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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Beautifully said, Anne. Since this is so long and well-written, I'm preparing it as a Viewpoint piece. I found a brief bio online, but please let me know if you would prefer different wording. All the best, Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Planet Hank is at our door

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

'What Hank Poitras — or Planet Hank — is practicing is propaganda for profit: selling division, selling resentment, selling a version of masculinity and patriotism that depends on someone else being humiliated. He's not building community; he's mining it for content.'

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

ON OCT. 18, at the GOP counter-rally to Chester's No Kings protest, Hank Poitras stood in front of about 60 people and did what he always does: sold himself.

11 If you don't know him, Mr. Poitras runs a brand called
12 "Planet Hank" out of Brattleboro — part podcast, part "news"
13 channel, part traveling self-promotion tour. He's the new chair of
14 the Brattleboro Town Republican Committee and has spent the
15 past few years filming people at their lowest — struggling with
16 addiction, poverty, and mental illness — and uploading those
17 moments for clicks. He wraps it in talk about "transparency" and
18 "citizen journalism," but it's exploitation.

19 Even the Brattleboro Police Department — which he
20 often films — issued a public statement making it clear they don't
21 collaborate with him and condemning his racist, divisive
22 comments. Mr. Poitras has a well-known history of racism,
23 homophobia, and discriminatory rhetoric.

24 * * *

25 NOW HANK POITRAS is trying to grow the brand beyond
26 Brattleboro, testing new markets for outrage. During his speech in
27 Chester, he mentioned his online platforms more times than he
28 mentioned Vermont. He told the crowd where to find him, how
29 to follow, how to "support the work."

30 He promised to take pictures with anyone who wanted
31 one — a local meet-and-greet at the Fullerton Inn for his own
32 media empire. He bragged about his "fans." He said he "cared
33 too much about women" to allow legal prostitution, mocked
34 electric-car drivers as "frogs that are supposed to be gay," and
35 waved off "LGBT issues and the Hamas war" as if they were
36 trivial distractions.

37 Between the punchlines, he called to the audience, "See
38 you online. I need you to come defend me in the comments."

39 That's the business model laid bare. Every argument,
40 every confrontation, every public stunt becomes raw material for
41 content. Conflict equals engagement. Engagement equals clicks.
42 Clicks equal sponsorships. The cruelty is the point — and the
43 profit.

44 * * *

45 IT SHOULDN'T BE overlooked that Mr. Poitras has ties with
46 Americans for Prosperity (AFP), one of the most powerful right-
47 wing political networks in the country. Founded and financed by
48 billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch, AFP has spent
49 decades lobbying against workers' rights, environmental
50 protections, and public education funding, while pouring
51 millions into electing candidates who promote deregulation and
52 corporate interests.

53 In Vermont, AFP has tried to rebrand itself as a
54 "grassroots" group, but its agenda remains the same: weaken
55 government, privatize public goods, and amplify culture-war
56 narratives that keep working people divided.

57 When someone like Mr. Poitras aligns himself with
58 Americans for Prosperity, it's not accidental — it's strategic. AFP
59 provides the ideological scaffolding and funding network for
60 personalities like him to thrive. His brand of performative outrage
61 serves as a local echo chamber for a national machine that profits
62 when communities turn on themselves.

63 * * *

64 WHAT HANK POITRAS — or Planet Hank — is practicing is
65 propaganda for profit: selling division, selling resentment, selling
66 a version of masculinity and patriotism that depends on someone
67 else being humiliated. He's not building community; he's mining
68 it for content.

69 We should be honest about what this represents. Fascism
70 doesn't usually announce itself overnight. It seeps in through
71 spectacle — through people who turn cruelty into entertainment,
72 who dress contempt up as courage, who frame empathy as
73 weakness and market rage as realism.

74 Hank Poitras didn't come to Chester to talk about policy
75 or to listen. He came to convert attention into income and
76 outrage into relevance.

77 The Chester crowd seemed unimpressed. A few clapped,
78 but most looked underwhelmed. And that matters, because it
79 shows something about Chester that he can't fake or buy: People

80 here still recognize the difference between a neighbor speaking
81 in good faith and a provocateur chasing attention.

82 That's why we should respond not with more outrage,
83 but with more civility. Chester doesn't need another provocateur
84 looking to normalize cruelty or to peddle division. What we need
85 is community care and community investment — the kind that's
86 built on seeing and supporting the humanity and decency in one
87 another. We need to resist cynicism with generosity, and
88 spectacle with sincerity.

89 We don't have to buy what Planet Hank is selling.

90 * * *

91 AFTER THE RALLY, Mr. Poitras walked onto my yard, waited
92 until I noticed him, and said, "How'd you like my speech?"

93 When I didn't answer, he grinned and said, "I'll see you
94 online then." So I guess here I am.

95 Hank Poitras isn't just selling himself — he's selling the
96 same toxin Donald Trump has spread across this country: the idea
97 that cruelty is strength and chaos is power.

98 Don't answer the door.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

99 ANNE HENSHAW is an independent educational
100 consultant and advocate for disability rights.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

102

###END LINKS###

VIDEO:

###BEGIN VIDEO###

103

###END VIDEO###

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

104

###END LOGLINE###