



Appointment in Samarra

Published 4/15/2010

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■ News that at least one Huckabee has moved to Florida arrived as we were pondering, more or less, a study showing that residents of states without state income taxes, such as Florida, pay more in federal income taxes than do residents of states that have an income tax, such as Arkansas. The Huckabee(s) may not be getting as good a deal as she/they think.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy examined the effect of the federal income tax deduction that taxpayers can take for the state and local taxes they pay. "Substituting an income tax for a sales tax would keep the total revenue raised by the states the same, but would substantially reduce the federal tax bills of the residents of these states," ITEP says. Federal taxpayers can deduct state sales tax payments as well as income tax payments, but ITEP says the sales tax deduction "offers a small benefit and the low- and middle-income people for whom sales taxes are most burdensome generally do not itemize their federal tax returns, while the income tax deduction offers a much larger tax benefit and the beneficiaries – mostly upper-income taxpayers – are very likely to itemize."

We say those who'd leave Arkansas for Florida deserve to be hoist by their own petard.

Revising history

■ Right-wing white people hated Bill Clinton long before anybody'd heard of Monica Lewinsky, their hatred induced in part by the love that black Americans had for him. Maya Angelou famously called Clinton "the first black president."

Cold-hearted conservatives and mainstream media found other reasons to despise Clinton too. Kenneth Starr, like the New York Times, was a devout Clinton-hater from the beginning. But revisionist historians promote the notion that the current era of political bad feeling began with the investigation and impeachment of Clinton, and that Starr was a dutiful prosecutor rather than the malicious partisan of real life.

It's difficult to say exactly when the venomous trend in American politics began, but you'd have to go back at least as far as Ronald Reagan. Before Reagan, presidents usually tried to avoid excessive partisanship in choosing Supreme Court justices. Reagan set out deliberately to capture the federal judiciary by appointing partisan right-wing ideologues; later Republican presidents followed suit. Scalias, Thomases and Robertses were installed. Now we have a Supreme Court that steals presidential elections, that says giant corporations are people and money to be speech. It's a massive threat to American democracy, and hucksters babble about Bill Clinton.



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