

Boilerplate for the Utopian Ant

Written by Alex Baer
Friday, 19 October 2012 17:36

Every four years, like clockwork, two enormous trucks back up to the public troughs. One slaps in various slime and slop, while the other one glops in some assorted goo and gorp. Then, diners are left to choose between the two evils.

Oh, sure -- there are some sweet, well-intentioned people who drop by now and again to offer a bucket or two of much fresher food that's far better looking, smelling, and tasting. But everyone knows a bucket or two won't stretch very far, not up against these industrial-strength, corporate sludge movers that deal in mountains and not mole hills to fill public troughs.

Before you know it, everybody's been taken to market, as in the old nursery rhyme. Only thing is, the "market" looks suspiciously like voting booths filled with easily-hacked, paper-trail-free, shaky and uncertain, electro-mechanical vote takers. Not only that, there's no chance to go *wee-wee-wee, all the way home*.

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"Thank goodness the fate in that cartoon won't befall us," said the worker ant behind the podium, tapping the projection screen with a rubber-tipped pointer for emphasis as the lights came back up in the school gym, amid amused chuckles and laughter. "Providing we all take a deep breath, remember what's truly important, and work together, that is."

The ant adjusted its wireless mic. "True, we must be alert for laughing hyenas escaped from asylums and zoos, and also be watchful for the ravenous anteaters that draw them, just as the 'eaters are in turn drawn to all of us, in this vast circle of life."

The ant asked for quiet, amid the rising hum and buzz of agreement from all gathered. "Our parallels with the human world are increasingly disturbing. We must always be searching for better answers to our challenges -- for the increasing benefits of all!"

The ant crowd went crazy, erupting in wild cheers, applause, and antenna-wagging typical of

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ant-style cacophony and total approval. This ant's campaign had *legs*. This ant had good instincts and good *feelers* for the crowd. This was one energized, incumbent ant who just might -- with this revised platform and new message -- pull off the impossible and remain Mayor of Antopia for a second term.

Collected below is a summary of the ant's inspirational speech, a new "boilerplate-utopia" talk now given at all the ant's campaign appearances. It was a list of basic, restorative suggestions for the improvement and stabilization of community life -- the dawning of a new era, *for all ant-kind*.

The ant issued no fluff or puffery in any speech and did not brag of personal greatness, wisdom, excellence, or success. This ant simply spoke about what was truly important for the community and its members. The talk went step by step...

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Freedoms: All citizens shall enjoy maximum freedom in all areas, within our framework of community support and sharing -- so long as no provable harm is incurred on others, nor the right of one interfere with or pain any other. But, with such broad freedoms come broad, basic responsibilities to community, other, and self.

Arbiters: All sides shall be heard in every matter under review, and community law be made and reviewed by a panel of randomly-selected citizens. All citizen grievances against individuals and groups will be heard and resolved to all individual and community satisfactions before being closed. All who serve as Arbiters do so at the pleasure and vote of the community, and may be removed or extended accordingly.

Elections: No one may give funds selectively to individuals; all campaigns shall be equally funded from taxpayer stores only. All votes will have a paper trail and receipts given. The penalty is death for election tampering at any level, in any way.

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Candidates: No candidate may be demonstrably racist, sexist, *specist*, nor prayerfully (or otherwise) insane. Nor shall candidates be overly beholden to any individual or group, nor shall they be conspiring members of groups voted as actively and provably harmful by citizen decree.

Representation: District office holders shall make every effort to meet with constituents once per moon, formally and informally, using every medium of message and citizen review. Citizens shall have the right to personal review, and the responsibility to provide concerns and feedback to office holders at least once per moon.

Policing: Minimum force and maximum understanding shall be applied in all but gravest emergency situations. All actions are reviewable by individual citizens and community oversight board. Citizens may request review on any and all matters, as well as requesting temporary holds of any individual or group units. Police intimidation, bullying, and abuse cannot be tolerated. Police shall interact with citizens as full community members, resorting to, or escalating, force only when demonstrably necessary.

Roles: Jobs will be available for all, complete with individualized assistance, education, and training. All will take two season cycles to complete compensated work useful in some way for the community, with time extensions available. These will be "wisdom-jumpstart" years between primary school and the citizen's next step in life, be it work desired or added education. Counseling and "best-satisfied-fit" assistance are also available -- free, as are all baseline social services.

Defense: For true home defense, all citizens are automatically pledged, and for the duration of the stated emergency. However, only volunteers will be selected for exploratory excursions beyond home borders. We maintain our pledge of no first action taken against others. Citizens shall review and approve all actions, save for direst emergencies.

Contracts: Consenting adults are free to enter into pairing and other contracts as they wish, provided no previous contracts are broken and no demonstrable harm falls to any third party.

Prayer: Consenting adults may pursue prayers as they prefer in private homes and designated prayer sites. There shall be no overlap of personal preferences into the making of public policy,

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nor into the public arena, where all such prayerful matters are forever restricted and excluded. Citizens are free to accept or reject any combination of *spiritualities* desired. No one shall force prayerful matters on any person, nor place such matters on or within public and community charters.

Prayer Sites: Any prayer sect and/or member(s) found placing its privately-held prayer beliefs into public policy, or the public arena, or advocating or supporting such attempts on their site's grounds, will be chastised and shunned for five consecutive season cycles, and its group lose its tax-free status for that duration.

Taxes: Store shares will be levied fairly according to levy brackets citizens approve for themselves. No one will be asked to give more than one's own fair share.

Expenditures: Citizens shall approve all community expenditures over the set amounts specified by vote and noted in the charter. Citizens may request a show of need from any community group engaged in doing community work before subsequent or follow-up expenditures are granted. The only exception shall be during the time of any declared community crisis or emergency.

Habitat: The community environment nurtures all in it, and the favor must be returned. Any who soil our surroundings soil us all. The penalty is death for soilers who do not correct their behaviors.

Self-care: All citizens are provided full and free care, as per charter, funded solely from stores according to citizen vote.

Education: Only verifiable fact and critical thinking using reason and logic may be taught in all sciences. All creative pursuits and arts may be taught, as may instruction in hobbies and recreational pursuits. However, all creation superstitions and group myths may be addressed in overview only as historical context regarding the assortment of community beliefs available. No prayerful belief may be in any way uniquely supported or recommended, nor endorsed.

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Airwaves: Program providers must act in a responsible manner as set by community board and citizen vote. Providers deemed irresponsible repeaters after warnings will suffer permanent license loss and termination of all corporate charters. Lies, hate speech, belittling, and bullying, especially, cannot be tolerated.

News: The obligation at all times is simple: *Tell The Truth*. News providers will self-police, in conjunction with community board and citizen vote. Punishment for repeat violations will be corporate death. Opinion segments must be clearly and so labeled, and be kept wholly separate from factual news-sharing efforts and activities.

Commerce: Fair dealings and fair profit shall be allowed, according to specifications clearly listed in the community charter via citizen vote. Violation of this simple mandate, and for all greed and hoarding, shall be corporate death. The good of the community shall, in all cases, trump the good of the corporate entity.

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There was more, but this was the gist of things. The cheers grew as the ant read on. There was no law requiring everyone vote, but, somehow, everyone did, this year.

The ant won in a runaway landslide for the All-Together Party. The Me-First Party candidate was allowed to run once again after some initial community disputes. In the marketplace of free ideas, the Me-Firster received only nineteen votes -- probably in sympathy from family, maybe a few from friends.

It had been a long campaign that always felt too close to call -- now, in the closing days, the ant had taken it all the way.

There were still nineteen citizens who voted that greed was better than sharing, myth better than fact, and commerce more important than individuals, among many sour planks in his opponent's platform. But a clear majority overwhelmingly approved the ant's ideas for the new charter. It had been a breath-holding vote, followed by a breathtaking victory for the Prime

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Mayor of Antopia -- the first in a long while to be graced with a second term.

The best news of all, the renewed Prime Mayor knew, was this: Although the community had let many precious values slip away during many season cycles, and many PMs, the generations sway and swing back, given time.

And, like all cycles, The Great Wheel restarts once more: Their values were only briefly hidden, misplaced, or maybe absent-mindedly, momentarily discarded -- but not dead.

Nor was the community, not after today.