



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on January 1, 2013

Happy New Year?

The beginning of a new year is often a time to look forward and look back. The way the future looks, I prefer to look back — and depend on my advanced age to spare me from having to deal with too much of the future.

If there are any awards to be given to anyone for what they did in 2012, one of those rewards should be for prophecy, if only because prophecies that turn out to be right are so rare.



With that in mind, my choice for the prediction of the year award goes to Bret Stephens of the *Wall Street Journal* for his column of January 24, 2012 titled: "[The GOP Deserves to Lose.](#)"

Despite reciting a litany of reasons why President Obama deserved to be booted out of the White House, Stephens said, "Let's just say right now what voters will be saying in November, once Barack Obama has been re-elected: Republicans deserve to lose."

To me, the Republican establishment is the 8th wonder of the world. How they can keep repeating the same mistakes for decades on end is beyond my ability to explain.

Bret Stephens said, back at the beginning of 2012, that Mitt Romney was one of the "hollow men," and that voters "usually prefer the man who stands for something."

Yet this is not just about Mitt Romney. He is only the latest in a long series of presidential candidates backed by a Republican establishment that seems convinced that ad hoc "moderation" is where it's at — no matter how many of their ad hoc moderates get beaten by even vulnerable, unknown or discredited Democrats.

Back in 1948, when the Democratic Party splintered into three parties, each one with its own competing presidential candidate, Republican candidate Thomas E. Dewey was considered a shoo-in.

Best-selling author David Halberstam described what happened: "Dewey's chief campaign tactic was to make no mistakes, to offend no one. His major speeches, wrote the *Louisville Courier Journal*, could be boiled down 'to these historic four sentences: Agriculture is important. Our rivers are full of fish. You cannot have freedom without liberty. The future lies ahead....'"

Does this sound like a more recent Republican presidential candidate?

Meanwhile, President Harry Truman was on the attack in 1948, with speeches that had many people saying, "Give 'em hell, Harry." He won, even with the Democrats' vote split three ways.

But, to this day, the Republican establishment still goes for pragmatic moderates who feed pablum to the public, instead of treating them like adults.

It is not just Republican presidential candidates who cannot be bothered to articulate a coherent argument, instead of ad hoc talking points. Have you yet heard House Speaker John Boehner take the time to spell out why Barack Obama's argument for taxing "millionaires and billionaires" is wrong?



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It is not a complicated argument. Moreover, it is an argument that has been articulated many times in plain English by conservative talk show hosts and by others in print. It has nothing to do with being worried about the fate of millionaires or billionaires, who can undoubtedly take care of themselves.

What we all should be worried about are high tax rates driving American investments overseas, when there are millions of Americans who could use the jobs that those investments would create at home.

Yet Obama has been allowed to get away with the emotional argument that the rich can easily afford to pay more, as if that is the issue. But it will be the issue if no one says otherwise.

One of the recent sad reminders of the Republicans' tendency to leave even lies and smears unanswered was a television replay of an old interview with the late Judge Robert Bork, whose nomination to the Supreme Court was destroyed by character assassination.

Judge Bork said that he was advised not to answer Ted Kennedy's wild accusations because those false accusations would discredit themselves. That supposedly sophisticated advice cost the country one of the great legal minds of our time — and left us with a wavering Anthony Kennedy in his place on the Supreme Court.

Some people may take solace from the fact that there are some articulate Republicans like Marco Rubio who may come forward in 2016. But with Iran going nuclear and North Korea developing missiles that can hit California, it may be too late by then.

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