

The American establishment and the British royal pregnancy

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The announcement that Kate Middleton, wife of Britain's Prince William and Duchess of Cambridge, is expecting a baby has produced unseemly squeals of delight from the American media and establishment generally.

Why this stupidity? Or is it something more than mere stupidity?

Since we are speaking, first of all, of the American media, of course *there is* the element of imbecility—along with the inevitable effort to divert public attention from social disaster and unending wars and threats of wars.

For months the major television networks, cable channels and weekly magazines have been breathlessly anticipating what ABC News on December 3 termed “the most eagerly awaited pregnancy.” Fox News, owned by Rupert Murdoch, declared itself “delighted” by the “royal pregnancy,” only worrying whether “Kate's medical condition” posed a threat to her health. According to *Time*, “When news of the Duchess of Cambridge's pregnancy broke on Monday, a gasp of excitement went round the world.”

Briton Alex Massie, writing in *Newsday*, noted December 5 that the media in the US was “plunging overboard in one of its periodic obsessions with the British House of Windsor” and that the news from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge was “sending a good part of the American press into a familiar frenzy of twittering, fluttering excitement.”

This same press imputed its own frenzy to the population at large. An Associated Press reporter informed his readers that “An heir to the British throne is on the way—and Americans may be as enthralled as the Brits. This former colony has been riveted by the royal news that the former Kate Middleton is pregnant.” He should speak for himself. To the casual observer, this country presents itself as a sea of indifference to the British royal family's impending expansion.

Without a doubt, however, the various television anchors, gossip columnists and scandalmongers posing as journalists are beside themselves with joy.

CNN's Jane Velez-Mitchell asked her viewers Monday evening, “Are you excited? I am. We've got breaking news... Since the moment they [the prince and his wife] walked down the aisle, rumors have run rampant that the wildly popular couple are expecting. But tonight, a year and a half after their

wedding, we have confirmation—the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are expecting a baby—yay!—and an heir to the throne.”

On CNN's HLN evening show, “Showbiz Tonight,” host A.J. Hammer observed, “Already we've seen the reaction to the news that Catherine is merely pregnant. What if it turns out she's carrying twins? It would be like a nuclear explosion of baby news.” He asked his guest, Rosie Pope, “You can hear my head is exploding, right?”

Pope responded, “My head is exploding, too. It's—I'm speechless just even thinking about it. I mean, the possibility is incredibly exciting, however unlikely.”

White House press secretary Jay Carney told a media briefing December 3 “that on behalf of everyone here in the White House, beginning with the President and the First Lady, we extend our congratulations to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the welcome news this morning out of London that they are expecting their first child.”

Nominally at least, the United States remains a republic. Why should the American president extend congratulations to the British royal family, a collection of wealthy parasites, mediocrities and dimwits, for anything?

The American independence struggle (1775-1783) was an immensely serious, world-historical event. Approximately 25,000 American revolutionaries died in the conflict, 8,000 or so in battle and another 17,000 from disease. As many as 12,000 perished as British prisoners, most in rotting prison ships. Estimates of the wounded range as high as 25,000. The total casualty figure, therefore, is calculated to be at least 50,000, in addition to thousands of civilians. This out of a population of only 2.4 million.

The former colonists declared independence in conscious defiance of King George III and the principle of royalty, on the basis that all men were created equal. The generation that advocated and fought for independence from Britain despised the monarchy as an institution.

For example, the radical Tom Paine, author of *Common Sense*, wrote: “To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and

lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever... One of the strongest natural proofs of the folly of hereditary right in Kings, is that nature disapproves it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule, by giving mankind an ASS FOR A LION."

Thomas Jefferson referred to royalty with unstinting contempt. In 1788, writing to George Washington from France, he observed, "I was much an enemy of monarchies before I came to Europe. I am ten thousand times more so since I have seen what they are. There is scarcely an evil known in these countries which may not be traced to their king as its source, nor a good which is not derived from the small fibres of republicanism existing among them."

In a letter written in 1810, Jefferson noted that not only was the king of England "a cipher," but the entire breed of European royals, like "any race of animals," confined "in idleness and reaction, whether in a sty, a stable, or a state-room," pampered and gratified in every way, deprived of "whatever might lead them to think," had become in a few generations "all body and no mind." Listing the various European kings and queens of the time, he described them as "fools," "idiots" or "really crazy." Concluded Jefferson, with a biblical pun, "And so endeth the book of Kings, from all of whom the Lord deliver us."

The Civil War, the second American revolution, fought against the Slave Power, was also conceived of by the most advanced elements in the North as part of the global struggle against aristocracy and royalty and a blow for republicanism.

Abraham Lincoln argued along these lines: "They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, 'You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it.'

"No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle."

The most profound figures in American culture and social life in the late 19th century shared this hostility to royalty, Mark Twain chief among them. Anyone who has read *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) is unlikely to forget Twain's defense of the French revolutionary "terror" and his somewhat bloodthirsty advocacy of exterminating nobility generally.

Twain also observed, "There never was a throne which did not represent a crime" and "The institution of royalty in any form is an insult to the human race."

In his notebook in 1888, the novelist suggested, "Let us take the present male sovereigns of the earth—and strip them naked. Mix them with 500 naked mechanics, and then march the whole around a circus ring, charging suitable admission of course—and desire the audience to pick out the sovereigns. They couldn't. You would have to paint them blue. You can't tell a king from a copper except you differentiate their exteriority."

So why do the present rulers of America, and their press agents, ooh and aah and wretchedly carry on about the Windsor family, who cost the British people hundreds of millions of pounds a year and whose personal, ill-gotten wealth is simply vast (in 2010 *Forbes* estimated that Queen Elizabeth II's net worth was nearly half a billion dollars)?

The most pertinent answer lies in America's transformed social and economic conditions. The United States is ruled today by a financial-corporate aristocracy, with infinitely more in common with George III and Jefferson Davis than with Paine, Jefferson, Lincoln, the abolitionists, Twain and any progressive figure in US history.

Can anyone imagine the crowd of "Tories" (as those loyal to the crown were known during the Revolutionary War) and "copperheads" (pro-Southern sympathizers during the Civil War) who currently run America standing up to the British monarch or the slavocracy? Not for an instant; they are made from the same human and social material.

America's multimillionaires and billionaires, and their hangers-on, envy Britain's "legitimate" royalty and dregs of a nobility, long for such rank themselves and despise the "common people" with as much fervor as the aristocrats of an earlier age.

They would agree with Alexander H. Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy (and a figure in Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*), who insisted in a March 1861 speech, as historian James McPherson has observed, that the old confederation known as the United States "had been founded on the false idea that all men are created equal." (*This Mighty Scourge*, 2007)

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