

#1488 Seeking Approval from the GOP Fringe is Making Them Mainstream

Intro 5-7-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left* podcast, in which we shall take a look at the jockeying for position that is happening among GOP politicians, both incumbents and hopefuls, in this sort of murky Trump, post-Trump (?) political era in which the path to victory for Republicans is to support Trump unquestioningly, obviously, while also keeping an eye on the long game for which one may want to attempt to out-Trump Trump to gain the support of his cultish masses.

To explain all this, we have clips today from *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *Skullduggery*, *The Majority Report*, *Some More News*, and *The Takeaway*, with an additional members-only clip from *The Bulwark*.

Local Republicans compromising voting systems in pursuit of Trump's Big Lie - The Rachel Maddow Show - Air Date 4-29-22

[00:00:46] **MEHDI HASAN MSNBC HOST:** And we start tonight in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where this happened last week. Just see if you can figure out what is going on here.

[BEGIN VIDEO CLIP]

[00:00:57] **UNIDENTIFIED MALE:** Oh yeah. Where is Goliath? Thank you.

[00:01:07] **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:** You are welcome. Bless you.

Wow. How powerful is that? Oh my gosh. Our next governor.

[END VIDEO CLIP]

[00:01:20] **MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC HOST:** Our next governor. Yes, that man in the center, the man receiving the giant sword, that was Pennsylvania state senator and Republican candidate for governor, Doug Mastriano. The man dressed in multiple American flags, and the woman to his left or the organizers of this event in Gettysburg last week. And they are gifting Mastriano what they call a David sword.

That is a nice gift. Who doesn't appreciate a good sword, right? But honestly, the sword may have been the least weird thing about this event because this was a big QAnon event. And not just QAnon, it was kind of a every conspiracy theory under the sun event.

This was the poster for the event which was called Patriots Arise For God And Country. The headliner for this event you can see her name there, Dr. Betsy Eads. She is actively pushing a theory that people who got the COVID vaccine booster shot are going to get AIDS. She was the headliner at this event.

Not long before they got to the headliner, the organizers really set the tone for this two-day gathering with a video that played in the event first hour.

[BEGIN VIDEO CLIP]

[00:02:27] **UNIDENTIFIED MALE:** Media propaganda, the child trafficking, and the slave economy. All of these control systems will crumble down.

The darkness will collapse, and only a few countries at first, but other countries will soon follow. We will unite against the dark.

[00:03:02] **MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC HOST:** That crazy video keeps going like that with a hodgepodge of every conspiracy theory possible, from 9/11 was an inside job to 5G networks are killing you, to Hitler's death was faked. Didn't see that one coming, did you?

But of course, all of those conspiracy theories are just the appetizers. The main course is the big one that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald J. Trump. And candidate for governor, Doug Mastriano, wasn't just attending this event, he was all in. His campaign auctioned off this print of a painting of a very muscular Donald Trump to raise money for his campaign.

Someone paid \$4,000 for it. Madness.

Mastriano himself who has been subpoenaed by the January 6th investigation over his efforts to overturn Joe Biden's win in Pennsylvania. He gave a speech in which he described that subpoena as a badge of honor. And you know, how times change, and how fast they change, because just last year, Doug Mastriano was distancing himself from this same group, and this same event.

His spokesperson at the time said he strongly condemns the QAnon conspiracy theory, and that it was a mistake that he was listed as a speaker at last year's conference. But this year? He is not shying away. He went all in, and left with a sword, and a goody bag.

And Doug Mastriano, remember, is the front runner for the Republican nomination for governor in Pennsylvania. One new poll out today shows him with a 14-point lead over his nearest opponent. That poll maybe a bit of an outlier, but you get the idea.

It is time to say it: this is not the fringe. This is the Republican Party now. And it not just in Pennsylvania. Last weekend, Republicans in Michigan chose two election deniers to be their candidates for statewide office in November. One of those two candidates spoke at a QAnon conspiracy theory conference late last year. She is now the official Republican nominee for secretary of state in Michigan, which means that if she wins in November, she will be in charge of overseeing elections for the entire state. The other candidate has said that his Democratic opponent, the currently serving attorney general of Michigan, should be in jail. And if he replaces her as attorney general, he has the power to help do that.

Next door in Wisconsin, the front-runner for the Republican nomination for governor, the closest thing to an establishment Republican candidate in that race, this week said that she too believes the 2020 election was rigged.

And it is not just election conspiracies that are animating the Republican Party now. The QAnon craziness is seeping into more and more of the GOP's agenda. The central thesis, I guess, of the QAnon conspiracy is that the country is run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping Democratic party pedophiles.

And what is the latest crusade from Republican politicians? Pushing laws to outlaw any mention of a gender or sexuality in schools. And then shamelessly accusing anyone who objects -- Democrats, even the Disney Corporation -- of being pedophiles, or groomers out to molest our children.

Republican legislatures are also racing to see who can ban the most books in schools, setting up new tribunals that will sift through every school library and remove any book that Republican lawmakers find objectionable. Or maybe a book ban isn't quite stringent enough for today's Republican Party. Maybe what we need is a good old-fashioned book burning.

[BEGN VIDEO CLIP]

[00:06:33] **STATE REP JOHN RAY CLEMMONS:** Let's say you take these books out of the library. What are you going to do with them? Are you going to put them in the street? Light them on fire? Where are they going?

STATE REP. JERRY SEXTON [R-TN]: I don't have a clue, but I would burn them.

[END VIDEO CLIP]

[00:06:50] **HASAN:** The 2020 election was stolen, Democrats are a bunch of pedophile groomers, burn all of the books we don't like. This is the Republican Party now. Which makes it absolutely hilarious that Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, the man who was just buying Twitter, surveyed this political landscape and concluded that Democrats -- Democrats! -- are the ones who have become crazy extremists.

I mean, whatever you think of Elon Musk's politics or his plans for Twitter, here is a guy who was unquestionably brilliant in some areas. He has designed cars, and spaceships, and built these successful companies. But his big brain take on today's political situation is literally this stick figure drawing he shared on the social media platform he is in the process of taking over. This stick figure drawing that shows a figure in the middle standing slightly left of center politically in 2008, and then watching Democrats sprint leftward over the following 13 years, while Republicans stayed put exactly where they were. No change from the Republicans there.

Musk wrote, quote, "I strongly supported Obama for president, but today's Democratic Party has been hijacked by extremists. It is the Democrats who have gone far left, not the Republicans far-right."

As the political scientist Don Moynihan replied, "Obama's party is led by Obama's vice president, and the other party is led by the guy who tried to orchestrate a coup. But sure, it is the Dems who are extremists."

Even by the bunker standards of Elon Musk`s tweet, it is a bonkers take on the political situation.

Will Trump help Ohio's Vance Advance (w_ Tom LoBianco and Kyle Kondik) - Skullduggery - Air Date 4-25-22

[00:08:24] **MICHAEL ISIKOFF - HOST, SKULLDUGGERY:** Some of what Vance's is... is saying here... Mark, you want to play that clip?

[00:08:29] **JD VANCE:** Who would have believed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, our FBI, would have got an illegal wire tap on a U S president? Who would have believed... Who would have believed [chokes on own words] that the January 6th protestors, many of whom are not even accused of a violent crime, would still be rotting in prison, without an ounce of due process, which is required under our constitution?

And ladies and gentlemen, I'm sick of it.

I'm sick of not living in a country that makes its own stuff, that relies on the communist Chinese to make the things that we need.

I'm sick of knowing that our own FBI is more concerned about arresting American citizens than it is about stopping the drug and sex trafficking across our Southern border.

[00:09:29] **MICHAEL ISIKOFF - HOST, SKULLDUGGERY:** Let's dissect this a little bit; go through, you know, one by one...

His first example, the FBI got a wire tap on a sitting U S president. Um, actually there's no evidence that ever happened.

January 6th defendants rotting in jail without an ounce of due process; they've all been charged in court proceedings with full due process rights.

And that last bit about drug and sex trafficking; uh, that seemed to be the standard-- what is becoming the, increasingly, standard QAnon dog whistle out there, sex trafficking.

[00:10:14] **VICTORIA BASSETTI:** Let me jump in here and add one thing not mentioned in any part of that speech is the word or name: Trump. Which kind of raises... which goes to the point that there's now, kind of, Trumpism-without-Trump.

Um, and so I'm... I'm, kind of, curious: if Trump, isn't the thing that's moving the needle in these races, what is?

[00:10:36] **TOM LOBIANCO:** Okay, well, two thoughts on that: and actually the... little known... thing you guys talked about there.

So, number one is, I'm with you. I keep on seeing these indications that we are already in a post-Trump universe. I think there's some kind of lag time in, kind of, determining this. But one of those is, when I was out with Josh Mandel and... trailing Josh Mandel and Michael Flynn on their sweep across, uh, from Cincinnati up to Cleveland. What was fascinating about that was, I kept on hearing them talk about the stolen election, and they repeated a lot of the election lie that Trump has put out there, and they would whip the crowd into a... well, you know, not a frenzy like a Trump rally, but, you know, a frenzy for an average size campaign. Talking about it, but never actually mentioning Trump.

And I heard a lot of the voters at those stops telling me that, too; that, you know, the stolen election... election lie, but not supporting Trump because he is supporting Vance. And the ability for them to dissociate from the name-bearer. Right? That Trump himself, and stick with the Trumpism.

So the second part of that is; that clip that... so, Mike, the clip that you played of Vance, that-- going through the Tiktok, with January 6th, you know, allegedly rotting in jails, uh, you know, et cetera-- it sounded like Tucker Carlson. It sounded more like Tucker Carlson than it did Trump. And for that group-- and again, I don't know that this represents a majority or even a sizable plurality of the Republicans right now-- but for that group of, kind of, like, your hardcore Trumper, loyalist, MAGA, and even smaller subset of QAnon types, that sounded like Tucker Carlson. And my guys have been telling me for more than a year now, the Tucker really has the zeitgeist better than Trump.

[00:12:22] **MICHAEL ISIKOFF - HOST, SKULLDUGGERY:** It's a fascinating point because, you know, Tucker Carlson has a much bigger megaphone right now, right? On... on Fox. And Trump is off of Twitter. He puts out these... these statements, but they don't get the traction that his, you know, kind of daily, uh, you know, tweets did.

And so it's, sort of, the, you know, the second part of... of what you referred to before as the post Trump era, is it... are we now beginning to see the Tucker Carlson era beginning?

[00:12:51] **TOM LOBIANCO:** [Inexplicable laughter] It feels that way.

And, you know... look, at the beginning of last year, right after January 6th, you know, obviously, all Trump's people, all they cared about with January 6th was, "Oh, Trump was deplatformed, he's canceled, cancel culture, big tech." That was their take on it. And they kept on saying-- I know, I talk with these guys and they would tell me, all the time-- they're like, you know, "Trump has to get the megaphone back. He has to build his own social media company."

Well, okay. He's got the social media company. Alright? Trump Truth. Right? And he's not using it. And he advertised it at the rally on Saturday, but he's... himself is not using it. He's using these workarounds.

Same thing with Donald Trump Jr. Don Jr. Gets the most traction on Twitter. Not getter, not parlor, not cloud hub. You know, not the other ones, not even Truth, the thing he ostensibly is working on.

Greg Abbott's Border Shutdown Backfires Spectacularly - The Majority Report - Air Date 4-16-22

[00:13:47] **DAVID GRISCOM:** So Abbott has been having state troopers inspect commercial vehicles that are coming over from Mexico. And I'm sure most people are aware a lot of trade comes over from Mexico on a daily basis. And this has caused huge snags in the supply chain, hours upon hours. I think it's important to remember too, that while there's a bureaucratic nightmare on the US side of the border, truckers in Mexico have staged protests to basically say we're going to shut down the border too. And oftentimes that has been sort of overshadowed, so we want to shout those people out for using their labor power to make a point.

But you know, the Pharr-Reynosa Bridge alone, \$70 million a day of goods are coming across that border. Mexican agencies have been saying around \$8 million a day has just been lost, in all of this kind of madness. And a significant amount of trucks are now just rerouting around Texas. They're going to other ports of entry in Arizona.

And it was almost immediately a disaster politically. Sid Miller, who's the agricultural commissioner here, came out and he was one of the first people to really hit Abbott hard. Sid Miller is, you know, is a Republican, but has a very weird relationship with Abbott. Apparently Greg Abbott hasn't returned one of his emails or phone calls, or even had a meeting with the agricultural commissioner of Texas in 7 years. And of course Abbott's response to Sid Miller's basically criticizing his policies that Sid Miller doesn't know what's going on. Well, it makes a lot of sense if you're not responding to emails from one of your important Republican members of government.

So, to fast forward a little bit, this has been going on. Beto, of course, has been showing up at the border and has been making rightfully, trying to draw awareness to this. But what Abbott's now doing is he's trying to save face. So, because this has been so unpopular -- and the thing about this too, is if you're in Texas and you might have not experienced this at the grocery store yet, but it's coming. And they're saying basically this weekend is when you're going to start seeing empty shelves. You're not gonna be able to get fruits and vegetables, or at least they'll be --

[00:15:45] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Communism. It's communism!

[00:15:47] **DAVID GRISCOM:** Well, it's big government getting in the way of free enterprise, right?

[00:15:49] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Obviously. Yeah.

[00:15:51] **DAVID GRISCOM:** So there's a lot of pushback against that already. And I think it's only going to get worse. Greg has tried to save face. He went down and he negotiated with the governor of Nuevo Leon, and got very, very vague promises from the governor that there'll be some more border security initiatives in Nuevo Leon. For people who aren't familiar with the kind of geography of the Mexican side of the border there, Nuevo Leon has a very important port of entry with Texas, but it's actually very, very small. It's a tiny little sliver. So we're still waiting to see if other states are going to show up.

So Chihuahua yesterday afternoon, they also negotiated a deal. But Coahuila, as far as I know, there's been no deal. And the most important one, at least when it comes to fruits and vegetables and things like that, is [stumbles to pronounce] Tamaulipas --

[00:16:42] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:**

Way better than when I attempt to read an IM in Spanish here on the show, so don't even worry.

[00:16:49] **DAVID GRISCOM:** They still have not, as far as I know, negotiated, and that's going to really hit a lot of the agriculture here.

And I don't know, it's been a really interesting week, frankly, to see the kind of pushback from even within the Republican party to these kinds of stunts, to see how willing Abbott is to do stupid shit like this, so that he can try to bolster his national image.

And that's the thing you have to remember too, is he's doing this, I think, with presidential ambitions and his goal right now is to be sitting with Tucker Carlson or Sean Hannity and being able to say that I'm the real "tough on the border" guy. There was a segment on Fox News where they compared him, they called him the Ron DeSantis of Texas, which I don't think his team pretty much is going to appreciate.

So, it'll be interesting to see how much benefit he gets out of this, but it's really been an absolute disaster.

[00:17:37] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:**

Yeah. bringing up Ron DeSantis there, it's interesting. There's no way he can catch up to the media darling treatment that Ron DeSantis has gotten, especially because DeSantis is way more ahead of the curve on some of these cultural formative stunts that Abbott has not ever seemingly been able to capture. And he's been in office for a longer period of time. What are we thinking if he does run for president? Tops 3% in the polling?

[00:18:04] **DAVID GRISCOM:** Yeah, I would be surprised. Him as a national political figure is interesting cause liberals probably get worked up about him as a kind of villain. But even the way that he runs the state here, there's a lot of stuff that really shouldn't-- Abbott really wants to be a kind of big media figure. And he tries to play this kind of hard ball stuff. But internally in Texas, he's been quite effective at promoting an extreme conservative, far-right form of government.

Not only that, and this is something -- if I can make a quick plug, I'm writing a piece for Sublation Media coming up in a few weeks on what Greg Abbott's done to the office of governor here. Because people might not be familiar with the way the system works in Texas. But Texas has historically been a weak

governor state. For a long time, governors were only elected to office for two years. And the executive power of that office is historically extremely weak. It's sort of fragmented into different elected boards or appointed boards and things are staggered, so you only get a few appointments. So typically that's been quite a weak office and not really something that people aspire to who had the grand designs of power. But following in the footsteps of Rick Perry, Rick Perry really started to re-formulate the government, and create a kind of clientless system because he was in power for so long. And he inherited a lot from Bush.

But Greg Abbott has used the COVID pandemic in a really fascinating way. Because a lot of people who get worked up about vaccine mandates and all this stuff, they're saying, "It's the government's coming for my freedoms. The government's trying to extend its power." But what Abbott has done is he has declared a state of emergency since the beginning of the pandemic ongoing to today. Which might sound surprising to people who are living here, where you very rarely see a mask or anything like that. The government very much acts here like COVID-19 is not still here. And Abbott has used the emergency powers that he asserted at the beginning of the pandemic to basically wage war on all other sources of authority in the state. While I don't know about his presidential ambitions, he has fundamentally reshaped the way the system of government in Texas works. And it's not really one of those things that comes up at the top of the headlines, because it's very slow and methodical. But it's going to have very long-term consequences, especially if the Republicans are able to maintain power here.

The Trump Variants Part 1 - Some More News - Air Date 11-9-21

[00:20:18] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** I wanted to go all the way back to Ron DeSantis, an establishment Republican trying to make it in a MAGA world.

As Trump's deputy campaign manager, David Bossie, put it, "I put Ron DeSantis in the same category of defenders, both defending the president, and being somebody who works best on offense to help forward the president's agenda."

This isn't, like, scandalous, and it's a common exchange relationship between politicians and a president. And, during this time, it proved to be an extremely smart move. Like, say what you will about all these caustic wads, they are definitely calculating, and we should not underestimate them.

But, unlike most presidents, there's a certain point-of-no-return here that I think is interesting. Courting Trump's base wasn't something you could do noncommittally, but rather, a very hard line you'd have to cross.

[00:21:02] **COMMERCIAL:** Everyone knows my husband, Ron DeSantis is endorsed by President Trump, but he's also an amazing dad. Ron loves playing with the kids.

Build the wall.

He reads the stories.

Then Mr. Trump said, "You're fired!" I love that part.

He's teaching Madison to talk

Make America Great Again!

People say Ron's all Trump, but he is so much more.

Big league. So good.

I just thought you should know.

Ron DeSantis for governor.

[00:21:32] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** Extremely embarrassing. That's not, like, an SNL sketch, but an actual campaign ad Ron did in 2018.

According to his close friend, Kent Sturman, DeSantis figured out what made the president notice people, and he did those things. And I guess the key word there is "did;" as in, Ron DeSantis would fully embrace the Trump way of doing things, all the way down to the racist dog.

[00:21:55] **Ron DeSantis:** The last thing we need to do is to monkey this up by trying to embrace a socialist agenda with huge tax increases and bankrupting the state.

[00:22:05] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** That's Ron talking about Andrew Gillum, the Black man he was running against, which

read to many as pretty fucking ghoulish, given this country's long history of comparing African-Americans to monkeys. Yes, that one is by cancel culture martyr Dr. Seuss. Damn that cancel culture, and damn the weird pronunciation of your name, doctor!

DeSantis, of course, later claimed that the statement had nothing to do with race, but, like... Who casually uses the term "monkey this up?" Even in that clip, it sounds like he forced it into his speech deliberately, which, of course, is how a dog whistle works.

But, benefit of the doubt; maybe he just uses and likes the phrase. Maybe he was referring to Air Bud Entertainment's 2016 hit, "Monkey Up!"

Either way, Ron would win this election, and seek out issues that would also cater to the Trump crowd, casting aside actual problems in the state in exchange for solving pretend ones that further this bizarre culture war Trumpist bullshit.

At one point, he signed a bill banning sanctuary policies, despite no sanctuary cities actually existing in Florida before the law's enactment. Just, weird performative stuff.

You can compare this, of course, to his Senate counterpart Marco Rubio's vague anti-wokeness bill, because obviously the pressing issue facing Florida, a state with rising homelessness, and poverty, and a failing infrastructure, are rainbow flag logos and diverse superheroes. Great job, Marco! Truly a man of the working class.

And while I wish I could say that this type of extremely embarrassing pandering doesn't work with their base... well, I can't.

[00:23:35] **Ron DeSantis:** When you look at the Biden, the Brandon administration, in terms of what the...

[Crowd grunt-chanting "Let's go Brandon!"]

[00:23:58] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** Oh, my God, you guys! Just say "Fuck Joe Biden." You can just say that. It's not illegal or anything. Fuck him! Fuck Joe Biden! Fuck him!

See the common thing across the board here is that all of these people base their political careers on being extremely reactive. It's not about governing the people, but maintaining an opposition to the left. You can see this with

DeSantis, and Ted Cruz's Obama years, most of their actions simply being to repeal stuff the president was doing. This was positively vital to their careers, as evidenced by the time Chris Christie dared to credit Obama for his swift response during Hurricane Sandy, and became a fucking pariah in his own party.

You could, I guess, argue that we'd see the same reaction if a Democrat praised Trump, except the opposition to Obama wasn't, like, on moral grounds. With Obama, the right wasn't mad at human rights abuses or drone striking civilians; they just didn't like him, and opposed him across the board. Marxist Obama! They stonewalled him out of spite, and it worked really well.

And after they all accepted Trump as the new front man for the GOP, we saw another shift: Republican politicians who knew that, at some point, Trump would no longer be the president, and could move in to fill his shoes. That meant not focusing on an actual policy, but rather attempting to harness the cult-like base he collected with broad talking points; that culture war, anti-wokeness stuff.

And the reason I keep going back to DeSantis is that, as it stands right now, he is the only conservative politician who Trump's base will consider for a possible presidential pick. In polls that specifically asks who voters will go for in the event that Trump doesn't run, 22% said they would pick Ron DeSantis, although they probably thought they were saying Ron DeSantis.

Compare that with any of the other names, none of which even broke double digits with the exception of one candidate, a "Mr. Unsure." Sounds mysterious! I like him!

The Fight Between Florida and Disney - The Takeaway - Air Date 4-25-22

[00:25:51] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Now, Nadine, let me start with you. What do you make of this bill that the governor signed on Friday to end Disney's special tax status?

[00:25:59] **NADINE SMITH:** Well, what we're experiencing in Florida right now is the adage that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. There's been 25 years of Republican rule under DeSantis. He has consolidated every level of government, from the Supreme Court, to the House and the

Senate, and he acts with impunity. In fact, the legislators could stay home, and he could simply write the laws, and there'd be no difference.

He is essentially drunk with power, and he's made it very clear that this tyrannical temper tantrum is punishment for a company expressing its values, standing up for its people, trying to create an environment that draws top talent. How that is showing up in Florida is we are seeing, not just as an attack on the LGBT community, we are replaying history.

In Florida, we had The Johns Committee that went after civil rights advocates and gay people in the education system; then we had Anita Bryant, who launched her Save Our Children campaign, using the same rhetoric of calling gay people groomers and pedophiles. And she was backed by the moral majority, and their main issue at that time wasn't abortion. It was school integration.

So, once again, we see how these appeals to racial panic and anti-LGBT panic going hand in hand, and they always serve the same purpose, which is to consolidate power by sewing division and whipping up fear.

[00:27:33] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** The other piece is: Disney's been good business. The notion that by revoking this special tax status, there's a real possibility that we're going to see a tax hike for many Florida residents, that does seem to go directly against what conservative lawmakers say that they stand for at their core.

[00:27:53] **NADINE SMITH:** I think the assumption there is that there is a core. Right now, the only thing that motivates DeSantis and the Republican party is power. DeSantis is intending to usurp Trump. His audience is not Floridians. He doesn't care about the fallout for many of his actions. He's speaking to a national audience of his base of people who are terrified in the aftermath of the uprisings after George Floyd's murder, who see a generation emerging that embraces the multiracial future of America. For them, this is their last stand; this is their great white hope; this is the messaging that he brings; that "I will stop this education from existing in our schools. I will erase the things that make you uncomfortable. I will build the wall."

All of these things are a reaction to, not only the Obama presidency, but the demographic reality that we are increasingly a nation of older white people and younger brown people, what they call the graying of America and the browning of America.

That demographic collision is at the heart of the existential panic that is empowering the DeSantises of the world. He's willing to gut Florida's university system, to corrupt any independence of any science-based entities in our state, because his audience is the small-dollar donors nationwide that fill his coffers every time he shows up on Fox News.

I think it's important to say it this way: this isn't about a company getting involved in politics. The companies that are being political are the ones who are keeping their mouth shut, ducking and covering, and hope it blows over. The ones that are not being political are the ones who are actually trying to walk the talk of these values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, who understand what it takes to draw and keep talent.

Corporations are motivated not first and foremost by values that come from the heart, but values that protect the pocketbook. And so, they don't want to hemorrhage talent. The pressure that companies are feeling right now largely has come from within the organizations, saying, "Be who you said you were when you recruited me. Be who you said you were when you trained us and said you were going to create a safe environment where my family will be protected."

There's a reason that the military has said they're willing to transfer military families out of states where their kids aren't safe because of this, the inundation of these anti-LGBT laws. Me and my older brothers were born on military bases in Maine because it was the only base my family could be stationed at.

We're seeing the same constriction of rights, demonizing, stigmatizing.

I will say this: the companies that aren't being political are the ones who will say, "These are our values. We're going to stand up for our people and we're going to push back on things that cause harms."

The Trump Variants Part 2 - Some More News - Air Date 11-9-21

[00:30:59] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** We've discussed it many, many, many times on this show already: that Trumpism might more accurately be described as the early stages of an American fascism, a palingenetic ultranationalist ideology that promotes cultural anxieties around sexuality and gender, cultivates an "us-versus-them" mentality often centered on

ethnic or racial lines, and encourages anti-intellectualism through propaganda and denial of reality.

Fascist parties often coalesce around a single charismatic strong man who becomes the all-powerful leader of the party. Because of this, fascist movements often go hand in hand with centralizing styles of government, like totalitarianism.

[00:31:38] **UNIDENTIFIED MALE:** I alone can fix it!

[00:31:40] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** In her book, "The Origins of Totalitarianism," political theorist Hannah Arendt describes what she calls "The Masses," individuals who live on the periphery of society, and who may have lost their former social identity and emotional bearings as a result of some abrupt political, geopolitical, or economic dislocation. She says, "The term 'masses' applies only where we deal with people who, either because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization based on common interest; into political parties, or municipal governments, or professional organizations, or trade unions."

Put more simply, Arendt's "masses" don't fall along traditional political or class lines, which exist because they share some common interest or political goal. Rather, the "masses" are composed of people who feel disenfranchised by mainstream politics, who don't cleanly fit into one economic class or income level.

Equally importantly, the "masses" become mobilized when their way of life is drastically impacted, by, say, an economic crash, or a climate crisis, or the continued disappearance of manufacturing and other blue collar jobs at the hands of automation and the gig economy.

A big drastic change. Like, if some big monster just snapped their fingers and... Made everyone clones? Something on Multiplicity. You get it.

These people, Arendt says, who are traditionally indifferent to politics, provide a totally fresh pool of supporters for totalitarian leaders to draw from. Then, once mobilized, the masses turn against the established system and its government, since in their eyes, the system never actually did anything for them. And, for a lot of people, fair enough.

This is perfect for the totalitarian leader, who uses the "masses's" fury to tear down the established democratic systems of government and replace them with their own system of authoritarian control.

Trump's administration wasn't actually totalitarian. After all, he lost. For all his efforts to undermine the legitimacy of our elections and cast doubt on long-standing systems of government, our democratic institutions are still standing... for better or for worse.

But it feels clear that Trump's appeal, his rhetorical style, and strategy, were all centered around appealing to a base of supporters who absolutely fit Arendt's definition of the "masses:" angry, marginalized people, who don't trust the system, but do completely trust their "fearless leader."

The problem we're now seeing is that... Well, Trump isn't the president. And maybe won't ever be again. And the problem we're seeing is that none of the Republicans attempting to follow in Trump's footsteps seem to have his "Je ne sais quoi." Whether because their supporters keep dying of COVID, they're fielding allegations of sex trafficking, or just because they're just a weird unlikeable little dude.

In other words, Donald Trump, for some reason, had a charm to him that these other people just can't duplicate. He was, for all of his, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many faults, really good at coming off as natural and likable to his base.

These turds, on the other hand, not so much. In part, I'm sure, because everything they're doing is a pale imitation, rather than a new freshness. A copy of a copy of a copy.

For example,

[00:35:07] **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:** I'm Michelle Fiore, and I'm running for governor.

I spent my whole life fighting the establishment. I was the first female majority leader in Nevada Assembly. And one of the first elected to endorse Donald J. Trump. And you better believe I was attached for it.

Washington Post called me at gun-totin' calendar girl, and Politico Magazine said that I was the lady Trump. And I don't care.

We need outsiders, fighters, not the same old, boring, moderate, compromise, blue blazer politicians.

Let's start with a three shot plan: ban vaccine mandates; ban critical race theory; and stop voter fraud.

The Joe Biden administration is coming after me.

I'm Michelle Fiore, and I'm ready for the fight.

[00:36:01] **CODY JOHNSTON - HOST, SOME MORE NEWS:** Did she drive all the way to the desert just to shoot three bottles? Why are they full? You're supposed to drink them first, then shoot them. And then shoot, like, more stuff. You had a perfectly good TV to shoot. It was right there!

This ad by Michelle Fiore for governor is, like, several metaphors on top of each other. The first being that these ghouls often think of guns as political props, while not seeming actually that enthusiastic about firing them. It's weird to think that anyone could see someone trying so transparently hard to be the next Trump and actually think that they were a viable candidate. Like, even if I was a pro-Trump, gun loving, anti-mask, country-boy Cody, images like this would seem insultingly pandering.

She's even doing her own campaign fraud scam. And, like, come on, lady! Play an original song! You know? Like, big deal! Trump also assaulted women. Give us something new!

For a lot of these lower level people trying to get the Trump vote, there's definitely a large intersection in the Venn diagram of calculating politicians and people who are in need of a serious intervention. I'm not being flippant here. A lot of these folks have a real history of assaults, or threats, or intense interest in conspiracy theories.

And as the GOP moves away from Trump, you're going to see a lot more true-believers instead of opportunists. And they all seem to have a few things in common: the key one being that they have some amount of resources giving them the ability to launch an effective campaign. They're often wealthy, with a background in business, or, in some cases, simply inherited their wealth.

And on top of that, they seem to be extremely lacking in empathy. These two come to mind. Remember them? The one on the right is Mark McCloskey, a wealthy personal injury lawyer, who, as you might've guessed, is running for

Senate as we speak. This is after Roy Blunt announced he will not seek re-election, continuing a pattern where older establishment Republicans are leaving and being replaced by this MAGA era group.

Gee... It would probably be good for Democrats if more Democrats retired, huh? Whatever. Anyway, best of luck to Mark McCloskey, guy who likes pointing guns at protestors, who also thinks that 13 year old rape and incest victims shouldn't be allowed abortions.

There's also Amanda Chase, a member of the Virginia Senate who is currently running for governor. Amanda holds the honor of being the first Virginia State Senator since the eighties to be censured, both the GOP and Dems voting against her after she posted a bunch of wild horseshit about the Capitol rioters being both patriots but also secretly Antifa. Which is it?! It can't be both, you know?

She also took a hard stance against the Derek Shovan guilty verdict, despite even a lot of the right agreeing with that outcome. She calls herself "Trump in heels," and part of her greatest hits include wearing a gun to the Senate floor, and berating a Capitol police officer for not letting her park in a secure area. Like, that second thing isn't even a political gray area. She just... legally couldn't park there.

When she announced her campaign, one of the men cheerfully standing behind her would go on to be arrested with a bunch of handguns, with plans to attack a Pennsylvania vote counting site. They have very real histories of violence and sure seem like they could potentially hurt somebody, or enable people to hurt other people. And they pose a really big problem for the establishment GOP or anyone pivoting away from Trump, because while we're-- fingers crossed-- not likely to see any of them in the White House soon people, like Amanda Chase, and Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Lauren Boebert, all represent the GOPs current grassroots side.

The only reassurance we have right now is that all of these people, so far, just don't seem to have the national charisma that Trump bafflingly obtained.

So again, what if Trump doesn't run? Where will the GOP and his base find themselves?

This dilemma has left a gap for the GOP open for one of two possibilities:

The first is what we're talking about, that in 2024, the Republicans field a presidential candidate who is like Trump, but possibly smarter, someone who can effectively appeal to the Trump base, possibly even one of the people we talked about, or way worse. After all, Trump wasn't a politician but a TV personality, paving the way to some of the darkest of timelines. There are loads of people who are actively trying to do this.

But the second, and equally bad, option, is that they don't find anybody, and the Republicans completely lose control over their base. We're already seeing this with Amanda Chase, who after her bipartisan censure has been flip-flopping between the Republican and independent parties.

Arendt spends a long time talking about what happens to the masses when totalitarianism collapses. And she says that, contrary to what you might expect, the masses pretty much keep keeping on. This is because they're loyal, not actually to the individual leader, or to any particular goal, but to the fictional reality the leader has created for them: a world of conspiracy, of black and white morals, where everyone is out to get them, and only the charismatic leader can speak the truth. Once the leader is gone, they either revert back to their previous state of apathy, ceasing to believe in the dogma for which yesterday they still were ready to sacrifice their lives, or they find a new function, a new cause to throw themselves behind and support, just as vigorously and stupidly as the initial one.

Back to brunch, or onto Lexis! [?].

The repercussions of this are most easily seen with COVID. While Trump was in office, he downplayed the virus, and undermined the necessity of masks, and of the vaccines. And now, republican voters are dying left right and center because they were convinced not to get the vaccine, and now nobody in the Republican party has any ability to control them.

Not even Trump. Breitbart, bastion of respectable journalism, has pivoted to arguing that, actually, the anti-vax movement was a Democratic PSYOP all along as a part of a bid to kill Republicans in a desperate attempt to get their readers to stop dying from an easily preventable virus.

In Florida, DeSantis's approval ratings have dropped [THIS IS NOVEMBER 2021, he's extremely popular now] as Florida's COVID numbers have gone up, in large part because the people who like DeSantis keep dee-ying of the Corona virus, and the people who aren't dying don't like that the governor of their state seems to be okay with people dying of the coronavirus.

And as the pandemic rages across the globe, income inequality in America continues to spike and total climate catastrophe grows nearer and nearer. More and more people are realizing that the status quo is not equipped to fix these problems. Fascists and totalitarians prey on these feelings, on disenchantment with the establishment, and resentment of the people in power, to amass support for their undemocratic political movements.

Because it's easier, you see, to ignore the complicated solutions to these issues, in exchange for glomming to one larger-than-life figure. The question right now is who that figure will be for the GOP. Because that's simply the direction things are heading.

And whoever that person is needs to both toe the political line between the establishment Republicans and up-and-coming MAGA folk while not just seeming like a bad Trump impersonation.

And I don't know, maybe that person just isn't in the spotlight right now, but might be very soon.

David Frum It's Not DeSantis v Disney it's DeSantis v Trump - The Bulwark Podcast - Air Date 4-27-22

[00:43:13] **CHARLIE SYKES - HOST, THE BULWARK PODCAST:** So what do you mean when you say it's not the Sanders versus Disney? It's the Santa's services.

[00:43:18] **DAVID FRUM:** I am strongly of the view that descent is, did not want this fight. He didn't eat. I don't think he wanted round one, which is the fight over the actual original bill. And I am certain, he did not want round two where he punished Disney.

So spectacularly for defying him on, on the bill. Um, He, uh, the on round one, um, Rhonda Sanders was going to run for the Republican nomination on something that was very broadly popular among Republicans and even among many non Republicans, which is the public health authorities went a little mental in 20, 20 and 2021.

And especially on the schools, um, they closed schools. Smart choice was to keep the schools open. And I resisted extremism. I'm not anti-vax although I

don't like to answer questions about it, but I took the backs and we have high rates of vaccination in Florida. I worked with Publix to get back out there and I kept the schools open when a lot of states close them.

You're welcome. That's me at Ron DeSantis, defender of common sense and freedom and freedom. And now he's. So now round one of this fight. You know that guy who kept the schools open, he also is really anti-gay really anti gay and not just, you know, and some of the issues that are kind of that are very controversial now, which has transgender issues and we'll puberty blockers for kids.

But like, he's not sure that gay people should be allowed to teach highschool. And put a picture of their partner on their desk. So that's not where America is. And that's probably not where Ron DeSantis personally is. And it's certainly not a good place to be, but he got pushed, uh, into, um, backing this bill that creates a new identity for him that he really didn't need.

But then. Disney speaks up and suddenly there is this mantra. You know, what you could have done is just shrugged it off, right? Corporations, you know, take pious positions all the time. Look at Toyota saying we won't fund candidates who oppose, you know, who tried to overthrow the 20, 20 election. And then six months later, Toyota is quietly supporting all the candidates who tried to overturn the 20, 20 election.

They take pious positions, they retreat from them. Uh, he must have known that that was the case with Disney, which is a company that leans Republican. That was an important supporter of his, an important supporter of the Republican majority in the state of Florida. Instead he creates this gigantic. Um, uh, that has all of these as heinous consequences for Florida taxpayers for, uh, the bond ratings for Florida state debt.

So who pushed him into this? And I think the real significance of this fight is it's DeSantis, auditioning with the Republican conservative entertainment complex to say that guy. Kept doing things where he drove you to take positions. Kim Kardashian told him about prison reform. He decided. Kim's hot. I want to be for what Kim's for.

She's a real cheese, real honest to God, celebrity. Unlike all these Fox newspapers, I'm doing what Kim says, and now you all have to follow me. I met Megan Kelly, you thought she was the future of your network. I'm going to have a fight with her. Now you have to get rid of her. The sadness is telling that

world, if some maniacal idea pops in the head of a bunch of fortune commentators and via Chris Rufo goes on to Tucker Carlson.

I'm your guy I'll do that for you. No matter how possibly harmful it is to myself with, with Rhonda Sanders, you are the boss with Donald Trump. He's the boss. That's the message.

[00:46:53] **CHARLIE SYKES - HOST, THE BULWARK PODCAST:** It's interesting because of course, you know, the, the narrative, um, around him is that he's strong and that he fights. And this is why there's so much enthusiasm.

You're describing this as demonstrating his submission to this right wing entertainment complex. His his, his willingness to be led by them in, into areas that in fact, um, are political losers, because he does not appear to be reluctant in any way to go along with this. I mean, it's like when they say jump it's like how high, how fast.

And then it feeds on itself, doesn't it? Because then he gets praised. He basks in the glow of the admiration for a while. This is a guy that is actually fighting and winning the culture war battles that Donald Trump only talked about.

[00:47:36] **DAVID FRUM:** Yeah, but, but the thing about politics is you, you really do have to choose your fights and choose them intelligently and choose them.

Remembering that video clips exist. And the fights you have today are recallable six months later. So you want to, you want to choose your fights fighting Dr. Fowchee over reopening the school. That was a great fight to choose because you're dealing with something where both your party and potentially the public are going to be on your side.

But the fight over are you scared that the person who teaches high school history is.

The number of Americans who were still scared of the person who teaches high school history is gay. I mean, Ronald Reagan in, in the late 1970s came out on the other side of that fight, very famous, very famously 1978. It was maybe a close call, but in 2022, and I leaving aside the ethics of it, because as I'm sure to say, cause Stripe.

This is a crazy fight. And the current fight with Disney is worse because it, what it does is if what you want to do is say we're against cancel culture. We're

against content moderation, where the party where our message is freedom, but the freedoms we favored do not include the freedom to criticize the.

That you know, that, that you don't have. I mean, absolutely. You have a freedom to, you know, injure your loved ones by carrying a gun without any training. Yes. For sure. Absolutely. A freedom to stock your former girlfriend with a gun. Yes, of course. That that's in the constitution, isn't it? Um, but, but the freedom to criticize the government without retaliation.

No, we don't believe in that. I mean, it just completely, and, and the, the, the attack writes itself, you know, and that's the question is, uh, under president dissent is, will you be allowed. You know, to criticize the government, that's a powerful line of attack and, and, and he has to see it coming and I don't believe he chose it.

I think he got pushed and, and as to how strong he is, if you're, so if Chris Rufo can push you around, you're not that.

[00:49:35] **CHARLIE SYKES - HOST, THE BULWARK PODCAST:** So there is an ideal outcome for the Sanders, right? I mean, he can negotiate. He, you know, the courts are almost certain to invalidate this, throw it out on one ground or, or another. Um, so he can negotiate a deal with Disney, you know, then he can, you know, or rail against the courts and the bureaucrats for not letting him stomp on.

[00:49:54] **DAVID FRUM:** I totally think that's where this is going, uh, that I, and I think that that was, that was his, his own build escape out just goes into effect in 2023 are supposed to, and it's the bills are studded with, uh, with procedural defects, many of them highly technical, like, did you get the consent of all the business improvement district?

Uh, there's there's a bond issue and why is Disney being so quiet about it? And my guess is not only have their lawyers. This thing is going to collapse, but there, there may even be private conversations between the governor and Disney to say, just give me a little bit of time here. We'll work something out.

[00:50:30] **CHARLIE SYKES - HOST, THE BULWARK PODCAST:** So your bottom line is, this is a DeSantis versus Trump fight for the support of the right wing entertainment complex that they're going back and forth. How is that playing out right now? But I have to say that. But I am struck by how enthusiastic, um, this, uh, this, this entertainment complex is about a DeSantis and even some of the anti anti-Trump folks, you know, the publications like

national review are prepared to do battle on behalf of DeSantis, uh, in a way that sort of was reminiscent of their willingness to defend Trump.

But what is your sense, how this is playing out and as opposed to a real threat to Donald Trump, getting the nomination?

[00:51:07] **DAVID FRUM:** I think it does pose some challenge to him, but here's, here's, what's going on with. The kind of people are most active and conservative conversation have almost zero interests in the world of things.

You know, if you read Rick Scott's 11 point so-called plan for, uh, the Republican future, you know, what's not there. Healthcare is that it's not even like, at least in the past, the words health care would appear. There might not be any, you know, anything about bladder, but. There's no acknowledgement that healthcare, the party that spent a decade vowing to repeal and replace Obamacare, where Heritage and AEI and the other spent together a billion dollars over eight years promising to deliver an alternative.

It's not like it's gone. We're not going to do it. We don't care. We don't think you can because they live entirely in a world of representation. It's not things that interest them. It's images of things. It's things as refracted through social media. So this fight that descends it's perfect. None of the boring, bureaucratic detail.

You're not interested. I mean, it's. Health care. It's not about pensions. It's not about roads. It's not about Dulce. It's about pure animus and representation and arguments about arguments or even better arguments about arguments, about arguments. So that's perfect. The second thing is, as you have observed, so often conservatives have pivoted away from so many things that they supposedly stood for.

And you would think the ability of a corporate entity to express a view on a public policy matter without direct retaliation from the. You know, the pure essence of conservatism, as one knew it in say 1985 that, you know, you know, uh, can a corporation speak out against the government policy without the government trying to take away the corporations.

Yes. That's obviously not a hard one. So the amount of emotional energy you need to execute that pivot. I think that's one of the reasons that people have to be so excited about this, because otherwise, if you weren't in a state, just the words coming out of your own mouth, I believe in freedom, except for the freedom to criticize them.

Um, it's a hard, it's a mouthful.

Summary 5-7-22

[00:53:20] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with the Rachel Maddow show, highlighting some GOP hopefuls, bending the knee to Trump and QAnon in their quest for power skullduggery, compared to the Trump era of old and the coming Tucker Carlson era. The Majority Report looked at Texas governor Abbott's attempts to use the border to raise his national profile.

Some more news looked at DeSantis's embarrassing sucking up to Trump and the overt racism. He used to get elected. The takeaway analyzed the way DeSantis is using his power in Florida, particularly in relationship to Disney. And some more news came back to take a look at the dynamics. of Early fascism and the role of the manipulated masses.

That's what everyone heard but Members also heard a bonus clip from the bulwark podcast, not a usual source for us. The bulwark to be clear is a very anti-Trump, but conservative publication. So think the Lincoln project and all that. And I included this clip for members because I have found sometimes In sort of this narrow lane of analyzing the fall of the Republican party from political party to sort of more cult conservatives who have been able to watch it all happen from the inside, but remain relatively clear-eyed about it. Sometimes have a better analysis than those either watching from the sidelines or from the other side of the ideological aisle.

So I thought this one was worth. To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into your new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive. Sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds, a barrier to hearing more information.

Every request is granted. No questions asked and now we'll hear from you.

Voicemail - Discord Community Member

[00:55:13] **DISCORD USER:** Just finished listening to the recent unions episode. My opinion on why the conversation around the worker's movement doesn't include anything about making jobs something we love and integrate into our lives is because that mentality has been used against workers for too

long. I will not let my passion or compassion be leveraged against me anymore. My top priorities are that I must protect my mental and physical health and provide for my family. With every industry and sector seeming to be struggling with work conditions and adequate pay, just give me a job I can tolerate that pays my bills. Once we have raised the baseline expectations back to thriving wages, actually beneficial benefits, and dignified working conditions, then I will maybe factor in my own love for a particular job.

Final comments on creating workplaces that are conducive to human needs

[00:55:52] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at 202-999-3991, or write me a message to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com. Although now there's another way because the message that we just heard came from our Discord community A community member had that comment about a recent episode and I found it so thought-provoking that I decided to use it on the show.

So to sum up and hopefully not misrepresent what the person was saying, basically the idea of enjoying your job can be used against a person. And that is why they argue that the labor movement really doesn't get into that territory. They don't go around advocating that jobs should be fun or not soul crushing or anything like that. Because as soon as people start getting non-monetary rewards, like having a job that isn't terrible, that can just be used as an excuse to pay a person less. And that's very true. That is extremely true.

I think the first, maybe the most important takeaway from that, is how damning of a statement is that about the dynamics of our labor system -- not the labor movement, the labor system -- that to advocate that a job not be horrifying would take away from one's ability to advocate that we also get paid enough. Those things shouldn't actually be at odds with one another, but here we are.

So, as I said, there are non-monetary rewards. You know, if you don't hate your job or you feel like you're doing something worthwhile and fulfilling in your job, then clearly you don't really need to get paid very much. This is sarcasm I'm using. But this is the natural extension of the idea that goes back a long ways that, for instance, housework and motherhood are so inherently satisfying that we certainly shouldn't consider these tasks labor. Perish the thought that we would think of compensating people for their labor when they're having such a

good time doing it, right? And then women entered the workforce in a large influx and they were offered lower pay, in part, because of all the non-monetary rewards that getting to work offered. Sarah Jaffe, who wrote *Work Won't Love You Back*, which was referenced in our recent labor episode, talks about this phenomenon as part of the "do what you love propaganda" being pushed by large corporations as a conscious strategy to pay people less. If people are supposed to feel fulfilled and full of pride for being in an office worker in a corporation, just think how gleeful someone working at a nonprofit must feel, and just imagine how little we could pay them to do that work, not to mention parenting and all the rest.

So you ended up with this inverse ratio between fulfillment and pay. And probably a hundred thousand articles have been written on, which should you do? Should you follow your passion or should you take the money and do something soul-sucking? Because if what you're doing for work is either really soul crushing -- so think like David Graeber's book, *Bullshit Jobs*, just people who believe that their jobs shouldn't exist, that they provide no value to society. Or maybe you do something that's actively harmful -- you're an oil and gas executive or something, right? You're going to need to get paid more to do those jobs.

Usually the worst your job is for the world, the more you can probably get paid for it. And the same in reverse. I mean, if you're a nurse saving lives, you should basically be paying the hospital for the honor of doing that work. Am I right? More sarcasm.

So this is the scale that we're used to talking about. This gets talked about a lot, the "fulfilling work to harmful work" scale, the "get paid less for doing something good, get paid more for doing something bad." It's ripe for abuse, underpayment, meager benefits, et cetera.

But then there's a separate scale, and this is what I was talking about, which is the "humanizing versus dehumanizing" scale, which could be talking about the actual work involved, but it doesn't necessarily have to be talking about that. And to illustrate this, I saw an interesting exchange on Twitter recently, apropos of, I don't even know what. One person made just a slightly humorous and innocuous comment about how women in a tribal setting would have had to have been doing this tedious work. Maybe that they would have been hand milling grains with a pistle or something, and that they didn't even have podcasts to listen to. Right? Like a little funny comment. And I'm heavily paraphrasing because I couldn't find the original tweet anymore, but that's the basic idea. But then another person showed up and commented that these

women would have done that work, mindless as it was, probably sitting in a circle and telling stories to each other. And so, yes, they kind of did have podcasts to listen to was the response. So when I talk about work that is conducive to human needs, that is more what I'm talking about. Doing mindless work, grinding grain, isn't conducive to human needs in and of itself, I mean, other than helping provide food to eat. But the act of doing the work might not feel fulfilling or it's not fun necessarily, but it can be integrated into other human needs, like social bonding.

And just as a side note, I feel like I need to bring this up, not just today, but, but the other day I kind of feel like I need to bring this up because I don't hear labor organizers mentioned this sort of thing very much. But also I don't know that most people really understand what real human needs are; but, I am beginning to think that we are having a moment in time when a lot of people are starting to figure it out. The last decade or so, we thought social media was going to connect us more, but it tends to make us feel more separate. That was a surprise. And then the pandemic came along and made everyone collectively realize all at the same time, how important in-person interactions are. So I have hope that we're going to start moving in the right direction by demanding that we move in the right direction, because we've all had this realization.

So up until now, I've only heard labor advocates speak about human needs in opposition to specific policies. So here's the best example I can think of. They were fighting against algorithmically-managed scheduling tools that gives people irregular schedules each week. So these are hourly workers, shift workers. And each week they couldn't count on what their schedule is going to be. And they may not even know what their schedule is going to be until the last day of the week, getting ready for the next week, right? And all of that makes it harder for an employee at that place of work to schedule the rest of their lives around their work, like childcare or just organizing activities or planning carpool and whatever it is. And managing one's life outside of work is a human need. And so irregular scheduling is an important issue to fight against, but it is still being framed in the negative. There's no talk about how consistent scheduling would also be good, not just because people would be less scattered or that their lives would be less hectic, but that it would be actively positive by creating work environments in which co-workers could get to know each other better, which I think should be seen, not just as like a little bonus or a little positive, or wouldn't that be nice, but as part of making a work environment conducive to human needs, and that that should be seen as part of the baseline for how we develop and design our work environments.

Framing an argument in that way turns it into a proactive, a positive argument. So it can be part of a positive vision for what we are fighting for, not just part of a long list of things that we're fighting against.

But there are further consequences too. So I was reminded of this: The Onion had a great headline little while ago during all the talk about the Great Resignation, and so The Onion's satirical headline was, "Economists trace Great Resignation to Comedy Central airing *Office Space* constantly during workers' formative years." And so, spoiler alert about *Office Space*, the victory, the characters in *Office Space* enjoy, is not that they end up with work that is fulfilling, but work that is more conducive to their human needs. Being outside, using their bodies to create, spending time with friends. But the spending time with friends is actually something that they could do to some extent back at the office, which helped them develop the comradery and the courage to fight back against the office and ultimately quit. Now I know that The Onion is joking, but employees could very well watch that movie and be inspired to demand something better from their workplace.

But management might watch that and think, Hmm, how can we stop our employees from becoming friends with each other so that they don't rebel against us? And that's where you get to algorithmic scheduling and Amazon's policies that were discussed that I was referring to in the previous episode, where they schedule and employ people in such a way they hardly ever meet the same person twice. And so relationships are basically impossible to forge in that scenario.

So the obvious solution -- and I just have to put this out there -- the obvious solution is that we all work for co-ops, where the workers and the management are on the same side, or are literally the same people. That's how you get rid of this adversarial dynamic.

But for the time being, unions should be demanding more than just good pay, benefits and time off, but also for things like break times to be scheduled in such a way that is conducive to employees socializing with each other. It would be good for the humanity of those workers, and good for the continued development of the kind of solidarity required to maintain support for unionization, to be quite blunt. You know how, when Republicans take power, one of the first things they always do is start changing rules that will help them maintain power going forward. This is like that. Unions should be demanding rule changes that are further conducive to unionization, as well as to the mental health of the people that they're representing, on the grounds, that workplaces should be conducive to human needs. Not fulfilling, not sources of pride, not a

place for you to do what you love so you never have to work a day in your life or any of the other bullshit propaganda that just benefits the management, but workplaces that are conducive to human needs. And geez, I hear myself say that, and I think you could hear that in a couple of different ways: you can think like, oh, that sounds sort of inspiring! Yeah, we need better work environments! Or you could think, we want workplaces that are conducive to human needs; how fucking low is our bar? And we're right back to where we started. How damning is this whole conversation of our entire labor system that, what I think we should be demanding that we are not demanding, is workplaces that are conducive to human needs. Shouldn't that go without saying? And yet, no, it doesn't.

As always keep the comments coming in at 202-999-3991, or by emailing me to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott, for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting.

And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at BestoftheLeft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcasts app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player. And continuing to speak about comradery and solidarity, join our *Best of the Left* Discord community, join the discussion there and maybe spark more hopefully interesting thoughts like the ones I laid out today. And keep sending in your interesting articles, videos, books, podcast episodes, anything like that. Just send those in to me, leaving a voicemail, tweet at us, send me an email, whatever you like. I'm wide open to recommendations of interesting things. I'm always looking for something else to spark interesting ideas.

And with that, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.