

## Occupy Wall Street South coming to Charlotte

By John Heuer

Charlotte is the home of Bank of America, the eastern headquarters of Wells Fargo, and home to enough other banks to make it the 2nd largest financial center in the US, after Wall Street. So it is no surprise that Occupy Wall Street South has emerged to protest the Democratic National Convention coming to Charlotte in September.

The press conference in Charlotte on January 18 featured several peace and justice speakers who announced the primary demands of the Occupy Wall Street South Coalition:

Good jobs for all! Economic justice now. Make the banks and corporations pay for their crisis.

Money for education, health care, housing and all human needs, not for war and incarceration.

Justice for immigrants and all oppressed peoples! Stop the raids and deportations.

The Occupy Movement blossomed last September, and despite being ignored or marginalized in much of the corporate press, the movement is transforming what has passed for conventional political wisdom in recent decades. The conventional wisdom regards a polarized electorate on opposite sides of the so-called "culture wars," with abortionists, gays, secular humanist tax and spenders, and those who would eliminate private gun ownership in America locked in mortal electoral combat with borrow and spend church-going, gun owning pro-lifers, who are either heterosexual, or, like a younger Ted Haggert, not yet out of their gay closet.

The lame-stream press beats these straw horses to death, while the reality is that the election of either

a Democrat or a Republican signifies continued subservience of our political system to corporatism, militarism, and the accelerating concentration of wealth among the already super-rich, who filter out unwelcome candidates in the early stages of every presidential campaign. Although this year, perhaps for sheer spectacle and entertainment value, many candidates enjoyed a larger forum than they might have deserved.

Since last September, thanks in large part to the Occupy Movement, the percentage of those polled who acknowledge that the real divide in the US is not between right—left, conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, but between the 1% and the rest of us, has soared a whopping 40 percent, from about a third of the populace to about 60 percent. The habit that our political equations are formulated and handed down to us by the corporate press is suddenly seeing its shelf life shortened.

Super majorities of voters now support overturning the Citizens' United Supreme Court case which anointed personhood to corporations, and unleashed a torrent of corporate money that can sink almost any candidate's chance of gaining high office, without the electorate ever learning who signed the orders for the political assassinations.

Occupy Wall Street South invites people of every party and political persuasion to join the peoples movement to restore our democracy. For more information check out our website at <http://protestdnc.org/>.

*John Heuer, chair, NC Peace Action and a Chatham resident, is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line.*

## Immanentizing the Eschaton

By Don Lein

Eric Voegelin's famous phrase seems apt today. It was originally aimed at progressives (see New Deal) who promised a heaven on earth if we would simply implement their policies. Although Voegelin voiced this in 1952, the idea has been around for millennia. Simply stated it postulates that the imperfections of the world can be transcended by extraordinary insight, learning or knowledge with the corollary that those possessing those capabilities should make the rules. Gnosticism embraced this concept before the Christian Era and Voegelin identified a number of similarities between Gnosticism and modern political theories, such as progressivism, communism, fascism, and socialism. As Jonah Goldberg quipped, "They (these reformers/dictators) were hell-bent on creating heaven on earth!"

Today it is the underlying theme in the redistributionist/class warfare rhetoric emanating from Washington and from the Occupy protests. Although that is probably giving the Occupy movement more credit than it deserves – young people from the richest generation ever known on earth, when not texting or going to Starbucks to refresh their lattes, are shouting epithets at brick walls and demanding that money be taken away from "the rich". Their reason is not that the protestors are lacking in anything, it is simply that they are dissatisfied that others have "too much" and should share so that we could move another step closer to our Gnostic/communist/socialist/fascist/progressive utopia.

Of course, the Occupy movement could become much more credible if they practiced diversity, did not claim their right of free speech trumped property rights they were abusing, distinguished capitalism from cronyism, and were not so blatantly anti-Semitic. The Washington Post cited a survey that found "African Americans, who are 12.6 percent of the U. S. population, make up only 1.6 percent of Occupy Wall Street." This, in New York City where 25 percent of the population is African American. Consider that the Tea party was thought by some to be a "racist" organization because it only had a 6 percent representation of African Americans. Their posters attacking Zionism and Jews would have been right at home at a KKK rally.

Another facet of this argument is that redistribution must be tried because free market capitalism "has never worked". This assertion was made at Osawatomie by the President. Of course that depends upon what metric is chosen to measure –whether capitalism raises all boats, i.e. growth, or whether capitalism produces wealthy people. Certainly it does both, but when a politician is pandering to those who embrace breaking the 10th commandment, attacking the "rich" is persuasive. However, appealing to man's baser instincts, although perhaps a winning election strategy, is ethically reprehensible.

While redistribution seems to be predicated upon appealing to man's baser instincts, what of free market capitalism? Free market capitalism, at its base, is predicated upon each individual dealing with other individuals on a voluntary basis and if the buyer is not satisfied, she simply chooses another vendor. If enough consumers choose to leave that vendor they either change their way of doing business or they go bankrupt or today, if they are politically favored, they get bailed out. If the vendor is providing a product/service pleasing to enough people they become the next Bill Gates or Sam Walton. Thus there is mutual respect between consumer and vendor and, most importantly, freedom of choice.

Since free market capitalism seems to be ethically superior to the government controlled redistributionist rubric, which system produces better results in terms of income disparity? If you wish to observe abject poverty, simply go to the non-Western state controlled economies throughout the world that have no property rights, no freedom and no chance to escape their lot in life – in short, birth is destiny. While economic mobility in the U. S. is being hampered by onerous governmental regulations, it provides better opportunities than economies which do not even allow private ownership of assets.

Implicit in redistributionists' schemes is that government, rather than the free market, can discern the better places for money to flow, which is, at least, risible. Simply listing some of their choices should disabuse us of that idea – U S Postal Service, AMTRAK, TSA, the Chevy Volt, Solyndra, etc., etc. Even if central planners were competent, their approaches would be of secondary importance to the politicians who are in the business of getting re-elected. Re-election necessitates obtaining funding and politicians blatantly dole out favors to those who support them financially i. e. cronyism.

The choice seems simple – are we better off when we have the freedom to make the choice of where our money flows or when central planners/government makes that decision? Economists, politicians and other modern day Gnostics have long lamented the fact that the world does not conform to their theories. Perhaps we should recognize that the eschaton will come in due course and cannot be created by mere mortals who, at best, can only see through a glass darkly.

*Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is active in a variety of civic organizations.*

## National politics and the humor thereof

By Gaines Steer

This column's title does not imply that politics (is or are?) a joke. Please! Politicore is a sport, of course. Teams and banquets, all kinda coaches, talking heads and stuff. .... Polls and predictions galore with cheerleaders underwritten via a whole lotta moola: coming and going.

Bizarre, that's what it is. Whoever the dead person is who invented the USofA national political hoopla, must surely be enjoying this spectacle on the big-screen-in-paradise. Polemics day and night; a theatre plumb full of characters shopped around by central casting.

The funniest (Ha Ha!) part of all this extravagance en profligacy is America's ongoing insistence upon exporting said political system to other countries, that we have gone-to- war with, to more-or-less "save 'em." Why as soon as America limps away with another "victory," we begin setting up exit polls and consultations re political advertising campaigns. Some claim that this practiced part of our most favored sport is less than humorous.... Try presumptuous or check-in with Sri Thesaurus.

Meanwhile, back in the US each team member dresses down in jeans and all and goes 'round to unique (that's a kind adjective) states named Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Florida, excreta, expressly to bad mouth the other contesting athletes. Carefully avoiding saying (or doing) anything intelligible that the hovering press might seize in a fit of comprehension, these white men (balanced occasionally by one man-of-color and a lady from Alaska) parade around spending money by the truckload. Campaign finances thank goodness, are sportingly restricted and regulated by laws-of-Congress. (Now that is an oxymoron for the ages....). Only that most reliable of news media, Fox News, can seem to objectively keep score in these varied battles for the soul of Washington, D.C. (i.e.,The Washington Redskins?)

Sooner or later the sport of National Politics cohabitates in a big ole tournament between red and blue states, 50 of 'em. Good grief! The color white, I presume is the color reserved for third party candidates, should one manage to gain ballot access, a process that even Fox News cannot demystify.

Better not watch TV from now 'til November. You know why! Those bloody-terrible movie reviews will be upstaged 24/7 by semi-stupid political ads all about donkeys and elephants. (No oldie zoo jokes allowed....). My advice: switch to e-news to avoid the play-by-play announcing and remember to stop by the outdoor trash can as soon as mail arrives. Ah, democracy!

Oh yon pundits! These out-of-work sportscasters and comedians hired during the polit season to hype the whole silly process. They will, as you know, clearly explain which quarterbacks deserve to be in the Hall of Fame and why, how and whether certain political activists should reside in a white house. A white house that has avoided foreclosures, yet not eviction notices, due to refinancing shenanigans that should make a non-voting criminal blush.

Speaking of jobs, it is well known that the elected President is totally responsible for creating jobs. It is the number one task in the President's job description. Nobody seems to know how that arduous task got attached to the president's desk, yet it did for sure arrive. A student of American history would probably credit FDR for the advent, but not George Washington or the other George W. No problem really. All candidates for the big post are experienced personnel execs, whose expertise and job creation exploits rival that of our national ace-jobber: The Donald Trump. Go figure!

In case you don't consider this stuff downright hilarious, it's likely because you are crying too hard to laugh very much. Lighten up, we can be proud of the declarations of independent objectivity and tolerance that our political system has wrought. Our people are clearly not very prejudiced against Mormons, if they can indeed organize a decent Olympic Games, nor do we overtly discriminate against grandparent candidates who frequent divorce courts. And let's do please include in our "political equality @ perception equation" any racial minority candidate who has a spouse smarter than himself.

Goodness gracious!

*Gaines Steer is a personal historian (memoir assistance) and owner of Creative Writing Services. He is also an ole-timey antiques dealer and a community organizer. Chatham resident since 1986. Contact: [www.thelastunicorn.com](http://www.thelastunicorn.com)*

## EXPRESS YOURSELF!

Send your letters or columns in to Julian Sereno  
[chathamcoline@mindspring.com](mailto:chathamcoline@mindspring.com)