

# Republican Perspective

by Ed Manning

## The Party of NO

*"The meek shall inherit the earth, but not its mineral rights." J. Paul Getty*

As a youngster growing up in the steel town of Homestead, PA just 7 miles south of Pittsburgh, the glint of grit particles on the hoods of Fords, Plymouths and Chevys proved the mills were in full production. Around the clock, the men and women of US Steel, Jones & Laughlin and Mesta Machine made the steel and iron necessary to fuel the nation's economy. These were hard working people looking to improve the quality of life for their families. The thought of shutting down a mill due to environmental concerns and putting steelworkers out of a job did not enter the equation. This held true even with the political persuasion similar to Ivory Snow, 99.9% Democrats.

Poor management that failed to embrace technological change and a union that demanded more led to the exporting of thousands of jobs. Retraining is a favorite theme of the political elite but to a 55 year old steelworker it is nothing more than pain and suffering.

Politicians on both sides of the aisle campaign about returning lost manufacturing jobs to America. Few walk the talk, especially modern day Democrats. We can see that with the growth of fracking shale to retrieve large deposits of both natural gas and oil.

Due to fracking, electricity and natural gas prices are so much cheaper in US than other countries that it may lead to "re-shoring" of manufacturing in steel, chemical, fertilizer, plastics, tires; foreign firms are building or expanding plants in the US due to this factor. To my progressive friends, you need not worry about industrial firms "re-shoring" to California. Our energy costs are amongst the nation's highest and coupled with demonic regulations it is a test of a company's sanity to relocate here.

In 2006 many business and government leaders openly worried about the US running out of energy. Wall Street and government officials subscribed to the "peak oil" premise, a Malthusian theory that global oil production had peaked and an era of high prices and short supplies was about to begin. The large integrated oil companies no longer viewed the US as having deposits of oil worth drilling and spent large sums in far away places.

A few larger than life entrepreneurs in Oklahoma and Texas saw things differently. These men believed that the US still had the ability to become energy independent and there were domestic areas worth drilling. With the help of funding from George Soros, they began to try a new drilling technique known as hydraulic fracturing that became "fracking". In the 2012 State of the Union address, President Obama said there was enough natural gas buried in the US to "last 100 years" and that a booming gas industry

would lead to hundreds of thousands of American jobs. There has been no new drilling on federal lands under Obama.

Because of fracking, the US is the largest producer of natural gas in the world and prices have dropped 75% since 2008. US oil production increased from 5 million barrels/day in 2005 to 7.5 million in 2013. Saudi Arabia has become concerned over US oil production and refused to lower its production even though oil supply is currently sufficient. The Saudi's desire to drive energy prices lower so that some independent US drillers will be forced into bankruptcy.

Enter the Party of no. Democratic environmental activists have zero tolerance for the development of fossil fuels. It is a Party that says no to fracking on federal lands, no to drilling in Anwar, no to coal power plants, no to oil power plants, no to the Keystone Pipeline and no to new nuclear plants. Members of the Hollywood Left along with others charged fracking was contaminating ground water. Forget there is no scientific evidence. Radisav Vidic, an environmental engineer from the University of Pittsburgh told Scientific American that "I'll take my chances on winning the lottery over the chances of frack fluid in the groundwater." There have been no proven cases of fracking fluid traveling up and into water tables.

This does not mean that fracking should be free from environmental scrutiny. It is an industrial activity with associated issues of water use/reclamation, noise, diesel emissions, dust, truck traffic, etc. The Democratic Party of my youth would have worked toward finding a compromise to insure the US is limiting its oil payments to despots in the Middle East and Venezuela. It would have realized that fossil fuel energy development was providing middle class employment and upward mobility. But that was a long lost blue-collar Party of steelworkers and mineworkers that "clung to their religion and guns." Today it is the Party of academic, political and super-rich elites.