TRUMPING THE PARTY

Donald Trump has now said that he would reverse President Obama's executive amnesty for "DREAMers" - illegal immigrants who've been here since they were children - and deport every last member of the Undocumented-American community.

The amnesty for the kids was supposed to prefigure an amnesty for their parents - for what mean old politician would advocate breaking up families? But, as he told NBC's Chuck Todd, Trump plans to keep the families together by deporting every single one of them:

"We're going to keep the families together, but they have to go," he said in the interview, which aired on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday (8/16).

Pressed on what he'd do if the immigrants in question had nowhere to return to, Trump reiterated: *"They have to go. We will work with them. They have to go. Chuck, we either have a country, or we don't have a country."*

Now there's a campaign slogan.

But he's gone beyond that. Trump has - ta-da! - a policy paper:

1. ***A nation without borders is not a nation.*** *There must be a wall across the southern border.*
2. ***A nation without laws is not a nation.*** *Laws passed in accordance with our Constitutional system of government must be enforced.*
3. ***A nation that does not serve its own citizens is not a nation.*** *Any immigration plan must improve jobs, wages and security for all Americans.*

In other words, as every functioning society understood until two generations ago, immigration has to benefit *the people who are already here*. Government owes a duty to its own citizens before those of the rest of the planet - no matter how cuddly and loveable they might be.

The fact that it is necessary to state the obvious and that no "viable" "mainstream" candidate from either party is willing to state it is testament to how deformed contemporary western politics is. Trump may not be a "real" Republican or a "real" conservative, but most of his rivals are not "real" period, as Carly Fiorina would say.

There seems to be some dispute among the consultant-industrial complex as to whether Trump's rise comes from his seizing the immigration issue or because folks are just enjoying the show - like "Breaking Bad" star Bryan Cranston:

"I actually like his candor. There's something so refreshing about shaking up that world that is all

*about being handled and here comes this loose cannon who has terrible ideas and would be a horrible president, but there's something great about his 'I-don't-give-a-s***' attitude that really kind of keeps others honest."*

On the other hand, when it's a subject that both parties are evasive and dishonest about, maybe the issue and the I-don't-give-a-s*** candor are perfectly aligned.

The retort that Trump is not a "real" Republican or a "real" conservative would of course be a devastating criticism had "real" Republicans and "real" conservatives" in Washington managed actually to "conserve" anything during their time in office.

Fiscal prudence? Constrained welfare? Private health care? Religious liberty? There's no point to a purity test for a party that folds more reliably than the White House valet. You see, for the Republican establishment the issue is Trump; for a large part of the base the issue is the Republican establishment.

And among the broader citizenry, where elections are decided, the GOP's complaint is entirely irrelevant. It's not often that I find the pajama boys of Vox.com worth reading, but this Ezra Klein column makes an interesting point:

It's not that Trump is a moderate Republican. It's that he's a moderate, full stop. And he's the kind of moderate that really exists, not the kind of moderate Washington likes to pretend exists.

What, after all, is a "moderate"?

The way it works, explains David Broockman, a political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley, is that a pollster will ask people for their position on a wide range of issues: marijuana legalization, the war in Iraq, universal health care, gay marriage, taxes, climate change, and so on.

The answers will then be coded as to whether they're left or right. People who have a mix of answers on the left and the right average out to the middle — and so they're labeled as moderate.

But when you drill down into those individual answers you find a lot of opinions that are far from the political center. "A lot of people say we should have a universal health-care system run by the state like the British," Broockman told me in July 2014. "A lot of people say we should deport all undocumented immigrants immediately with no due process."

Because the first position is "left" and the second position is "right", the pollsters split the difference and label such a person a "moderate". But he isn't actually a moderate, so much as *bipartisanly extreme*. In practice, most "moderates" boil down to that: They hold some leftie and some rightie positions.

The most familiar type of "moderate" in American politics are the so-called "fiscally conservative, socially liberal" red governors of blue states - Christie Whitman, Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Pataki and (in his Massachusetts incarnation) Mitt Romney. In practice, they usually turn out to be not all that "fiscally conservative" because it turns out the social liberalism comes with quite a price tag.

Suppose there were a countervailing force to the fiscally conservative, socially liberal type? Fiscally liberal, socially (or at any rate culturally) conservative.

Recent elections in Europe suggest there's no shortage of voters who like their welfare checks, free health care, state pension plans ...but don't see what any of that has to do with letting the country fill up with fanatical Moslems hot for sharia and female genital mutilation.

Once upon a time the old left-wing parties represented that interest, but the British Labor Party and most European social democratic parties abandoned that market when they got hot for multiculturalism and diversity.

Is there a similar constituency in America? In other words, people who like their Medicare and food stamps ...but, like Trump, think there are too many unskilled Mexican peasants flooding into a country with ever diminishing social mobility and no hope of economic improvement without a credential that requires taking on a quarter-million dollars in debt.

As Trump's detractors see it, he's just a reality-show buffoon with a portfolio of incoherent attitudes that display no coherent worldview.

But very few people go around with a philosophically consistent attitude to life: Your approach to, say, health insurance is determined less by abstract principles than by whether you can afford it. Likewise, your attitude to the DREAMers may owe more to whether your local school district is collapsing under the weight of all this heartwarming diversity.

Presumably, if you're one of these bipartisanly extreme moderates, which of your incoherent positions is more pressing on election day determines your vote. The question then is whether large numbers of the electorate are as concerned about immigration as Trump purports to be.

Via Mickey Kaus, for example, I found this nugget in a new paper by that David Broockman fellow quoted up above:

On immigration and abortion citizens tend to think the entire range of elite policy debate is too far to the left.

But on abortion one of the two parties at least talks the talk, even if it does nothing. *On immigration both parties are engaged in a conspiracy against the American people. One party gets cheap*

voters and Big Government dependents; the other gets cheap labor and a chocolate on its turned down coverlet in the junior suite.

The Democrats made a smarter deal. The Republicans signed a demographic death warrant. Yet Jeb! and the other alleged non-buffoons in the race have to be dragged kicking and screaming to get beyond the most ludicrous sentimentalist pap on the subject.

If a "real" Republican is someone who toes the party line on a suicide mission, why be surprised that voters seek reality elsewhere?

The experts are still assuring us that the next Trumpian infelicity - after Mexicans, McCain and Megyn - will be the one that causes his campaign to self-destruct. You could be waiting a long time. As Ann Coulter says, the quickest way to get rid of Trump is to steal his issue and run with it.

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