unrestrained enthusiasm.

The hypocrisy extended into the RNC convention where the moderate herd members were paraded before the nation. One after another, they abandoned their own principles and trumpeted high praise on a candidate who vehemently opposed a woman's right to choose, who opposed gay rights, who destroyed environmental protections and who flaunted the separation of church and state. Herd mentality rose obediently to the occasion.

And so, in the end, the lemmings in the Red States came out in droves. They stood in line as the most uninformed electorate in history and voted in unison for a candidate that ran primarily on a gay marriage issue. They followed the herd in true lemming fashion and believed they were safe from terrorists because the herders had told them so. What they did not see is was that they were swimming directly to their own destruction. And so they were.

One is hard pressed to find a single person who has not been victimized by the policies of the current administration. And yet, the followers of the GWB Republicans lined up to thank their abusers and mimic their request for more paddling. Millions of Americans willingly voted away their civil rights, their jobs, access to affordable health care, clean air, clean water, consumer protections, their privacy, and any opposition to an illegal war. These millions of followers eagerly voted away the greatest protection they had as Americans – the checks and balances guaranteed by their own Constitution.

The logical question has to follow: How could so many people follow a herd of blind elephants and vote against their own interests? How? Enter - God at stage right.



### **PRAYING WITH THE HERD**

It's fairly easy to understand the herd itself: follow the leader or lose your support for reelection. Power corrupts absolutely. But understanding the lemmings, - the millions and millions of people who cast votes that actually jeopardized their own wellbeing, is far more complicated. One obvious explanation is the way in which the herders in the White House played the religion card.

Religion plays a huge part in the incomprehensible mindset of the American people. According to Religious Tolerance.org, The United States has a higher level of church attendance than any other country at a comparable level of development. This is a very significant statistic: 53% of Americans consider religion to be very important in their lives. This compares with 16% in Britain, 14% in France and 13% in Germany. Fifty three percent! That is very close to the percentage of Americans who approved of George Bush's performance as president at the end of his first term. It is also very close to the number of people who cast votes to keep Bush and his Republicans in power.

It might help, then, to consider the connection between trust and truth. The more fundamental a religion, the more it presents itself as the source of absolute truth, and the more it demands complete and unquestioning trust from its followers.

Repressing individual thought stands in opposition to healthy human development. The human brain has the ability learn and to process experiences so that we, as thinking people, may

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ultimately understand the reality in which we live. As small children, we place our unquestioning trust in those authority figures who provide us with the safety and nurturing we need. We learn from them and believe completely in what they tell us. And then we grow up.

As we grow older and wiser, we learn that there must be a valid reason to place our trust someone. Normally developing children eventually challenge what they are told, and ultimately learn to believe in our own senses and draw their own conclusions. The child who is told not to touch a hot stove eventually chooses to test the caution and touch it anyway. You just know that will happen, and in a way it's often an important, if painful, learning opportunity. The child is learning to think, to question and to understand how to make independent decisions in life.

But more important, the child in this example discovers, perhaps for the first time, that his or her parent had told the truth. This experience becomes a tangible validation of trust. The child was able to discern the reliability of the source of the truth, and the parent, quite justly, earned the trust of the child. The operative words here are *earned the trust*. Bear that in mind.

That natural process, obviously, is reversed in much religious teaching that forgoes the learning element and leaps immediately to the trust factor. In such settings, trust is simply demanded from the fold, while developmental thought processes about religious teachings are absent. Followers are simply told to trust and obey those in authority. The trust is based on pure faith, not reason. There is never a hot pot to touch and no lesson from which to learn. The trustworthy nature of the leader is a given, and must never be challenged.

That attitude may be fine in the church or the temple or the mosque. It is disastrous when applied to the democratic process on which the greatness of the United States depends. It is also disastrous when it is used by those in political power to further their own agenda of greed and power.

When people block their own critical thinking and ignore the need to learn by experience, they become more and more comfortable with trusting those in power without requiring any validation for that trust at all. This leaves them in a dangerously vulnerable position. And didn't George W. Bush and his herders understand that well!

To lure that 53% of religious voters, The New Republicans sang the back-up chorus to George Bush's 2004 preaching campaign. God had chosen their leader. God had directed his policies, and God alone would decide what was good for America. The issues of the day were forgotten, and gay marriage and abortion rights replaced terrorists as the fear factors to be reckoned with. They knew the drill: Don't think. Don't question. Just trust me. Hallelujah. .



## **DISPERSING THE HERD**

There is something to be said for following a good leader. But there is nothing to be said about following blindly. The herd is in power because it functions as one. Each trunk is linked to the tail in front, and the New Republicans have learned the art of synchronized voting. It's time for a change.

What is going on is politics at its worst. Absolute trust has been placed in the hands of legislators who control life and death on this planet. They control the wealth, the health, and the well being of every person in this nation, if not the world. They are the power elite who have

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betrayed the naïve trust of those to whom they pandered. They cannot be trusted because they have done absolutely nothing to earn the trust of the people.

The New Republicans wrapped themselves in the American flag after the attacks of 9/11. They asked that God Bless America, - not the rest of the world, and proceeded to rubber stamp everything George W. Bush demanded. Democracy went down the proverbial drain, as good and evil were the dominant themes of the day. All that Bush and his cohorts wanted was good, and all that they opposed was evil. Hallelujah, once again.

The greatest error of all would be for the opposition to emulate their strategy.

Ironically, today, every candidate for public office in the United States today seems compelled to publicly declare his or her dedication to religion. In order to compete with the George W. Bush New Republicans, Democrats and Independents have assumed the position: I believe, I believe, just watch me. I'm steeped in my faith, my bible and my God. Now, vote for me. The issues take a back seat. Reality remains distorted. The destructive consequences of the Bush years are swept under the rug. And the game is played to the hilt. It has to stop.

The basis of American democracy is a system of checks and balances built into our Constitution. That system is a marvelous mechanism of non-trust! Blind trust in any branch of government is in direct conflict with American democracy that demands accountability and oversight. Refusing to question or challenge is a cowardly surrender to tyranny. The rug has to be pulled from under the herd by demanding that the American electorate reaffirm its commitment to democratic processes. Those who would unseat the herd have to return to the issues that affect the people and must have concrete plans for reclaiming the nation and undoing the damage that has been done.

- The mantra must change from TRUST ME to QUESTION ME!
- The message must change from I BELIEVE in GOD to I BELIEVE IN THE PEOPLE!
- The process must change from PARTY LINE VOTING to OPEN DEBATE AND CHALLENGE!
- The presidency must change I AM NOT ACCOUNTABLE to THE BUCK STOPS HERE!

As it stands, George Bush and his New Republican herd can be trusted only to lead the American way into oblivion. Leadership in these troubled times is not determined by church attendance or religious belief. We need leaders at every level of government who understand the needs of the people and who believe in the basic precepts of democracy. Theocratic thoughts and practices that are the antitheses of democratic ideals belong in houses of worship, not in statehouses or in Congress. They surely have no place in White House decisions.

The herd can be dispersed in 2006. Those who attempt to form their own herds will be defeated, as they should. America is in desperate need of trustworthy leaders who aspire to earn the trust of those who follow them. It is not enough to ask for trust; the operative phrase is *earn it*.

It is not enough to claim the authority to be trusted. It is not enough to cash in on those whose blind trust is the foundation of their faith. It is simply not enough to allow those who have betrayed the trust of the nation to continue to run it. It is simply not enough.



