CHAPTER 6

Infamy and Indoctrination in American Media and Politics

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Practice

As I sit at my computer, writing this article, on January 9, 2012, Republican presidential candidates in New Hampshire are insulting one-another at town-meetings in New Hampshire, having bickered with one another in a dozen so-called ‘debates’ between the candidates held in various sites in the United States.

The Republican Debates

The first primary of the American presidential election will be held tomorrow and Mitt Romney, a multi-millionaire entrepreneur who was governor of Massachusetts for one term, is expected to win by a large margin. He won the caucuses in Iowa by only eight votes, which was a victory in one sense and a loss in another. After the primary in New Hampshire, the action moves to South Carolina, where the next primary will take place.

And what have American’s learned from watching these debates? Mostly that none of the Republicans running for the presidency trust Romney and they don’t like one another. They believe he is really a moderate and the Republicans want (or think they want) a ‘true’ conservative, whatever that is. During the campaign, when the ‘anyone but Romney’ feeling was strong, a variety of candidates momentarily led the field, only to flame out and be replaced by another candidate. Herman Cain, a former pizza executive who boasted that he had no political experience at all, led for a while and entranced Republicans with his 9-9-9 plan. It soaked the poor and middle classes but was great from the wealthy – like all Republican plans. But when a number of women who claim they had had affairs with Cain attracted media attention, Cain ‘suspended’ his campaign. When Rick Perry, the governor of Texas, entered the contest, he immediately became the front runner, but that only lasted until he participated in the debates and stumbled terribly, showing that he was not ready for ‘prime time’, and for the presidency. He had a famous
'oops' moment on television when he could only name two of the three governmental departments he would eliminate when he became president. He still has a lot of money to spend on advertising from his billionaire backers but now seems to be irrelevant.

Next came Newt Gingrich. He has been divorced twice and worked as a lobbyist (it was discovered) but conservatives were willing to forgive him because they thought he could stand up to Obama in debates and because he actually had some ideas about the economy and other topics. Gingrich comes across on television as smug, nasty and hostile. His claim to fame was shutting down the United States government when he was Speaker of the House. While Romney spent his time attacking President Obama, a Super PAC (Political Action Committee) full of former staffers and others sympathetic to Romney spent three million dollars attacking Gingrich, which more or less destroyed his lead and his candidacy. Super PACs can spend money however they want but they cannot coordinate with the candidates. This left Rick Santorum, who spent the better part of a year in Iowa, as the only candidate standing, more or less, and he almost defeated Romney in Iowa. Santorum was defeated soundly when he ran for his seat in the Senate a number of years ago but that seemed to be of no concern to him or his backers.

The last two Republican debates in New Hampshire were notable because of the poor questioning by the moderators in the first one and the expressions of loathing by Gingrich towards Romney and the attacks by all the other Republican candidates on Romney in the second. Assuming Romney wins New Hampshire and South Carolina, he will have more or less assured himself of getting the nomination. He has offered an economic plan that, when analyzed, also was very beneficial to the 'rich, well-born and able'; and which, like so many other Republican plans, took money from poor people and the middle classes and transferred it to the wealthy.

Gingrich argues that Romney, despite his claims, actually is a 'career politician' (which Republicans think isn't something to be proud of) and has been running for president for a dozen years. Gingrich pointed out that Romney spent 200 days out of the state of Massachusetts when he was governor running for president, and that his performance in the business world as head of Bain Capital wasn't anything to boast about. The other candidates attacked Romney on every front, arguing that he was really a moderate claiming to be a conservative and that he 'flip-flopped' on everything – that is, he didn't stand for anything except running for president, but he brushed off the attacks, saying he's used to being attacked and has 'broad shoulders'. It looks like conservative Republicans will have to grit their teeth and vote for him unless there is a third party conservative candidate. The debates were characterized by