

# THE VOORHIS VOICE

Progressive Voice of the Pomona Valley

**October 2015**

[www.claremontdems.org](http://www.claremontdems.org)

claremontdemocrats@yahoo.com

## MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS



Friday, Oct. 2, 12-2pm  
 Rabi's Café, 930 Central Avenue, Upland  
**Issues Committee Luncheon**  
 No speaker: Bring your issue

Friday, Oct. 9, 12-2 pm  
**Hamid Rezaei on Iran**  
*Monthly Luncheon: Darvish Restaurant* 946 W. Foothill Claremont. Lunch at noon,  
 speaker from 1 to 2. Lunch is \$17 including tax & tip. No charge to hear speaker.  
 Speaker: Lunch, Ernie Powell, Social Security expert from AARP

Friday, Oct., 16, 12-2pm  
 Rabi's Café, 930 Central Avenue, Upland  
**Issues Committee Luncheon**  
 No speaker: Bring your issue

Friday, Oct. 23, 12-2pm  
 Rabi's Café, 930 Central Avenue, Upland

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## Issues Committee Luncheon

No speaker: Bring your issue

Monday, Oct. 26, 7 – 9pm

Monthly Membership Meeting at Porter Hall

Speaker: **Pro/Con: The Police Station Rehabilitation in Claremont**

601 Mayflower Rd., Pilgrim Place Campus, Claremont



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## The GOP: Our Competition

by John Forney, DCC President

I was appalled by the astounding banality of the Republican debate this last week. It seemed more like a junior high food fight than the deliberations of serious people wanting to lead our nation into the next four years. We were treated to an altercation between Trump and Fiorina over who was the lousiest CEO – both were lousy. Carly Fiorina was excessively shrill in her denunciation of Planned Parent, calling out Hillary over a non-existent video no less! The evening was, by and large, a fact-free environment. If the event wasn't so worrisome – one of these low-information candidates might actually become president – it could have been said to be risible.

I am proud to belong to a party that has credible candidates. Yes, some champion Hillary, some Bernie, and a few are hoping that Al Gore or Joe Biden might jump in. But in the end we will marshal our energies and contributions behind a single, very credible, candidate who could be trusted with the high office of president. We can have a full measure of confidence that whichever one of these candidates leads us into the general election could actually perform the duties of the office.

And unlike the Republicans we saw on that stage in Simi Valley, our candidate will address issues of substance. She or he will talk about the challenge of global warming. She or he will talk about rebuilding the middle class, with a path out of poverty. She or he will talk about mass incarceration and the racism that deprives so many of our young people of a future. She or he will address the need to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. She or he will talk about a just immigration policy with a path to citizenship.

As much as anyone, I love a heated political debate and will defend my candidate to the end. And I trust that if you support someone else, you will do likewise. A good argument keeps the

juices flowing and the issues sharp. But in the end let us close ranks around whoever comes out of the primaries and caucuses ahead. Our country can afford nothing less. If it's Hillary, I am willingly prepared to put away my Bernie button and wear another that says, "Madame PRESIDENT – Get used to it!" The alternative is unthinkable.

## Acting on Our Beliefs

by Carolee Monroe

In addition to working to elect Democrats, the DCC wants to influence policies and educate the public regarding current issues. We currently have several matters before us. All our projects need volunteers to succeed. Most recently we have volunteered to staff the Los Angeles County Democratic Party's booth at the Los Angeles County Fair. The total effort requires 114 four-hour shifts be filled during the 19 days of the fair. The DCC provided 29 volunteers (one-fourth of the staffing positions). Several stalwarts staffed fair's booth more than once. Thank you to all who volunteered: John Ammon, Rose Ash, Juana Baracscai, Gar Byrum, Betsey Coffman, Louie and Marta Duran, Chuck Farritor, John Forney, Sandy Hester, Bob Hughes, Holly Kurtz, Dorothy Lebovitz, Ben Libeskind, Jack, Carolee, Murray and Marlena Monroe, Merrill Ring, Marguerite Gee Royse, Ann Marie Sullivan, Connie Weir, Carol Whitson, Mary Lou Williams and Hugh Wire.

Besides the usual Democratic booth activities of registering voters, providing political materials (printed and buttons) and discussing issues, volunteers helped secure signatures on petitions to our State Senators and Assemblypersons to support AB 700, the California DISCLOSE Act. Once the components of the ballot measure were explained to them, most visitors signed our petition. The coordinator of CA Clean Money Campaign, Noah Snyder, will provide us with materials to use at our booth at Village Venture.

Representatives of our club also composed letters to our elected representatives. Congressperson Judy Chu was asked to support the Iran Agreement while Assemblyperson Chris Holden was asked to support SB 350 (the original bill) and SB 32, both addressing global warming. Some DCC volunteers participated in the rally in support of the agreement near Judy Chu's Claremont office on August 26<sup>th</sup>, organized by Progressive Christians Uniting and Claremont Progressives/MoveOn.

Upcoming events in which volunteers like you can participate are many. Our monthly luncheons and meetings will continue in October and November. Our booth at Village Venture on Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, will feature another straw poll of presidential candidates; come, staff the booth and vote! Our annual holiday party on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Napier Center is your opportunity to speak with some of our elected officials, socialize and renew your membership. Please join us!

## What Happened to the Moral Center of American Capitalism?

By Bob Gerecke

Robert Reich recently asked this question. Here's my take on the answer. Was capitalism moral when businesses were locally owned and operated by people whose customers and employees were neighbors?

In my wife's small upstate NY town of only 1500, the merchants cheated their customers and employees. During high school she worked in a food store, where the owner stood to one side of the large round scale when weighing flour and other bulk goods, so that the needle would look like a full load when it was less. He insisted that she do the same. She refused and quit.

A few years later, when the local businesses were audited by the government, she and her mother both received checks from former local employers who had cheated them by paying less than the full amount of minimum wage for the total hours worked.

During high school I lived in a town of 8000 and worked briefly in a locally-owned grocery store. Day after day the owner would give me a 15-minute task 5 minutes before quitting time. I asked an older employee about this, and he said this was how the owner obtained some unpaid labor. I quit.

Some time ago, when health insurance was being debated, I read about two reports which proved that doctors in private practice adjusted their advice to generate money for themselves. In one study, two counties in CA were compared. The one with fewer patients per doctor prescribed far more visits and treatments for the same problems; the county with more patients per doctor prescribed fewer. The outcomes were the same in both counties. In the other study, two counties in TX were compared. In one the doctors had investments in hospitals and laboratories; in the other, they didn't. Doctors prescribed far more hospital visits and lab tests in the first county than in the second, for the same problems, with equivalent outcomes.

Small capitalism wasn't and isn't necessarily ethical. Big capitalism involves an even greater risk of unethical behavior, because the absentee investor and the CEO can demand maximum results without becoming involved in the messy details of how to get there, and the employees are trapped by fear of job loss or co-opted by rewards.

Some businesses crow that their employees are paid salary rather than commission, so they can be trusted more to give the customers good advice. This itself is an admission that economic incentives generate anti-social behavior. Capitalism isn't moral; it's neutral at best and a source of temptation at worst. It motivates anti-social as well as socially beneficial behavior. The wisecrack that "business ethics" is an oxymoron isn't far off course.

Some -- perhaps most -- people cannot resist the temptation to act unethically when it's financially advantageous. In recessions, it may even be necessary to survive. Once it's been done without penalty, a psychological line has been crossed, and it will be crossed again. Laws, regulations and their enforcement are necessary to protect us.

If we're not careful, the profit motive can even infect public service. We have read that police in

some areas target minorities for minor infractions, that police are sometimes under pressure to write many tickets, and that police have used laws to seize property from people who are accused of crimes but never convicted. Can you imagine how many children would be put in foster care if social workers received commissions from the foster homes? Or how many would be left with their parents to be abused further if the workers received bonuses for avoiding foster care? Can you imagine how high court awards would be in civil cases if the judges and juries received a cut? Can you imagine how many shoddily-built buildings would be approved by the inspectors if they received bribes for doing it, as occurs in countries where public employees are poorly paid? Bribery and bonuses insert the profit motive into the public sector.

The person who is paid an adequate fixed salary is liberated to do what's right and is more likely to do so, in my opinion. The profit motive impedes ethical behavior. A system that relies on it has -- and never had -- a moral center.

## Addendum

By Ivan Light

Bob Gerecke's question is so good that I wanted to offer in support what I know of the academic literature that deals with it. I have also had my personal brushes with cut-throat capitalism, recollecting especially the summer I sold the Crowell Collier encyclopedia door to door as a student, and was taught to lie to customers about the "special deal" they were getting. Beyond anecdotes, there's now no dispute that markets are amoral (not immoral). Even the defenders of market capitalism acknowledge that. Their defense of capitalism turns on its efficiency in giving people what they want and allocating resources to this purpose in the economy. If people want snuff films, capitalism will provide them. If they want gasoline, capitalism will provide all they want.

That said, Bob Gerecke says that a profit-driven system *cannot* be an ethical system "and never was." Here I must disagree. That is the old-time religion, and it's really old. Aristotle condemned production and trade of commodities for exactly Bob's reason. As for the Romans, a bit later, they thought that the god Mercury was the patron of thieves and merchants. Similarly, Hindus and Chinese classically ranked merchants below peasants in their social status hierarchy, and only above prostitutes. Moral condemnation was, we now believe, the ubiquitously hostile view of market capitalism in the traditional, pre-capitalist era.

Arguing against the old-time view *a century ago*, the German sociologist Max Weber went back to the origins of capitalism in the sixteenth century to find a time when capitalism, then an economic innovation, expressed what Weber called, "the Protestant ethic." By that term Max Weber meant that Protestantism but especially Calvinist Protestantism conferred a moral legitimation on market capitalism that the system had never previously enjoyed. This legitimation helped early capitalism to survive the moral condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church.

In a nutshell, the Calvinist legitimation of capitalism worked like this. Sure, one can relieve human suffering by giving one's money to the poor as the Catholics recommended, but that method does not eliminate poverty. It just offers transitory relief to some poor people. A million dollars will provide one dollar for a million people if given away as charity. It is far *more moral* to invest one's million dollars in a productive enterprise that creates employment and provides high-quality, wholesome products to the public at a reasonable price. Quaker oats provide an example. That way the money initially invested continues to do *good work forever* rather than being dissipated in one fell swoop by donation to the poor. To accomplish this productive investment, the Protestant theologians recommended a life of hard work, reinvestment of profits in the business, and a personally ascetic life style. No booze, no dancing, no luxury, just hard work. Moreover, since anyone who lived that way would naturally prosper, the Calvinist theologians concluded that capitalists were doing God's work so he blessed them. Wealth acquired in trade then became a sign of divine election and poverty a sign that the impoverished person was a no-good idler, abandoned by God in this life and condemned to hell in the next.

There's more to say, but let me point out the lingering implications of this theology even among those who don't go to any church. Being rich is meritorious. Poverty is a result of laziness. That is why Donald Trump should be the next President of the United States. That is also why the welfare state should be abolished. Indeed, if you hear someone say, "that God-damned" Joe Blow did this or that reprehensible thing, what's asserted is that God damned Joe Blow to perdition. His misconduct is only proof of that divine disfavor. Here in America, an exceptional land, a city built on a hill, we cannot get away from our cultural heritage any more than they can in Iraq, Iran, or Saudi Arabia.

Mad as hell and not going to take it anymore?  
**Let 'Em Hear from You!**

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letters@inlandnewspapers.com  
[editor@claremont-courier.com](mailto:editor@claremont-courier.com)  
[letters@nytimes.com](mailto:letters@nytimes.com)  
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### Renew Your DCC Membership Today!

We have no corporate sponsors. Your membership dues pay all DCC's expenses that include our meeting expenses, p.o. box, club charter, storage space for our booths, publicity, political donations and events such as Claremont's July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration and Village Venture. Take this opportunity to renew if you haven't already done so. *Just complete and clip this form and mail it to DCC.*

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**Newsletter Editor: Ivan Light**  
*claremontdemocrats@yahoo.com*

