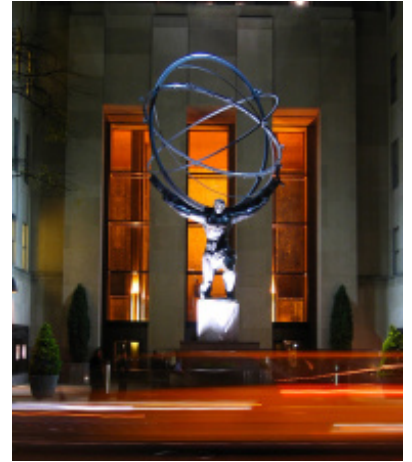


Do something!

Barack Obama, three days ago, went all-out in class warfare. He uttered every well-worn cliché about “the rich” and “the poor.” Not only did he say nothing original. He also left people wondering: how long before he starts crying, “Do something!”?



Obama returns to an old theme

Obama made his remarks at Georgetown University. Naturally, one of the C-SPAN channels covered them.

At one point he complained about the lower tax rates hedge-fund managers pay on their income. Never mind that a typical hedge fund manager will likely pay a larger *amount* of taxes than nearly any other person. Obama complained such a person pays income tax *at a lower rate* than most. He then said, “You pretty much have more than you...or your family [can] ever use.” He spoke of “fairness,” a frequent refrain of the left. Then he got to the point: “If we can only close that loophole, I can now invest in early childhood education that can make a difference.”

Lay aside for the moment that the Constitution nowhere says, “The Congress shall have the power...to provide for and maintain a system of free public schools.” Lay aside, also, an eighteen-trillion-dollar national debt that keeps growing. Lay aside even that government money-printing press we call the Federal Reserve System. Listen to what else he speaks of: “My brother’s keeper.” (Of course Obama drops the context of that quote: the one asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” has recently murdered his brother.) Finally: “If we can’t ask from society’s lottery winners to just make that modest investment, then really this conversation is for show.”

Lottery winners? To begin with, he who wins a real lottery, must always negotiate the form in which he takes his winnings and when he pays the tax collector. Anyone understands that, or should understand that, when buying a ticket. *What ticket does anyone buy, who manages large sums of money to invest in activities that will do something for the economy?* Obama proposes to treat them worse than the government treats one winning the lottery: by enacting a bill of attainder or an *ex post facto* law.

Similarly Obama [complains](#) of the “image” of “the poor” today:

I think the effort to suggest that the poor are sponges, leeches, don't want to work, are lazy, are undeserving, got traction...If you watch Fox News on a regular basis,...they will find, like folks who make me mad. I don't know where they find them.

Don't tell me you don't know where Fox News can find boosters about “Obamaphones.” It's your *job* to know. *You*

developed the programs people now abuse. Do you now pretend this outrages you? Do you *really* want to know? Ask the worthies at Fox News. They'll tell you. Better yet, read the transcripts! They made no secret of where they found these program abusers.

How old is this theme?

Ayn Rand (1905-82) knew all about this kind of complaint. It appears in her magnum opus, *Atlas Shrugged*. In Part 3, Chapter 5 ("Their Brothers' Keepers") any reader can find the best example:

Those who had once simpered: "I don't want to destroy the rich. I only want to seize a little of their surplus to help the poor, just a little, they'll never miss it!" – then, later, had snapped: "The tycoons can stand [the squeeze]. They've amassed enough to last them for three generations." – then, later, had yelled: "Why should the people suffer when businessmen have reserves to last a year?" – now were screaming: "Why should we starve when other people have reserves to last a week?"

What, Rand's character then asks, are they counting on?

In the next instant she gets her answer:

"Do something!"

Yes. A villain in that piece, as the heroine ponders the progress of the simpering, snapping, yelling, and screaming complaints about "the rich" and so on, shouts, "You must do something!"

Later, this same villain has the bad sense to say it again, to the hero of the narrative. By *hero* we mean here, not the caller of the great Strike of the Men of the Mind, but a businessman and inventor who agrees, against his better judgment, to meet with this man and four other men, including at least two federal representatives. They want this businessman to sign on to a "Steel Unification Plan." By that plan, all steel producers will produce as able, but receive pay in proportion to a measure of need. That businessman knows he will work at a loss under that plan. He asks the assembled proponents how long they expect him to last. They answer, "only until the situation improves" – a non-answer. He points out:

Have you anything left to loot? If you did not see the nature of your policy before, [how can you not] see it now[?] Look around you. All those d____d People's States all over the earth [subsist] only on the handouts you squeezed for them out of this country. But you: you have no place left to sponge on or mooch from... This country was the greatest and the last. You've drained it. You've milked it dry. Out of all that irretrievable splendor, I am only one remnant, the last. What will you do, you and your People's Globe, after you've finished me? What are you hoping for? What do you see ahead, except plain, stark animal starvation?

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One of the men gives part of the game away. He says men like this businessman have spoken of disaster for years, but that disaster has not come. But he has not convinced him. "What are you counting on?" he repeats. The men still speak of temporary problems and a "chance" to work. He relentlessly points out the irrational can never work. "What can save you now?" he asks.

And again that original villain yells, "Oh, you'll do something!"

The hero recognizes a key point so many people miss. *Progressives' plans can only succeed when non-progressives "do something"!* Obama could never say that out loud. But his voice, and the plaintive look on his face, said it for him: "Please do something! Please save my plan!"

Barack Obama got exactly one thing right. If we men of the mind do *not* "do something," this conversation really *does* go only for show. Next, let's ask: *why* should we "do something"? *What* shall we do?

Actually, Barack Obama and all his progressive allies could "do something" any time. *Give up and get out of the way.* Then the captains of industry and finance can *really* "do something" and not only reap a just reward, but also do that something faster. And that something would stand a better chance of working than it can today. It certainly would stand a better chance of working than anything Obama, in his six years in office, has yet proposed or done.

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