

MEMO TO THE CLUELESS NEPOTISTICALLY SELF UNAWARE FLEXIBLE BAG OF MOSTLY WATER KNOWN AS LUKE RUSSERT



.....Russert Nantucket Estate.....

Has there ever been a more self unaware little ball of unworthy entitled Beltway nepotism than Luke Russert? I ask that as an honest question, because it is quite possible the answer is no. The story of Luke, son of Tim, is mostly public record.

Let's take a look at the latest from L'il Luke, humbly entitled:

Luke Russert: Like Me, Paul Ryan Is
Driven By Personal Loss

Well, golly, you just know it is going to be an intellectual and cognitively aware barnburner piece from that, no?

Of course it is, because that is the searing literary talent of the one and only Luke

Russert; progeny of the Wonder of Whiteboard,
Tim Russert. Let us inspect Luke's
Hemingwayesque prose:

I peppered the congressman with questions about the health care law and budget priorities for an interview a colleague would use on Nightly News. When we were done, we exchanged pleasantries and he got up to leave. After about 15 seconds, he came back in the room and asked me, "How old was your dad when he passed from heart disease?" I told him, "58." He said, "Mine was 55. My grandfather and great-grandfather both died from heart issues in their 50s, too." He then asked me if I was into fitness and inquired about my workout regimen. He told me to run more and that I needed to work up a sweat at least five days a week. We both joked about how preventative fish oil supplements had a bad aftertaste.

Oh, what personal pathos these two poor sons have seen. Luke, son of Tim, product of St. Alban's Academy in Washington DC, was left with a mother who worked for Vanity Fair, an estate and mansion on Nantucket Island fit for a king and a sinecure at NBC.

Bootstraps baby, bootstraps.

And L'il Luke's brother in hardscrabble upbringing, Paul Ryan? This common man of the people was born the son of a respected lawyer in a Wisconsin town known as Janesville and:

Mr. Ryan, the youngest of Paul M. and Betty Ryan's four children, was born in 1970 and grew up in Janesville's historic Courthouse Hill neighborhood...

Like Luke Russert's traumatic childhood, Paul Ryan suffered such various hardships as being voted Prom King and "Biggest Brown-Noser" in high school.

Oh, the pain they must have suffered, the poor dears.

The smooth stylings of Luke Russert's searing reportage continue:

Much has been written about Ryan's notorious P90X workouts and physical discipline. At one point he was a personal trainer in Washington to help pay the bills. Aside from the obvious health benefits, from many personal conversations I've had with him since that day in Baltimore, I believe Ryan keeps himself so physically fit in order to downplay the anxious feeling all children of heart disease victims have – the dreadful thought you could be next.

I can attest that this feeling spurs you to accomplish as much as possible because the idea that you're on earth for a limited time is imprinted in your mind daily. Ryan was elected to the House at 28, was Chairman of the House Budget Committee at 40 and now is his party's presumptive nominee for vice president at age 42. He's already accomplished in 42 years what most politicians would hope to do in a lifetime.

Yes, what bloody hell these two tortured souls must have faced. Previous to reading the poignant words of Luke Russert about the woe and tribulations he and Paul Ryan (who has effectively never been out of government employ) commonly faced in life, I used to occasionally think maybe my life could have been better somehow. If, you know, only....

I used to think there was a lot of suffering in the world. At least until I read Luke Russert and Paul Ryan's common brotherhood of upbringing hurt. But, relatively, in light of all the real suffering Russert and Ryan went through to be where they are today, I was one of the luckiest

guys on the face of the earth.

For all the downtrodden out there, just be glad you have not suffered the “personal loss” of Luke Russert and Paul Ryan. We can all learn something from these bottom to the top, self reliant, American success stories of will and perseverance.

Well, or better, we can call out these two smarmy, self serving, holier than thou, nepotistic fucking pricks for what they really are. One represents the death spiral of American journalism, and the other the grim reaper for the morals and social safety net our fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers fought, died and worked so hard to insure. Yeah, those really are the stakes.

So, you might think ~~Tiny Tim~~, er Luke’s, tale of two forlorn, down on their luck, dandy pimperlins is over. Oh, no, there is a moving coda from Boy Wonder Russert:

So while Ryan is no doubt inspired by his faith, family, party and desire to shape the country in the ways he sees as best for the future, it should not be lost where much of his drive comes from – personal loss.

Personal loss. Yes. Of course. Like Russert and Ryan have some lock on fucking personal loss.

Please. Just get the fuck out, you simpering weenie naif. We all suffer personal loss, it is not yours to carry as a mantle of significance. We all have lost, or will lose, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends. What grandiose hubris you project with your sniveling, self serving tripe on behalf of yourself and Paul Ryan.

Get over yourself you candy ass punk; neither you, Ryan, me, not likely many, if any, of those actually able to read this article, are suffering the worst life has to offer. We are all fortunate sons and daughters, and you should

just shut the fuck up.

If only the foregoing palpably, cloying, asinine bullshit were but the worst of the situation. But, sadly, it is not. No, the deeper problem is that this is the gilded hollow future of journalism. At a time when print media, beat writers and old school journalism is dying like the plague has set in, this, L'il Luke Russert, is the harbinger of what's to come. How can you tell? Well, because the "senior talent" NBC ensconced in the hallowed throne of L'il Luke's father is the hollow and shallow dipstick known as Dancin Dave Gregory.

The suck up, Beltway Stockholmed Gregory is enough to make you puke, but he is par for the course for television networks that care more about scamming and plundering their viewers than playing to their common intelligence. NBC bastardized and cocked up the the London2012 Olympics big time; but that was just annoyance in sporting entertainment. It may have been craven, but it does not hold a candle to the intellectual and informational fraud they pull on their viewers via their news and political reportage every hour of every day.

L'il Luke Russert, and his suck up wet kiss to his soul mate in personal loss Paul Ryan, is but a symptom of the disease. It is a race to the bottom of the barrel, and with wet behind the ears, nepotistically installed, inbred Shetland ponies like Luke Russert, NBC and NBCNews.com are leading the field.

[Flexible Ugly Bag of Mostly Water]

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"STAND YOUR GROUND"

JUST TIP OF ICEBERG FOR BAXLEY'S RACISM, RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND GUN FETISH



Dennis Baxley

The tragic murder of Trayvon Martin has focused attention on Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law sponsored originally by Representative Dennis Baxley, who is serving for a second time in a district just south of the one in which I reside. Baxley has long been a symbol of all of the wrongs that ultra-conservative Republicans in Florida represent.

During his first time in Florida's House from 2000 until he was term-limited out in 2007, Baxley distinguished himself with his outright racism:

Baxley is currently a lonely voice opposing efforts to drop the state's official song, "The Old Folks at Home."

A compromise eventually revised the lyrics to remove the most offensive portion and added a state anthem. Here is what Baxley didn't want removed:

*Oh! darkeys, how my heart grows weary,
Far from de old folks at home.*

As if that were not enough, Baxley had another racist project at the same time:

Baxley is also advocating a new specialty license plate that would showcase the Confederate flag, with proceeds going to a group he belongs to, the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Baxley, NRA lobbyist Marion Hammer and the NRA teamed with ALEC to spread "Stand Your Ground" to 21 states. But "Stand Your Ground" is just one of several gun bills Baxley has developed. On his website he also touts a bill that "eliminated the prohibition on firearms in national forests and state parks". He also sponsored a bill that would have allowed employees to bring their guns to work, but it was defeated in committee in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings.

Baxley's image among Florida Republicans is that of an upstanding Baptist Sunday School teacher. He even spent his time out of the House leading Florida's Christian Coalition, a position from which he spoke out in 2008 about Barack Obama's exposure to Islam when he was younger:

"He's pretty scary to us," he said. "I think his Muslim roots and training – while they try to minimize it – it's there."

Asked what he meant, Baxley pointed to Obama's childhood stint in Indonesia and his Muslim relatives.

/snip/

"That concerns me particularly in the period of history we are living in, when there's an active movement by radical Muslims to occupy us," Baxley said of Obama's background. "That whole way of

life is all about submission. It concerns me that someone rooted in those beginnings, how it might have affected their outlook. That's what scary for me."

Baxley's fear of Obama's potential "submission" to Islam is particularly ironic, given his complete submission to a distorted radical Christian fundamentalism and gun worship. Back in 2005, Baxley was especially deranged in trying to help David Horowitz fight against fictional persecution of fundamentalist conservatives in academic settings. In the process, Baxley's bill would have set academic freedom back immensely (garbled formatting in article left as is):

In his statement to the committee, Horowitz compared universities in America to those in the third world, and said a large minority of professors don't behave like professionals in the classroom.

Casting the crisis in higher education as a struggle between leftist totalitarianism and mainstream values, Horowitz cited anecdotes about students being marked down for disagreeing with professors in class. He divulged neither the names of these students nor their professors.

Baxley also asserted that the bill would not lead to lawsuits, even though a legislative staff analysis warned the bill could allow students to sue their professors if they feel their views aren't being respected.

The analysis even recommends \$4.2 million be spent to hire new lawyers for universities to fight such suits if the bill is passed.

Fortunately, Baxley's bill never passed and

academic freedom was not removed in Florida.

Returning to “Stand Your Ground”, Baxley is trying to claim that George Zimmerman was improperly cleared in Trayvon Martin’s killing:

As the prime sponsor of this legislation in the Florida House, I’d like to clarify that there is nothing in the law that provides for the opportunity to pursue and confront individuals. It simply lets those who would be victims use force in self-defense.

/snip/

But media reports about Trayvon Martin’s death indicate that Zimmerman’s unnecessary pursuit and confrontation of Martin elevated the prospect of a violent episode, and does not seem to be an act of self defense as defined by the law.

Baxley is clearly squirming now as the impact of what he has done begins to hit home. He was warned of bad outcomes when the bill was passed:

But John F. Timoney, Miami’s police chief, called the bill unnecessary and dangerous. Chief Timoney, who has successfully pushed his police officers to use less deadly force, said many people, including children, could become innocent victims. The bill could make gun owners, including drivers with road rage or drunken sports fans who get into fights leaving ball games, assume they have “total immunity,” he said.

“Whether it’s trick-or-treaters or kids playing in the yard of someone who doesn’t want them there or some drunk guy stumbling into the wrong house,” Chief Timoney said, “you’re encouraging people to possibly use deadly physical force where it shouldn’t be used.”

Timoney's prediction was spot on:

State figures indicate that justified use of deadly force by private citizens is on the upswing.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement statistics show that before the law was enacted in 2005, there were about 13 justified killings each year by citizens from 2000 to 2005. Between 2006 and 2010, the average has risen to 36 justified killings each year.

That's over a hundred deaths in Florida alone directly attributable to Baxley's "Christian" values in action [see comments 8 and 9 for an explanation of the addition of quotation marks around "Christian" after the post was published].

THE EMPTYWHEEL PRIMARY TRASH TALK

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Primary you ask? Well silly, because today is the Super Tuesday of GOP primaries in both Michigan and Arizona. My Mormons versus Marcy's Hutaree. Gonna throw down baby.

I want to tell you how thrilling the excitement of the Republican primary has been for us here in Arizona. Except, well, I can't. Because it hasn't. It is now 5:00 pm here on the day of the primary, and I have not seen one single campaign ad on television. Other than a flurry of coverage on the day of the debate here, Nada. Zero. Zilch. As for campaign signs, which are always up everywhere in my busy area that sits at the intersection of Arcadia, Paradise Valley and Scottsdale. There are major roads leading to a lot of voters – many of them affluent – and this is a quite Republican district (it elected Ben Quayle handily just as an indicator). The pitiful tiny little Santorum sign in the picture above is the only sign I have seen within a two mile radius. That's it.

As for Michigan, Marcy reports the same there. CNN and MSNBC says the GOP candidates have been traipsing around Michigan, but Marcy has not seen much in the way of advertising or excitement either. Charlie Pierce gives a rundown on the wonderful candidates in Michigan. Here is what Marcy reported on Twitter yesterday about the level of excitement:

Honestly though, it just seems like a non-event to me. I have yet to see an ad-not TV, direct mail, robo, signs. Nothing!

So, two decent sized primaries in pretty interesting states, for differing reasons, and....bupkis.

It looks like Romney has Arizona solid unless there is a major upset, which is not shocking with the large contingent of Mormons here. But Michigan has been shockingly tight given Romney's roots there, and that could really be interesting depending on how a few key counties go. And Ron Paul has better strength than you think in Michigan. So this is a thread for election chatter, and anything else in the world you got (hint FOOTBALL and other sports, etc!).

On piece of pretty interesting news today, Olympia Snowe has announced she is retiring after this term and will not run, so there is a scramble underway up in Maine. The big Dem names floated so far to replace Snowe are current Representatives Chellie Pingree and Mike Michaud, as well as former Representative Tom Allen. Of those, it is hard not to think Pingree has the edge, and she is already thinking about it hard. This could be a great pickup opportunity for the Dems in the Senate, and would sure help the effort to keep the majority control of the Senate. DDay has more.

So, with that, let's hoop and yak it up for The Emptywheel Primary! Music by Bo Diddley and Roadrunner, which he first released in 1960.

COULD SANTORUM'S RADICAL RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM PROPEL US INTO RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE?

Despite the fact that our country was founded in part by immigrants seeking to escape religious persecution, the current crop of Republican presidential candidates (with the exception of Ron Paul, who gets no media airtime anyway) have carried the Republican party's "God and country" theme to even more of an extreme than usual. Taking the clear lead in this push to extremism is Rick Santorum, who now is not only proclaiming his radical faith as a principal reason to vote for him, but he also is deriding the faith of others, primarily that of President Barack Obama.

The Washington Post notes:

When Rick Santorum accused President Obama of having “some phony theology” last weekend, it was neither an isolated event nor an offhand remark.

Instead, Santorum’s comments were a new twist on a steady theme of his Republican presidential candidacy: that Obama and other Democrats have a secular worldview not based on the Bible, one they are intent on imposing on believers.

The Republicans’ religious fundamentalism comes through in response to concrete policy issues:

The relationship between religion and government has emerged as a flash point in the presidential campaign in recent days after an effort by the Obama administration to require religious institutions to include contraception in health insurance plans for employees. All of the Republican candidates objected to the effort, which the administration tweaked after a massive outcry, especially from Catholics.

The “Founding Fathers” that conservative Republicans so want to emulate on some fronts took pains to establish the separation of church and state. Because many had come from persecuted religious minorities, they pushed for the First Amendment’s prohibition both on establishment of an official religion and for the freedom to practice all religions.

Yet, with his extreme devotion to a radical fundamentalist Christian version of Catholicism, Santorum is moving in a direction that could lead directly into the kind of religion-fueled violence we see in other parts of the world. Until now, only the occasional murder of an abortion provider has cropped up as violence that could be attributed to radical religious fundamentalism in the US. But when a candidate

for president openly charges the current president with adhering to a “phony theology”, how far away are we from situations like that now in Afghanistan, where violence has erupted over the burning of Korans at Parwan prison?

When radical fundamentalist religion and government are intimately intertwined, violence seems to follow. In the current fiasco in Afghanistan, we see the mullahs in the Taliban calling for violence as a voice for the outrage at the burning:

An Afghan soldier joined protests on Thursday against the burning of copies of the Koran at a NATO base and shot dead two foreign troops, Western military sources said, as the Taliban urged security forces to turn their guns on foreigners.

Protests against the burning of copies of Islam’s most holy book drew thousands of angry Afghans to the streets, chanting “Death to America!” for the third consecutive day in violence that has killed 11 people and wounded many more.

The Taliban urged Afghans to target foreign military bases and kill Westerners in retaliation for the Koran burning at Bagram airfield on Tuesday, later directing its plea to the security forces, calling on them to “turn their guns on the foreign infidel invaders,” it said on its site shahamat-english.com.

But, remarkably, members of the Afghan Parliament have joined in with the Taliban in calling for a violent response:

The fury does not appear likely to abate soon. Some members of Parliament called on Afghans to take up arms against the American military, and Western officials said they feared that conservative

mullahs might incite more violence at the weekly Friday Prayer, when a large number of people worship at mosques.

"Americans are invaders, and jihad against Americans is an obligation," said Abdul Sattar Khawasi, a member of Parliament from the Ghorband district in Parwan Province, where at least four demonstrators were killed in confrontations with the police on Wednesday.

Standing with about 20 other members of Parliament, Mr. Khawasi called on mullahs and religious leaders "to urge the people from the pulpit to wage jihad against Americans."

Is there anything more chilling and disturbing than government figures and religious figures teaming up to advocate violence together? It doesn't even take the specter of an invading force to provoke such violence. In Iraq today, at least 60 people died in attacks that appear to be a return to the Shia vs. Sunni sectarian battles that have plagued the region for centuries.

Whether it is Catholic vs. Protestant or Shia vs. Sunni inside a country or Muslim vs. Christian in repelling an invading or occupying force, once radical religious fundamentalism becomes a part of government, violence appears to follow.

Calling for radical religious fundamentalism to have no part of government is not persecution of a particular religion. It is merely a part of the American concept that no particular religious view should become the position of the American government on any issue. The persecution the Founding Fathers fled and the fundamentalist-fed violence we see in the world today are all the evidence we need to know that Santorum risks taking the US in a direction that could negate one of its most precious founding

values.

“THE CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY NOW READS LIKE A CASEBOOK OF LUNACY”

There are a number of reasons to read this entire article—Republican Mike Lofgren’s explanation of why the TeaParty convinced him to leave his congressional staffer position after 30 years: the pithy descriptions of Republican nut-jobs (like the quote I’ve taken for my title, which he uses to describe Steve King, Michele Bachman, Paul Broun, Patrick McHenry, Virginia Foxx, Louie Gohmert, and Allen West), the accurate description of the corporate-purchased impotence of the Democratic party, and the description of how today’s Republican party puts party above the good of the country.

But I was particularly struck by this tie between normative behavior—collegiality and good faith—and the functioning of our democracy.

It should have been evident to clear-eyed observers that the Republican Party is becoming less and less like a traditional political party in a representative democracy and becoming more like an apocalyptic cult, or one of the intensely ideological authoritarian parties of 20th century Europe. This trend has several implications, none of them pleasant.

In his “Manual of Parliamentary Practice,” Thomas Jefferson wrote that it is less important that every rule and custom of a legislature be absolutely justifiable in a theoretical sense, than that they should be generally acknowledged and honored by all

parties. These include unwritten rules, customs and courtesies that lubricate the legislative machinery and keep governance a relatively civilized procedure. The US Senate has more complex procedural rules than any other legislative body in the world; many of these rules are contradictory, and on any given day, the Senate parliamentarian may issue a ruling that contradicts earlier rulings on analogous cases.

The only thing that can keep the Senate functioning is collegiality and good faith. During periods of political consensus, for instance, the World War II and early post-war eras, the Senate was a "high functioning" institution: filibusters were rare and the body was legislatively productive. Now, one can no more picture the current Senate producing the original Medicare Act than the old Supreme Soviet having legislated the Bill of Rights.

Far from being a rarity, virtually every bill, every nominee for Senate confirmation and every routine procedural motion is now subject to a Republican filibuster. Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that Washington is gridlocked: legislating has now become war minus the shooting, something one could have observed 80 years ago in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic. As Hannah Arendt observed, a disciplined minority of totalitarians can use the instruments of democratic government to undermine democracy itself.

Among other things, it describes why I never supported filibuster reform: Not because I like the filibuster or the Senate's other structurally undemocratic features. But because attempting to tweak the filibuster just ignores the root cause of our problems, that Republicans have given up the norms that keep our democracy working and serve, however imperfectly, to achieve the best outcome for the country.

As Lofgren notes, this nihilistic approach serves an explicit Republican strategy.

A couple of years ago, a Republican committee staff director told me candidly (and proudly) what the method was to all this obstruction and disruption. Should Republicans succeed in obstructing the Senate from doing its job, it would further lower Congress's generic favorability rating among the American people. By sabotaging the reputation of an institution of government, the party that is programmatically against government would come out the relative winner.

But it destroys the country in the process.

Lofgren doesn't quite say it, but it seems the logical conclusion of this state of affairs (barring a resurgence of Democratic values and spine and a new skepticism on the part of the press) is the collapse of the country, leaving just the corporatists and their Bible thumping puppets behind.

FEINGOLD FOR GOVERNOR: SCOTT WALKER & WI GOP'S WAR ON GOOD BEER

Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Republicans are declaring war on quality craft beer, and that is why I am supporting Russ Feingold in a recall election against Walker, and you should too.

DONALD TRUMP: THE JAMAICA JERKOFF



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Seriously, this asshole with a dead ferret on his head thinks he is going to run for President? Of the United States? Um, no. And why supposedly credible news organizations are giving this crapola one fleeting second of credibility not only beggars comprehension, but proves what pathetic swamp sludge the traditional media in the United States have become.

Oh, not to mention that the Republican party, who apparently takes Trump at face value (which given the ferret on his head and multiple bankruptcies is a value somewhere less than zero), is on the crazy train too.

So, where is The Donald from? What does HIS birth certificate show? Well, it demonstrates that he is from Jamaica. That's right, the loud mouth clown with a ferret toupee is from Jamaica. Sure, it *may look like* it is Jamaica New York as opposed to the country of Jamaica; but, seriously, without seeing the REAL certificate – you know, the one NOBODY HAS EVER SEEN – how is anybody to know??

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Jamaica. Uh huh. Sure. The Donald has been smokin some large spliff mon.

[The most awesome graphic up top is courtesy of the one, the only, DARKBLACK. If you do not know DB, he is a looong time friend of both Emptywheel and Firedoglake, and does brilliant

work and is in to some superb music to boot.
Check out the DarkBlack blog]

[PS – Yes, I could have gone with the original
Elton John version of Jamaica Jerkoff, but I
thought this version by The Pioneers was teh
awesome]

WHAT A GOP-MANAGED READING OF THE CONSTITUTION LOOKS LIKE

Bob Goodlatte is the guy the GOP put in charge
of today's reading of the Constitution. He
apparently chose to read the 10th Amendment—the
foundation of state's rights—himself. The 10th
Amendment is supposed to read:

The powers not delegated to the United
States by the Constitution, nor
prohibited by it to the States, are
reserved to the States respectively, or
to the people.

Only here's what Goodlatte's 10th Amendment
looks like:

Amendment 10: The powers not delegated
to the United States by the
Constitution, nor prohibited by it to
the States, **are reserved to the people
respectively**—are reserved to the states
respectively, or to the people.

So much for state's rights!

DAVID IGNATIUS CONFUSES JOE MCCARTHY AND DAN BURTON

David Ignatius got it wrong, IMO, when he asked whether Darrell Issa is going to be the next Joe McCarthy.

When you see the righteous gleam in Issa's eye, recall other zealous congressional investigators who claimed to be doing the public's business but ended up pursuing vendettas. I think of Robert F. Kennedy's ruthless pursuit of labor "racketeering" when he was chief counsel of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. And, more chilling, I think of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's use of that subcommittee to probe what he imagined was Communist Party subversion in America.

[snip]

Issa doesn't come across as a McCarthyite. Indeed, he has struck me as one of the smarter and more creative members of the Republican caucus. But he now has the whip in his hand, and investigative power, as we have so many times in American history, can be grotesquely abused.

Ignatius' analogy shows his blindness in two directions.

First, it's pretty obvious that Peter King, not Darrell Issa, intends to be the next McCarthy. Sure, other Republicans will join him in his anti-Muslim fear-mongering, but King is the guy

who has promised to use his gavel to accomplish that task. Peter King's goal, it seems, like that of Joe McCarthy, is to foster a generalized atmosphere of fear and distrust to justify authoritarian measures.

And given that today's equivalent of anti-Communist witch hunts is anti-Muslim and anti-Arab attacks, it'd be particularly dangerous for Lebanese-American Darrell Issa to carry out that task. Indeed, Debbie Schlussel, one of the key operatives in sowing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate, has in the past targeted Issa for his ancestry, calling him "Jihad Darrell."

But all that's not to say Issa won't launch into a bunch of wasteful witch hunts. But they're obviously modeled on the witch hunts of Dan Burton, Issa's predecessor at Oversight, in which a slew of baseless investigations served the purpose of delegitimizing the President.

Perhaps I'm being a pedant for insisting on this distinction, but I do so for two reasons. First, because it's important to understand the structure of these witch hunts and the intended targets of them. Issa, it seems to me, has an entirely political aim, whereas King's is more societal. Issa's target is Obama, King's is all of us.

But I also think it remarkable that a purportedly centrist Villager like Ignatius can't even summon the more obvious Burton comparison. All the blathering about bipartisanship, after all, ignores the tactics Republicans use to discredit their opponents, tactics that Burton mastered. It ignores the way Republicans put aside the good of the country to score political points.

I'm glad that Ignatius is calling on Issa to act like an adult, but he seems to ignore the whole point of Issa's forecast witch hunts.

OOPS! BRIBING NIGERIA FOR CHENEY'S FREEDOM NOT LEGAL

A lawyer in Nigeria has reminded the country's anti-corruption watchdog that the recent deal buying Cheney's freedom for \$35 million is not legal.

In a letter to Nigeria's anti-corruption watchdog, Osuagwu Ugochukwu, a prominent lawyer in Abuja, said the withdrawal of charges against Cheney was a breach of the law.

"We know as a point of law that once a criminal charge has been filed in a competent court, issue of penalty of fine is for the courts to impose and not parties," he wrote. "Hence, we are shocked to hear that EFCC imposed a fine on an accused person. We also know as a point of law that criminal matters cannot be settled out of court as in civil matters in Nigeria."

And a newspaper editorial makes the fairly obvious point that if corporations can keep buying the freedom of its executives, then those executives will never have an incentive to follow the law.

The risk of solving one criminal act through the plea bargain option amounts to a mere slap on the wrist and subtly telling the guilty firm and its personnel to "go and sin no more". It does not paint a good image for Nigeria, especially in the world's corrupt nations index where we are currently featuring notoriously.

We therefore condemn in strong terms this kind of under the table settlement. The same thing happened in the Siemens

bribery scam, and this is making Nigeria look like a country where money can buy justice. More importantly, the Halliburton case questions the seriousness of government in holding corrupt foreign firms and their officials accountable for their action, while on the other hand encouraging and patronizing companies that have not only confessed corrupt practices, but are not known to respect wholesome business ethics.

Only a painstaking trial and possible conviction, if found guilty, would have forced Halliburton to change its corrupt ways of doing business in Nigeria.

But Nigeria's anti-corruption watchdog, in response to Ugochukwu, pointed out that such plea bargains are standard in countries like the UK and US.

And, without addressing the move's legality, the head of the anti-corruption watchdog agency defended the move, saying that it is a "best world practice" used in more developed countries.

"The US and the UK governments are practicing it. Where you cannot successfully sustain a charge in court and you want to recover, then instead of losing the case, losing the money, then you opt for plea bargaining," Farida Waziri, head of the watchdog agency, said,

Of course, the US got an even bigger bribe from KBR – \$402 million – to dismiss these charges, without even having to threaten Cheney with jail time. So I guess Nigeria is left only to aspire to the "best world practice" of getting **bigger** bribes from corporations guarding the freedom of their executives.