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Republican Internecine Warfare

by Stephen Lendman

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Donald Trump is a caricature of a presidential aspirant. His views on vital issues are way over-the-top and then some. It's hard taking him seriously most often.

He's a billionaire hoping his wealth, bravado and business aggressiveness can put him atop the Republican field in polls when it counts most next year, win his party's nomination for president and beat his Democrat opponent.

At best, he shakes up an otherwise dull campaign. He's a diversion from cookie-cutter politics. The Huffington Post doesn't take him seriously. It relegated his coverage to its entertainment section.

He deserves justifiable criticism for many reasons. Shyness isn't one of them. A self-styled celebrity tycoon, he's outspoken to a fault.

His demagoguery reflects bombast without substance. His comment about Mexican immigrants openly displayed racist hate, saying:

“When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists.”

He wants a “great wall” built to keep them out and “make Mexico pay for” it.

He challenged John McCain’s self-styled war hero status, undeserving and then some. He graduated near the bottom of his Naval Academy class (790th out of 795).

He’s outrageously hawkish, intellectually deficient, temperamental, bigoted, arrogant, unstable, hardheaded, notorious for his legendary temper, and prone to making enemies among fellow Republicans.

During his unimpressive 2008 presidential run against Obama, critics called his stump speeches wooden, halting, mechanical, bumbling, uninspiring, and mean-spirited.

The late Alexander Cockburn once called him “a dunderhead in statecraft, devoid of self control, capricious in moral standards, and an imbecile in his lack of political judgment.”

The more people get to know him, the less he’s liked. He’s an unabashed Bush/Cheney extremist – one of many lunatics infesting Washington.

His self-proclaimed war hero credentials are dubious at best. He’s the son of the late Admiral JS McCain – CINCPAC Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command over US Vietnam forces during the war years.

Critics accused McCain of getting preferential POW treatment because of his father’s position. Others said he collaborated with his captors in return.

An organization called “Vietnam Veterans Against John McCain” for years maintained questions about his time in captivity remain unanswered. Other critics think he’s a war hero in his own mind.

He got 28 undeserved medals (including the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross twice) for flying around two dozen routine combat missions no longer than 30 minutes each, getting shot down, and being CINCPAC commander Admiral JS McCain’s son.

A self-styled soldier’s congressman and senator, he systematically opposes pay and benefit increases for active duty service personnel and veterans.

“He’s not a war hero,” said Trump. “He’s a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren’t captured.”

The late political commentator Molly Ivans called Texas Governor/presidential aspirant Rick Perry “despicable.” She compared him to George Bush saying: “O Please, Dear God, Not Another One” – quoting from a country song.

She exposed his unfitness for any public office, let alone the highest. He blasted Trump calling his remarks “a new low in American politics.” He demanded he “immediately withdraw from the race for president.”

Perry is mindless of earlier negative campaigning. Mudslinging was vicious – often left to surrogates. An influential John Adams supporter said if Jefferson became president, “we would see our wives and daughters (become) victims of legal prostitution.”

A Connecticut newspaper warned he’d create a nation where “murder, robbery, rape, adultery and incest (would) openly be taught and practiced.”

Jefferson supporter/journalist James Callender called Adams a “repulsive pedant (and) gross hypocrite (who) behaves neither like a man nor a woman but instead possessed a hideous hermaphroditical character.”

Earlier presidential campaigns make today’s look tame by comparison. Opponent bashing was unrestrained – no accusations too outlandish to make.

Stephen Douglas accused Abraham Lincoln of being a drunk during their famous debates. He could “ruin more liquor than all the boys in town together,” he said.

Trump stating the truth about McCain not being a war hero is mild compared to presidential aspirants bashing each other either directly or through surrogates in earlier campaigns – notably 19th century ones.

A post-WW II one stands out. Perhaps the most effective negative Big Lie was Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 “Daisy” TV campaign ad effectively saying nuclear war would follow Barry Goldwater’s election.

Johnson won the greatest US landslide presidential victory since James Monroe ran virtually unopposed in 1820.

Negative campaigning works. So does repeating Big Lies ad nauseam. Americans are the world’s most over-entertained, uninformed people.

They consistently replace old bums with worse new ones. Don’t expect the 2016 campaign to be different than before.