

Starting to Get a Complex About Complexity

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 07 December 2012 18:49

There must be a rule somewhere that says everything in life must be stranger and more complicated than it really needs to be.

If there is such an ancient edict handed down through the ages, like an amulet that we can't shed, one that's still mysteriously holding sway over us, then our days suddenly go from inexplicable to predictable.

Sometimes The Curse, or whatever, has a sense of humor. Other times it is as likely to trip you on the way by as it is to sneer and growl at you, no longer playfully wagging its fingers, its thumb parked on its nose.

For example: Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell was caught up in his own web of arcane legislative tripwires, traps, and tangles, and was forced to *filibuster* himself.

(Don't look -- the man has no shame: He did it right out in public *and everything*.)

There's a blow-by-blow account of how this came to pass, if you're interested, in the link down below. I did a pre-dawn run through it once (before application of the miracle drug, coffee) and retained about half of it. I decided not to press my luck with further details at that hour. Or since.

After all, I am a subscriber to a number of standard, civilized beliefs. One of these is that no one should awaken to the sound of Congressional debt ceiling battles, unless you really enjoy the sound of chainsaws carving up sheets of galvanized tin.

I moved on, rather than dwell on the dance steps required to bump into oneself, nicely satisfied that an oddball thing like a self-filibuster was not only possible, but that Mr. Filibuster himself, McConnell, would be hoist on his own perpetually-and-overused petard.

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Political junkies are aware that filibuster use by Republicans has skyrocketed, easily doubling the usual number since President Obama was elected. The GOP wields the filibuster as a favorite weapon of delay, obfuscation, and obstruction. (And that's only talking about organizing Congressional lunch orders.)

Actual legislation might again see the light of day in the Senate, sometime or other, if President Obama would just change his affiliation from the Democratic Party, to either the Resigned Party, or the Republican one -- thereby matching, many critics would say, the politics of more than a few of his actions.

Filibuster reform, meanwhile, is promised, as soon as 60 votes can be mustered to end the filibuster against any discussion of filibuster reform discussions. *Maybe.* □ *No promises.* □ *And stop asking why it is we're all psychopaths here.*

Speaking of which: You might remember the buckets and tubs of hellfire and damnation preachers and priests were upending from their pulpits onto their congregations, just before the election, warning parishioners that their very souls hung in the balance, should they vote unwisely.

It was similar to the warnings and brickbats of fat cats, except that any unwise votes in *their* venue would merely cause the loss of one's mortal livelihood, not one's immortal soul.

Well, in one Wisconsin case, a federal lawsuit has been filed by the Freedom from Religion Foundation, stating the IRS is violating the U.S. Constitution by allowing all these tax-exempt church groups and religious organizations to get involved in political brouhahas.

Seeing as how tax exemptions for religious groups runs at least \$71 billion a year, if not more, I'm all for encouraging such line-crossing behaviors by religious honchos such as those fiery bromides and dire warnings we experienced in multiple migraine clusters and pontificating tirades before the election. We could use that heavenly bump in the country's tax coffers, offsetting Republican hellishness to come in more budget talks.

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And, at \$71 billion -- *carry the three* -- that works out to right around \$219.62 per Sunday threat, per churchgoer -- *a real bargain* -- based on the superheated campaign spending of this past election cycle, and the furiously fast pace that red-faced, fire-breathing pontificators had set for themselves, at least for a while there.

On the mortal side of the tracks, some companies kept to their word, firing workers in celebration of President Obama's re-election, with the CEO of Murray Energy going even further, reading workers a thinly-disguised spoilsport's prayer before bringing down the axe. I must ask: *Where is the Freedom from Assbite Racist Employers Foundation, and their lawsuits, when you need them?* Further: *If such a group does not exist, why the hell not?*

At least the restaurants threatening workers with part-time hours, and their customers with health care surcharges have seen the light and smartened up, caving to public pressure and withdrawing their threats.

Good thing, too, or else there may have been a lot of startling, foreign objects starting to show up in food orders -- shrimp cocktail with Band-Aids, Fettucine ala Sweatsock, and Smoked Wood Chip pizzas with Linoleum Sausage.

I'm not saying servers would have been out to harm anyone, but as mere humans, some may have been out to jostle Americans' fondness for litigious duels with their home offices, where health care decisions for workers are made. I'm *positive* servers would have taken time to point out to their diners the AAA battery chunks in the apple crunch dessert.

As for the pizza places: If their delivery drivers did half as much backing-and-filling as the CEOs have done in first making, and then withdrawing threats and a range of wild comments, the execs would have had to fire themselves as totally unable to steer their companies. Good thing for them they heard the sound of one vehicle blowing its own horn, multiplied by the number of potential customers driving their businesses and profits.

In an unsurprising development, businesses with past labor issues tend to also be those that treat or pay employees the worst of all. Funny how that works, which is to say, *not much*.

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This makes me again think of the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, the least funny story I've run into in a while: Oil and gas fields allowed by a federal government loophole to dump wastewater onto the land, all nice and legal. So much for land being sacred. Again.

It is difficult to know where to begin on this one, and on others, in focusing any of one's available rage or outrage. The penalties for remaining aware and alert seem to be increasing, like no good deed going unpunished. The contest in weighing the benefits and costs of such awareness and knowledge grows more difficult daily, as do justifications to continue, unchanged.

This sort of thing can be soul-stirring but self-stalling, too -- worse even than the dreaded *analysis paralysis*

. Everything gets a second look and another weighing after a while. Each new question posed hangs in the air like a ghost, just at the edge of our minds, interfering with our thoughts, wondering if this or that is worth the bother or stress of thus and so.

Knowing or not knowing -- which one is better, which one is worse?

As I was remarking to a friend a few days ago: Don't expect much from humans -- we're still mired down in primordial goo, hapless primates still bearing reptilian minds. That's probably enough inner conflict and turmoil to last us a couple of lifetimes, each.

Everything's always stranger and more complicated than it seems or need be -- that's us, our lives, and all that we touch.

Not much of an amulet, but I think we're stuck with it.

Mitch chases himself down to forcefully remind himself that he no-can-do now: <http://www.csm>

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onitor.com/USA/DC-Decoder/Decoder-Wire/2012/1206/Debt-ceiling-debate-twist-Sen.-Mitch-McConnell-filibusters-himself

Filibuster history: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/post/the-history-of-the-filibuster-in-one-graph/2012/05/15/gIQAVHf0RU_blog.html

Filibuster reform: <http://thinkprogress.org/tag/filibusters/>

Psychopaths running the country: <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/13099-schizophrenics-psychopaths-holding-america-hostage>

Wisconsin suit: <http://news.msn.com/politics/atheist-group-sues-over-religious-electioneering>

Cost of religious tax exemptions: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2012/06/16/the-yearly-cost-of-religious-tax-exemptions-71000000000/>

Spoilsport's prayer: <http://www.nationalmemo.com/coal-company-ceo-fires-156-workers-after-obama-re-election/>

Restaurant threats: <http://www.alternet.org/6-restaurants-you-should-avoid-if-you-dont-want-your-food-cooked-sick-people?page=0%2C0>

and:

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2012/8-terrible-bosses-who-screwed-over-their-workers-because-obama-was-re-elected>

Some restaurants reversing their threats: <http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/health-reform-implementation/271401-restaurant-firm-ditches-plan-to-cut-workers-hours-in-response-to-health-l>

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and: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/rickungar/2012/11/21/papa-johns-schnatter-says-he-will-honor-obamacare-and-give-health-insurance-to-all-employees/>

Companies with poor pay and related histories: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2012/12/01/companies-paying-the-least/1735531/>

Loopholes, toxic water, and Native American land:

<http://www.npr.org/2012/11/15/164688735/loophole-lets-toxic-oil-water-flow-over-indian-land>

Today's Bonuses:

De-stressing the commute: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2012/12/06/166685434/what-to-do-when-the-bus-doesn-t-come-and-you-want-to-scream-an-experiment>

The fiscal cliff, Simpsons style: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c91usT4P1u0>