Politics of Hate and Envy

Part of the progressive agenda is to create hate and envy. One component of that agenda is to attack the large differences between a corporation's chief executive officer's earnings and those of its average worker. CNNMoney published salary comparisons in "Fortune 50 CEO pay vs. our salaries." Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf's annual salary is $2.8 million. CNN shows that it takes 66 Wells Fargo employees, whose average salary is $42,400, to match Stumpf's salary. It takes 57 Wal-Mart employees, who earn $22,100 on average, to match CEO Michael Duke's $1.3 million. At General Electric, 44 employees earning $75,300 a year match CEO Jeff Immelt's $3.3 million salary. For people with little understanding, such differences seem patently unfair. Before touching on the fairness issue, let's look at some high salaries that progressives ignore.

Forbes lists the "Highest-Paid Football Players 2013." Drew Brees, quarterback for the Saints, earned $40 million. If the average Saints organization employee earned $45,000, it would take almost 900 of them to match Brees' salary. Patriots quarterback Tom Brady earned $31.3 million, and Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant earns $23.5 million for playing basketball. It would take the earnings of more than 1,200 workers making $45,000 a year to match the earnings of Brady and Bryant.

But the "unfair" salaries of sports players pale in comparison with movie stars. According to *Forbes'* listing of the highest-paid actors, Robert Downey Jr. earned $75 million from June 2012 to June 2013. Channing Tatum: $60 million. Hugh Jackman: $55 million. Let's suppose the cameraman working with Downey earned $60,000. It would take the salaries of 1,250 of them to equal his salary. Oprah Winfrey's 2012 salary came to $165 million, thousands of times what the earnings of people who work for her are.

Though sports and Hollywood personalities earn multiples of CEO salaries, you'll never find leftists and progressives picketing and criticizing them. Why? The strategy for want-to-be tyrants is to demonize people whose power they want to usurp. That's the typical way tyrants gain power. They give the masses someone to hate. In 18th-century France, it was Maximilien Robespierre's promoting hatred of the aristocracy that led to his acquiring dictatorial power. In the 20th century, the communists gained power by promoting public hatred of the czars and capitalists. In Germany, Adolf Hitler gained power by promoting hatred of Jews and Bolsheviks.

I'm not equating America's progressives and liberals with Robespierre, Josef Stalin and Hitler. I am saying that promoting jealousy, fear and hate is an effective strategy for leftist politicians and their followers to control and micromanage businesses. It's not about the amount of money top executives earn. If it were, politicians and leftists would be promoting jealousy, fear and hatred toward multi-multimillionaire Hollywood actors, celebrities and sports stars. But there is no way that politicians could usurp the roles of Drew Brees, Kobe Bryant, Robert Downey Jr. and Oprah Winfrey. That means celebrities can make any amount of money they want and it matters not one iota politically. Do you think President Barack Obama would stoke the fires of hate and envy by remarking that he thinks that "at a certain point, you've made enough money" — as he did in a 2010 Quincy, Ill., speech — in regard to the salaries of Winfrey, Brees and Hollywood celebrities?

Why the high salaries? Ask yourself: If a corporate board of directors could hire a person for $45,000 who could do what a CEO could do, why would they pay CEOs millions? If an NFL team owner could hire a person with the athletic ability and decision-making capacity of Drew Brees for $100,000, why would he pay Brees $40 million? If some other actor could have created as many box-office receipts, why would movie producers have paid Downey $75 million?

There's another important issue. If one company has an effective CEO, it is not the only company that would like to have him on the payroll. In order to keep him, the company must pay him enough so that he can't be lured elsewhere.

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