

WE STILL DON'T ENTITLE PRESIDENTS

Steven Pearlstein collects a slew of things the plutocrats believe they're entitled to. The whole list is worth reading.

But I'm interested in the way he invokes Mitt Romney with them. (These are taken from the second half of Pearlstein's collection.)

I am entitled to **a duty of care and loyalty from employees** and investors who are owed no such duty in return.

I am entitled to operate my business free of all government regulations other than those written or approved by my industry.

I am entitled to **load companies up with debt in order to pay myself** and investors big dividends – and then blame any bankruptcy on over-compensated workers.

I am entitled to contracts, subsidies, tax breaks, loans and **even bailouts from government**, even as I complain about job-killing government budget deficits.

I am entitled to federal entitlement reform.

I am entitled to **take credit for all the jobs I create while ignoring any jobs I destroy**.

I am entitled to claim credit for all the profits made during a booming economy while blaming losses or setbacks on adverse market or economic conditions.

I am entitled to **deny knowledge or responsibility for any controversial decisions made after my departure** from the company, even while profiting from

such decisions if they enhance shareholder value.

[snip]I am entitled to be treated with deference and respect by investors I mislead, customers I bamboozle, directors I manipulate and employees I view as expendable.

I am entitled to be **lionized in the media without answering any questions from reporters.**

I am **entitled to the VIP entrance.** [my emphasis]

The last line—which is the second-to-last of Pearlstein’s long list, seems to directly invoke the Mitt donors who refused to wait in a line 30 cars carrying other big donors into a fundraiser. Four of the other bolded items appear to invoke Mitt’s Bain experience:

- Loading up companies with debt to pay dividends
- Taking tax breaks to do so and even a bailout from the FDIC
- Boasting about the 50,000 crap jobs Staples created while ignoring all the manufacturing jobs shut down
- Disclaiming any responsibility for outsourcing jobs to China that profited Mitt personally

And then there’s the expectation he wouldn’t have to answer questions directly, one that his running mate continued yesterday when he refused to detail the Romney-Ryan tax plan for a friend Fox interview.

So while many people have taken this as a general statement about our plutocrats, I think it clearly uses Mitt as a poster boy for that sense of entitlement.

Which is why I think the first bullet I included is so interesting. "I am entitled to a duty of care and loyalty from employees." Mitt and his 47% fundraiser host Mark Leder may have had this expectation dashed if, as is likely, one of the fundraiser servers took and released a video of Mitt being a complete asshole. That video may not be decisive in this campaign, but it surely was a significant event.

But I think there's a more significant example where Mitt's expectation of absolute loyalty from his employees will have backfired. After all, even in the aftermath of the Paul Ryan selection, what may be the high point of Mitt's campaign, his campaign staff were making it clear they didn't approve of the decision (which turned out to be a the wiser judgment). And then there was the Politico story quoting lots of campaign insiders about how the campaign was in disarray. Those leaks came in the weeks after Mitt gave 7 top staffers—but not more junior staffers—bonuses; I would not be surprised if campaign workers became aware of the bonuses before the leaks to Politico. And then this weekend someone started leaking Mitt's debate strategy.

Mitt may expect absolute loyalty from people who work for him. But not only can't he control all those workers. But by treating his own campaign staff with the same kind of elitist reward system he wants the government to replicate, he may well have encouraged disloyalty among people who can hurt him the most.

This election is not over. But Mitt has certainly approached it with a deep sense of entitlement, just as Pearlstein lays out. One of his fatal errors, though, may be his belief that he is entitled to loyalty.