

## Donald Trump and the Abortion Bill

My father, who was a contractor to home and apartment builders, spoke well of Fred Trump. He was born in Woodhaven, New York, not far from where a family real estate partnership purchased an abandoned synagogue and turned it into a facility for an engineering business. When Fred's son came into the business, my father said at the dinner table something along the lines of, "I don't think I'll be doing any more work for the Trumps. I met Donald today and, well, I just don't think it's going to work out with him. He is about your age, Cliff, and he wants to be a high roller." My father, at the time, had suffered heart problems and he did not want any more aggravation in business than was absolutely necessary. Dad was smart. Many of those people who did business with Donald Trump early on found themselves in bankruptcy court, waiting in line to get paid, or just had to suck up their losses.

I listened intently to Donald Trump at his Town Hall meeting recently. Trump is great for American politics. He has made some people listen to the political debate about the next President of the United States, and that cannot be bad for our system. The enemy of America's future is apathy. People seem to be anything but apathetic about Donald Trump.

When I was a kid, I did not go to summer camp like the other kids in my hometown. My summer experience was to be sent up "to the country." What that meant is that I got to spend several weeks or more in Swan Lake, New York, where my grandparents owned a small dairy farm where my mother and uncles were raised until they started college in New York City. The farm was sold off to a national hotel, and my grandmother was able to keep a bungalow for summer use. We were also permitted to use the facilities of this very stereotype Jewish borscht belt "complex." One of my enduring memories was Saturday night. We would go to the canteen to watch and listen to the singers, magicians, jokesters, and a variety of other entertainers. The humorists spanned the spectrum from Yiddish-speaking Brooklynites to Midwestern Protestants. Each comedian had his (there were very few "hers" outside of the singers) *shtick*. What exactly is a *shtick*? Well, I did not bother to look it up in Wikipedia or anywhere else, but I know what it meant to me. A "shtick" was an approach, an act, a way of relating to people that could be funny, serious, entertaining, crass, gentle, but always memorable in some way.

Donald Trump is surging in the polls because he has a *shtick*. He is very much like a borscht belt entertainer, memorable because of how he speaks and the way he presents himself, rather than content. The experts will have to parse the substance of Trump's message, if any, but his entertainment value could not be underestimated. He is making people sit up and take notice, whether he is hated, loved, or whether he just makes people shrug their shoulders and giggle.

Donald Trump is not dumb, of course. There is a method to his madness. As the pundits have said, the sometimes real estate developer has tied into frustration and anger with the American political system. Trump is absolutely correct in that regard. People are rightly disgusted with politics as usual and people in office being sold, sometimes not even to the highest bidder. The people we elect seem more beholden to the status quo than to any sort of long distance vision for America. In that way, Trump and Bernie Sanders have a lot in common. They both have a message. Sanders, almost shunted aside for the time being, whether he is loved or hated, socialist or capitalist, has a particular vision for America based upon political pedigree. Sanders wants the rich to support the poor, and the state to be the rising tide which lifts all boats. Trump wants to poke his finger in the eye of the establishment, and probably everyone else. Trump is about Trump. He wants to see his name in lights, on a wall separating the United States from Mexico, and to translate our economic system into a kind of American-Trump tower.

Donald Trump may not have shown great ability in building the bequest generously granted to him by his father, but he has learned how to be a good salesman. Someone once told me that the Apostle Paul was the world's greatest salesman. I never understood what that meant until I brushed up on my ancient near eastern history. Paul successfully welded together the ethics, philosophy and divinity of Judaism with Greco-Egyptian notions of a personal divinity.

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