

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

Elephants, Boy Scouts, and Beer

Bethany Mandel's column in *The Federalist* caught my eye. Mandel argues that Ringling Brothers made a fatal error in deciding to eliminate elephants from the circus. That error was listening to, and trying to satisfy, non-constituents rather than customers.

Mandel reports that the "American institution and backdrop of countless memories" yielded to pressure from animal rights activists like PETA and decided to retire the elephants. The effect was disastrous. Mandel quotes the Ringling Brothers chairman "...when the elephants were taken off the show, the downward trend [in attendance] was much more severe than had been anticipated." They are now folding their tent after 146 years of entertaining American families.

Mandel contends Ringling Brothers made a terrible, although not unusual, blunder: "...they forgot to prioritize the desires of their customer base" and instead yielded to pressure from the noisy Left. She describes "...the average PETA activist: an unmarried, 20- or 30-something...who likely considers having children to be detrimental to the earth..." compared with "...the average circus-goer: a family with several young children, eager to...experience an afternoon of whimsical entertainment...because if tickets cost that much, it better be an afternoon to remember."

Then Mandel shifts to the Boy Scouts of America which "...finally bent completely to left-wing activists, announcing girls who identify as 'transgender boys' will be accepted..." The Scouts "decided to allow anatomically female scouts into its troops and teach its members that, despite biology, these young girls are in fact boys."

Mandel predicts this decision may adversely affect scouting participation. She cites a Reuters poll which revealed that the transgender movement (as measured by responses to the North Carolina restroom controversy) is more accepted on the coasts and large metropolitan areas than in fly-over country. The Reuters poll also showed strong opposition to the transgender agenda among frequent church-goers (although Roman Catholics were split). Further, the poll showed support for "transgender rights" was strongest among young adults who are unlikely to yet have children of scouting age.

As with Ringling Brothers, the Scouts had failed to take into account that "...groups that most favor the societal impulse to change the definition of gender are not the same parents whose kids comprise the majority ..." of scouting participants. Mandel concluded it is too soon to say how the participation in scouting will be affected. But Family Research Council president Tony Perkins gives us a hint: "The time has come for every church and every parent in America to sever ties with the Boy Scouts."

Which brings me to today, Super Bowl Sunday. I read a Business Insider article this morning by Kate Taylor. She discusses a Budweiser ad which describes Adolphus Busch's *legal* entry into the United States and his encounter with anti-immigrant prejudice.

Apparently this 60-second ad is stirring up considerable negative reaction, on the grounds that it is an unveiled stab at those who oppose *illegal* immigration. Folks are tweeting for and against the ad, and there's a boycott in the works. Here's one example: "I drank your product for 30 years and I will no longer drink it you liberal [expletive]."

So generally, the ad should please liberals and displease conservatives. If that's true, this looks like another organization following in the footsteps of Ringling Brothers and the Boy Scouts. Here's why: Surveys have shown that conservatives favor what they believe to be domestic beer. Liberals (when forced to drink beer because there's no Chardonnay on hand) choose imports---maybe even with lime. Further, when liberals must choose among the domestics, they go for Sierra Nevada or a "craft" beer; conservatives stick with the old standbys--Bud, Schlitz, Miller, Coors.

(Yes, I know. You don't need to enlighten me that President Obama had a Bud Light at the 2009 beer summit---a choice probably facilitated by pollsters and focus groupies.)

So it looks to me like Budweiser has made an error similar to that committed by Ringling Brothers and the Boy Scouts: in order to satisfy a political agenda, they failed to understand and prioritize their customer base.

Now I'm going to a Super Bowl party, where I'll be drinking Coors.