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Features

Reviews

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Letters

Eternal Vigilance

In the October 1999 Terra Incognita, I found this blurb: "Advance in preventative epidemiology, from the Reuters wire:"

Welcome to America. Here in America we say "preventive" unlike the British who hold a propensity for extra syllables.

But the libertarian I am says do it your way, whether that way is British English, Canadian English, South African English, or even Indian English. If you want to give Webster the boot that's fine with me.

Bob Williams
Pittsfield Township, OH

Words Like Weapons

I was surprised to see Stephen Cox, wordsmith extraordinaire, politicizing a wonderful word like "liberal." Why call the enemies of liberty "liberal" or "progressive"? I like to think of myself as a liberal — progressive in my thinking, free from bigotry, generous with my wealth, liberal in my charitable work ("a liberal benefactor"), open to new ideas, tolerant of the views and behavior of others, a firm believer in the liberal arts and a liberal education. All these progressive meanings of liberal are taken from a standard dictionary. I say, let's take back the word liberal (and progressive) and return it to the camp of liberty where it belongs. Maybe it makes more sense to call those who are intolerant of new ideas and liberating policies "illiberal" and "reactionary."

I applaud the Mont Pelerin Society, the international society of thinkers created by F.A. Hayek, for bringing back some common sense to political terminology. I see the theme of their next meeting in Sydney, Australia, is "A 21st Century Liberal Enlightenment." No doubt Cox will choose not to attend, being under the impression that George Soros and Al Gore will be the keynote speakers.

I have even less patience with those who continue to use the tired old politically divisive terms "leftist" and "rightist." When you label people, thinking stops. We no longer listen to what the other person has to say, because, after all, he's a "left-wing nut." Equally, those who disagree with us stop listening because we are called "right-wing extremists." Dialogue quickly disintegrates like a Fox News debate. Professor Cox should discourage writers in Liberty from using these politically charged terms, just as we do at FreedomFest, the annual gathering of the true believers. We need to treat people as individuals, not groups. Isn't that the libertarian way?

Unfortunately, Cox is perpetuating the conventional wisdom. For example, misguided political language exists in economics, my profession. In the pendulum view of economic thought, Adam Smith, the advocate of laissez-faire, is on the right wing; Karl Marx, the socialist, is on the left wing. Both are viewed as "extremists." That leaves the "moderate" middle ground to John Maynard Keynes, supporter of big government and the welfare state. Is that

Letters to the editor

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really the ideal we want to teach our students?

In contrast, in my book "The Big Three in Economics," I proposed replacing the defective pendulum model with the Totem Pole. Here Adam Smith is on top, Marx is low man on the totem pole of economics, and Keynes in the middle. Thus, in my new classification system, Adam Smith's philosophy is #1, Keynes is #2, and Marx is last. As Ronald Reagan once said, "There's no left or right, only up or down."

Larry Abraham used to tell me, "Those who control the language win." When the advocates for liberty willingly yield the political language to its enemies, we have lost the war.

Mark Skousen
New York, NY

Cox responds: Mark Skousen is making several good points.

I myself tend to regard "libertarian" as virtually synonymous with "classical liberal" (think Madison, Acton, Paterson, and other people whose names end in "on"). When writing about "modern liberals" (think Obama), I sometimes get tired of posting the adjective, especially since readers can judge what I mean from the context. Yet in company with Isabel Paterson, Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and the founder of this journal, R.W. Bradford, I believe that libertarians should never give up our claim to be the legitimate heirs of liberalism. I can't think of a prouder political heritage.

But I also think there's something to Skousen's idea of omitting political labels and just talking to and about individuals. It would be fun, anyway. And I see reasons for not associating libertarianism with the Right. Bill Bradford often spoke to me about this, emphasizing the fact that "left" and

From the Editor

Like other libertarians, I enjoy speculations about a glorious future of individual freedom. I also take pleasure — a somewhat less reputable pleasure, granted — in speculations about how bad things will get if government continues to expand its coercive power, flouting the basic principles of politics and economics, and of human life. "That'll show 'em!" I muse.

From time to time, however, I succumb to the temptation of Omar's ancient verses: "Ah! Take the cash, and let the credit go, / Nor heed the rumble of a *distant* drum." In other words, enjoy the present; forget about the future.

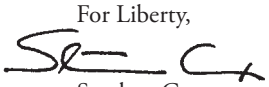
A seductive idea. But then it occurs to me that all humans necessarily live in three worlds — the past, the present, and the future — and the best thing we can do is try to profit from them all: think about them, find our way in them, do our best to understand them — in memory, in presence, or in prospect.

It's like a bridge. As you travel up the great steel arc, you see farther and farther, both backward and forward. You see, with improved perspective, the old neighborhoods on one side of the water — the shabby wooden homes, the prevalence of ugly buildings erected by the state, the lights of emergency vehicles shuttling back and forth, and all the other sad indications of poverty, fear, and the oppression of the people by their rulers. Then you see, in front of you and coming closer, the beautiful region on the other side: wide streets, comfortable houses, flowering trees, docks full of pleasure boats, the marble temples of the many faiths.

At the middle of the bridge, you feel that strange thing called the present, the moment of suspense between past and future, the moment in which one sees both shores, and the harbor too — nothing neglected, but everything seen at once and known for what it is. It's all interesting; it's all a fascinating source of knowledge — and, to the extent that knowledge really can be power, of power too.

For almost a quarter of a century, that's what Liberty has tried to communicate: the problems of the past, the promise of the future, the perspective of the present. All of this, so long as we are free, represents a movement forward, as majestic as the transit of the world's biggest bridge. Hey! Let's go.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox

"right" originated at a time when anyone with what we would call libertarian ideas would have associated himself or herself with the "left." "Right" stood for the party of Church and State; "left" for an emphasis — often a dotty emphasis, but still a crucial one — on individual rights.

The quarrel back then was about the results of the various phases of the French Revolution. It's interesting to me that by the mid-1790s the "Right" was having a lot of critical but true things to say about the way in which ideas of liberty can transform themselves into violently statist ideas. Some on the "Left," such as Acton, learned a lot from the "Right."

Since then, Left and Right have taken innumerable forms, in innumerable situations, in innumerable parts of the earth. This may be a reason for desisting from such words.

Yet John Adams, writing in 1813 to Thomas Jefferson, noted that there seemed always to be two parties in human affairs. The ancient Greeks, he said, pictured Aristocracy and Democracy as "two Ladies . . . always in a quarrel, [who] disturbed every neighbourhood with their brawls. It is a fine Observation of yours that 'Whig and Torey belong to Natural History.' "

Quoting this, I'm not arguing, as Adams may have been, that the object of political debate is always essentially the same — only that political debate tends to shape itself into binary oppositions.

Nowadays, we don't call ourselves Whigs or Tories; but often we call ourselves Leftists or Rightists. The Left, right now, in this country, is identified with strong exertions of government. The Right is identified with the opposite. The fact that there are big exceptions on each side — the Right, for instance, still generally demanding idiotic morals laws and declaiming more strongly against drugs than the Left — doesn't mean that there aren't two ideological parties, or that the existence of these two parties isn't worthy of note. Neither does it alter the general balance of ideas within the parties, so as to justify the impression that there's no important difference between the two. There is.

I'll speak for myself: I'm not a rightist in the sense that I am a San Diegan, a speaker of English, an Episcopalian, or even a fan of "South Park," but I would never call myself a leftist or someone indifferent to the formations of Left and Right. I think decisions like this are important for individual people and cannot be wholly ignored.

Labels? Sure. All words are labels, and all words can mislead. It depends on context.

A Complex Challenge

Charles Barr's article, "Complexity and Liberty" (September), significantly broadened the discussion about what we humans and our cultures are really like and what that means for libertarians. I have often wondered why my fellow libertarians, usually so analytical, tend to stay away from this subject when "The Party of Principle" and other libertarian slogans such as "liberty" and "freedom" clearly have little traction with the voting public. Libertarians certainly cannot compete with the two major parties and remain libertarians. Similarly, libertarians cannot hope to join with and bring principles to parties whose nature is purely opportunistic. The question is what would it take to bring the voting public to libertarian principles? Or, to put it another way, will the voting public's motivations ever lead to a libertarian society? What motivates human beings in the first place? The article gives us many clues to help answer this last question, but stops short of the answer.

A complex system such as the economy and its surrounding culture has to have initial conditions. What are those initial conditions? They are most likely few and simple. In fact, I think there are only two. First is the instinct to group. Grouping leads to safety and the availability of sexual partners. The second is the instinct for stability. In other words, protect the group at all costs and keep changes to a minimum. Why? Because it takes about 15 years to find a mate, give birth, and raise a child to maturity so he can care for himself. Thus the culture formed by these two initial conditions is very sticky, very difficult to change no matter how dysfunctional it may appear to outside observers.

Politicians have used fear to successfully pander to these instincts for all of recorded history. In the present-day U.S., more government promises and more rules and regulations than can ever be paid for, or even understood, have emerged. With the total federal debt and liabilities at around $100 trillion and rules and regulations operative in their hundreds of thousands, a colossal debt liquidation and severe instability probably lie just ahead. Such events could trigger the first collapse on record of an industrial society and lead to where collapses always lead, into the arms of a great leader.

Like emergent behavior, libertarianism is counterintuitive. The idea that free people freely transacting with each other can form stable, secure societies is simply not a part of our instinct. Such thoughts are only held or even considered by libertarians and Austrian economists even though many others seem to sense that free markets maximize wealth. Can libertarians change and somehow become the mainstream? I think not. The mainstream is populated by expert opportunists and interest groups who will not be easily dislodged. These groups have, after all, emerged over the years through the action of complexity.

If all this is so, maybe the only libertarian strategy that has any hope of working is to stick with principles and get ready to offer an alternative to the approaching instinctual panic into totalitarianism (Barr describes this approach as "continually exploiting opportunities to enlarge the sphere of liberty, wherever and whenever such opportunities arise."). Just as the Founders took advantage of an historical opportunity to form a new kind of society, libertarians might soon get the chance to do it again. What is our program if the opportunity arises and why will it be accepted as offering more security and stability than the great leader alternative? In this context, promoting "principle," "liberty," or "freedom" has no meaning. These are intellectual constructs; security and stability are instinctual. Vowing to end or cut any government program is a losing proposition for the same reason.

Jim Kluttz
Lafayette, CO

Lincoln Logs

Norman Ball's idea that modern warmongers can gain a better perspective of their trade by studying Lincoln is suspect. The fact that this country's number one coffin-filler is consistently rated as the number one president is

telling of the spiritual and moral plane on which we operate. Obviously there is some message that to achieve greatness as a president, a lot of people must be killed — as long as the cause is just, be it slavery, terrorism, spreading democracy, or weapons of mass destruction.

As the sesquicentennial unfolds, libertarians and "conservatives" will continue to give Lincoln a pass when referring to totalitarian presidents and continue to genuflect at the altar of political correctness. The idea is that he "saved the Union" and "freed the slaves" and what he did for both was "worth it." Why recoil in horror at Madeleine Albright's famous remark that 100 thousand Iraqi children's deaths were "worth it?" Why object that 5 million Iraqis have been killed, maimed, or displaced? Lincoln accomplished his greatness with 600,000 deaths, the destruction of a self-sufficient agrarian culture, and the annihilation of the spirit of the Constitution. Later, his heirs would carry out the destruction of the letter of the document as well. The only rationalization that supports Lincoln's behavior is that the ends justify the means. As Thomas Sowell points out in a recent article: "If you believe that the ends justify the means, then you don't believe in constitutional government."

War wagers of today already take their lead from Lincoln's tactics. Sheridan devastated the Shenandoah Valley so that "a crow flying across it would have to carry his provisions," and Sherman said that he would "make Georgia howl," and that he would "bring every Southern woman to the washtub." They carried out pillage and destruction of civilians throwing civilization back into the Middle Ages. The side which most disregarded the rules of chivalric combat won Mr. Lincoln's war, and in so doing pioneered a field known as "total war" whose contribution to civilization is dubious. Dr. Moritz Busch in his "Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of His History" tells the story that General Sheridan attended a banquet given by Chancellor Bismarck in 1870. Sheridan, who had been with the Prussian staff as an unofficial observer, remarked that he favored treating noncombatants with the utmost severity. He expressed that "the people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war." From the military policies of Sherman and Sheridan, there is an easy step to the war conduct of the Nazis and an even easier step to the "shock and awe," "carpet bombings," drone bombings, and sanctions posted against many nations by the imperialistic government in our once-great country today.

I have not to date found a better explanation of Lincoln's handiwork than that of contemporary essayist and poet Wendell Berry in "Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community":

> The Civil War made America safe for the moguls of the railroads and of the mineral and timber industries who wanted to be free to exploit the countryside. The work of these industries and their successors is now almost complete. They have dispossessed, disinherited and moved into the urban economy almost the entire citizenry: They have defaced and plundered the countryside. And now this great corporate enterprise, thoroughly uprooted and internationalized, is moving toward the exploitation of the whole world under the shibboleths of "globalization," "free trade," and "new world order." . . . The aim is simply and unabashedly to bring every scrap of productive land and every worker on the planet under corporate control. The voices of the countryside, the voices appealing for respect for the land and for rural community, have simply not been heard in the centers of wealth, power, and knowledge. The centers have decreed that the voice of the countryside shall be that of Snuffy Smith or Li'l Abner, and only that voice have they been willing to hear.

David Ware
Yorktown, VA

Ball replies: Perhaps Mr. Ware is practicing his outrage for next year's Civil War sesquicentennial. Indeed he makes some compelling albeit peripheral points — though I suspect 4 million slaves (1860 census) would question the "self-sufficiency" of the "agrarian culture" to which they were compelled to offer their uncompensated labor.

But what overwrought Southern apologia it is to saddle Lincoln with time-zero status on the path to modern warfare, as Mr. Ware appears to do. War and its dubious "advancements" date at least to Sun Tzu. For example, in "Lincoln on Trial," Burrus M. Carnahan suggests Lincoln's 1861 authorization of the bombardment of Baltimore (in the eventuality Maryland seceded, which it did not) compelled Gen. Winfield Scott to consider reprising his Mexican-American War tactics, specifically the 1847 bombardment of Vera Cruz (during which, it was estimated, 80 Mexican soldiers and 100 civilians were killed.) In 1847, Lincoln was an Illinois congressman who, as it happened, opposed the Mexican-American War.

Gen. William Sherman, with Grant's acquiescence, made the grim calculation that, if the will of the people could be broken, their "organized armies would soon collapse" (Russell F. Weigley in "American Strategy from Its Beginnings through the First World War"; from "Makers of Modern Strategy," Princeton University Press, 1986.) The essence of Sherman's contribution to modern military science was this: by disrupting behind-the-lines infrastructure — including the collateral murder of women and children — fathers and husbands (who just happened to be soldiers too) would offer less spirited resistance on the battlefield: hardly one of mankind's more ennobling epiphanies. That Sherman's "hard war" tactics occurred on Lincoln's watch owes more to the inevitable "advances" of military science than to the occupant of the White House during those inevitable advances. Lincoln is a dependent variable at best.

Wendell Berry's point is well-cited: the governing arc of American history is economically determined. Indeed the 20th-century marriage of profit and war may have found its unholiest alliance yet in the modern military-industrial complex. Certainly Lincoln inhabited this arc. But what American historical figure hasn't? Why not implicate Lincoln in the siege of Leningrad while we're at it? He bears a modicum of historical responsibility for that too.

My piece had less to do with the deterministic nature of history than the contrast in temperaments between a circumspect, war-wearied Lincoln and a brashly impulsive George "bring it on" Bush (not to mention the ideological confusion of his successor, Obama) when, in fairness, the latter had the advantage of history to ponder the hard-

won forbearance of the former, and not vice versa. Mr. Ware and I might agree that the wisdom of leadership has not enjoyed the same advances as military science over the ensuing century-and-a-half.

Puncher's Chance

I so consistently agree with Bruce Ramsey that when I find him taking an opposite position on something my first thought is, where did I go wrong? But upon reflection — I remain in disagreement with his "Pick Two" (Reflections, August).

I am one of those LPers in Washington state who shouts outrage over a top-two primary system which has banished third parties from the final ballot. I do see his point that the new rules discourage protest votes and force all voters to make real-world choices. But is channeling the electorate toward the middle of the spectrum really a good thing? In his liberal Seattle congressional district, he points out, a November contest between an "entrepreneurial" and a liberal Democrat favored the moderate. But in rural areas, the final contest will often be between moderate and conservative Republicans, and the moderate is more likely to win here as well, picking up votes from disenfranchised Democrats and Greens. This may cut against rabid neocons and religious nuts . . . or against fiscal conservatives and Ron Paul supporters who are trying to make inroads. And what about the strategy of LP candidates running right or running left by emphasizing different ends of the agenda to defeat a bad liberal or conservative in a close election? We tried it at least twice, making the last governor's race a cliff-hanger, and actually accomplishing it once, though to dubious effect (helping to elect Maria Cantwell).

At any rate, that option no longer exists. Currently out of favor in the LP is the view that our main good is to grasp the fickle eyeballs of the electorate every fourth November and do what we can in between. Actually winning elections is a chimera. But whether trying to win or just proselytize, being off the field for the main event is hardly a gain for liberty, and certainly no gain for free choice.

Scott Semans
Issaquah, WA

Feel Like a Number

In a September Reflection, Andrew Ferguson makes surprising accusations against Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Arizona. Let me say first that since I live in a determinedly statist society (and getting worse by the day), I prefer law enforcement to be conducted locally by an elected local official to any other real solution. I have come to like Sheriff Arpaio for his pragmatism and for his sense of humor. I also believe that prison should not be fun or comfortable. I think the idea of dressing violent offenders in pink is almost genius. Some of his ideas turn around and bite Arpaio on the backside, I know: after he bragged that he had the only female chain-gang in the world, there was so much competition to be on it that he had to discontinue the program.

I am astonished by the following sentence in Ferguson's contribution: "It's the sort of attitude that cheers on racist thugs like Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio when he 'gets tough on illegals' *detaining every Latino in sight even though half (or fewer) of the ones he pulls in are in the country illegally*." (Emphasis mine.)

If Ferguson has hard numbers — or even semi-hard numbers — on Arpaio's racial profiling, I wish he would divulge them, and their sources. It would certainly change my mind on the man and on his actions. I think evidence of any such actions occurring more frequently than rare accidental instances would also disgust many who, like me, don't want to line up with "racist thugs," in Ferguson's words. If Ferguson does not have any figures, his tirade is just gossipy slander and he should not have committed it.

Jacques Delacroix
Santa Cruz, CA

Ferguson responds: Hard numbers are difficult to obtain since Arpaio (sheriff of Maricopa County, not of all Arizona, no matter how he likes to style himself) shows as little concern with proper record-keeping as he does with the civil rights of those hoovered up in his expensive anti-illegal "sweeps." Arpaio vastly overstates his arrest numbers, seemingly adding on a couple thousand more every time he's in front of a camera. As of February, according to KPHO-CBS 5, he was claiming arrests of 37,000 illegals, but at least 31,000 of those were detained by other agencies and merely processed by detention centers in Maricopa County. A further 4,000 or more were taken by Arpaio's "human smuggling" task force, which aims at stopping coyotes rather than illegals; these immigrants, once released, will assuredly be on the next windowless van back over the border and thus potentially swell Arpaio's numbers even more.

According to that same KPHO report, of the "almost 700" arrests actually made during Arpaio's first 12 sweeps, "about half . . . were for immigration-related violations." A June 21 Arizona Republic article, meanwhile, notes that Arpaio's first 15 sweeps netted 932 arrests, of which 708 — regardless of what they were being arrested for — were unable to show documentation. Hence Mr. Delacroix is technically correct: during these sweeps, in which Sheriff Arpaio is able to cherrypick those locations he believes most saturated with illegals (fast food restaurants, Home Depot parking lots, Hispanic-dominated neighborhoods), he does not mistakenly arrest a citizen or legal immigrant in one out of every two cases. He does it one out of every four.

That distinction is, I suspect, scant consolation for the (at minimum) 224 who were arrested merely for being Latino while in Joe Arpaio's line of sight. This includes people such as Dan Magos, a citizen since 1967 who was pulled over, frisked, and berated by a hopped-up deputy; Sergio Martinez-Villaman, a Mexican national with ID card and proper visa jailed 13 days without bond; and Manuel Ortega, a legal immigrant pulled out of a car and cuffed four hours (aggravating a recently broken wrist) while the white driver of the car went free. It includes as well the entire staff of a Burlington Coat Factory raided just last month, shutting down the store for half a day to net a whopping three illegals (who were, obviously, holding down gainful employment). If these aren't enough "rare accidental instances" for Mr. Delacroix to forgive me the "gossipy slander" of my tirade, then I encourage him to turn to Google, where many, many more await his perusal.

Maybe that's why Sheriff Joe and

continued on page 53

Reflections

Hydrophobia — It just occurred to me that the same type of people who want national healthcare prefer drinking bottled water. Why do they trust the government to deliver healthcare, when they don't trust it to deliver simple clean drinking water? Shouldn't healthcare be left in the hands of the capitalists, the same people you trust to package the most crucial element of life? — Tim Slagle

Braking bad — Some months back, Toyota was crucified in the mainstream media and in hearings before Congress (led primarily by representatives who had accepted campaign money from the United Auto Workers), in part for inexplicable and uncontrollable acceleration in its cars. People tearfully recounted stories about their Toyotas accelerating even as they pushed their brake pedals as hard as they could. This was presented to the public as another obvious reason to buy cars from Government Motors.

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) shows that those reports of uncontrollable acceleration are dubious. The DOT went over the information contained in data recorders from dozens of Toyotas involved in accidents purportedly caused by sudden acceleration, and found that in all of them, the throttles were wide open and the brakes unused at the time of the crash. It appears that the drivers in these accidents were jamming down the accelerator, while thinking they were hitting the brakes.

This isn't a new phenomenon: 20 years ago, a similar rash of complaints was lodged against Audi, and the drivers were later found to have simply pushed the wrong pedal.

The DOT did the investigation, please note, with no advice from Toyota, either about the selection of the crashes to investigate or the interpretation of the data.

Do I have to add the punch line? The mainstream media largely ignored the report. — Gary Jason

Jersey fresh — This August, New Jersey did away with every aspect of car inspections except emissions testing. New Jersey inspections used to include checking brakes, tires, lights, turn signals, and windshield wipers, among other things. According to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, each of the old inspections cost the state (taxpayers) $21.95. For emissions only, inspections should now drop to a cost of $3.24 each.

The NJMVC claims that this, and a few other measures, will save the state $17 million. And New Jersey needs the savings. Like other states, after decades of endless spending, it can't make ends meet. Newark's mayor has even proposed eliminating toilet paper in city offices to meet the budget.

In an article describing the change, a NJMVC spokesman said, "When you're facing the kind of budget issues that we are facing, you have to look at every penny."

Really? Why not let New Jersey *taxpayers* look at every penny? No doubt, the state could cut the pennies that make up the spokesman's salary. Or the pennies that make up the cost of running the Motor Vehicle Commission itself. Why stop there? How about Health and Human Services? Housing? The Division of Youth and Family Services? Unfortunately, the list goes on and on. — Marlaine White

Eye of the beholder — Recently I came across the MSNBC.com headline " 'Double Dippers' could enable what they fear." Aha, I thought, this truculent news website is finally tackling the important story of malfeasant government employees who go on retirement pay (sometimes with added disability benefits), then take a different government job and collect both pension and salary.

But MSNBC.com operates under a different definition of "double dipper" than I do. The story — actually an Associated Press wire piece — focused on "politicians, economists and analysts who foresee back-to-back recessions." It blamed them for causing the country's and the world's economic woes by scaring "people into holding tightly onto their wallets."

Irreconcilable difference. — Jim Walsh

"Vote for me twice, shame on *you*!"

Path not taken — The iconoclastic Christopher Hitchens has been in the news, both because of his new autobiography, "Hitch-22," and because he was recently diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Since he is famed as an atheist, a debate has even erupted over whether people should pray for him.

Although I have not followed Hitchens' career closely, I admire him. That admiration began shortly after I met him in 1981.

I was a new "associate economics editor" at BusinessWeek magazine. The editor-in-chief had a fixation on industrial policy, the idea that the government can pump up the economy by selecting winners and subsidizing them. So one of my early assignments was to attend a conference on industrial policy sponsored by the Wharton School. It was a great experience (sharing a cab ride with Peter Drucker was a highlight), and I came up with a couple of suitable news items.

Christopher Hitchens was there, too, checking out the latest foibles of capitalism for The Nation. He and I attended a press conference given by Reginald Jones, the chairman of

General Electric. In the course of his comments, Jones discussed a transaction that GE was involved in, observing that the other company had tried to "jew us down" on the price.

I could not believe my ears. It violated every standard I had been taught from childhood. Although I was aware of the expression, I had never heard it stated, at least never publicly and certainly not by a titan of corporate America. Jones's stature, which had been modest before, sank precipitously. I was horrified but also embarrassed — for him, for his erstwhile impressive General Electric, and for American business in general.

But nothing was said about it at the press conference. And I didn't mention it in my writing. Mentally, I treated it as an awful mistake and pretended it had never happened. Christopher Hitchens, however, rose to the challenge.

In his article in The Nation, he coolly considered the expression at some length, as well as the significance of its use by a leading business executive in a public forum. Speaking as a visiting Brit, he mused that he had thought this kind of talk was frowned upon in America, but unfortunately, perhaps it was not.

I saw then that Christopher Hitchens and I, while both journalists, were moving in different directions — I, treading the beaten path; he, the trailbuster. And so it has been!

— Jane S. Shaw

No comment — Watching the way in which the mainstream media treats issues is a source of endless fascination. To say that the established media are biased to the Left falls far short of the truth. It is more accurate to say that the *Weltanschauung*, the worldview or mindset, of the establishment media is so deeply leftist that it literally cannot register anything that doesn't fit that mold. A recent case illustrates this bias anew.

It has to do with the John Cochran VA Medical Center in St. Louis, which mailed letters to over 1,800 past patients, giving them the fascinating news that they may have been exposed to HIV and hepatitis. It had to send out the warning notice after discovering that staff members had cleaned dental instruments improperly.

Now, this is amazing: many hundreds of people made to fear exposure to life-threatening diseases because of sanitary ineptitude — yet hardly any comment appeared in the mainstream media. Compare this to the ObamaCare debate, in which even one case of private healthcare screwing up could make the news. Whole stories were built around one person who claimed that she was driven to bankruptcy because of high medical bills, or a young man with tears in his eyes because his mother couldn't get health insurance.

This sort of journalism — the endless critique of private healthcare providers for minor or supposed failures — drove

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

Cliches: you can't live with 'em, and you can't live without 'em.

That's a cliche, too. But some cliches have earned their right to exist. Think of all those expressions in the "too" series: "Too clever by half," "Too good to be true," "Too smart for his own good," "Too big for his britches," and so forth. And I can't imagine a world in which I wouldn't be able to respond to a difference of opinion by remarking, "That's what makes horse races."

The fact that many people fail to understand me when I produce that old chestnut only means that some cliches ought to be revived. When was the last time you heard "Who's going to bell the cat"? But nothing could be more useful than that expression for those meetings when somebody finally has to be chosen to do something hard — in current parlance, to "take one for the team."

Of course, even useful cliches should be employed sparingly. And there are a lot of cliches that have no business existing in the first place.

I've just been looking at a news report about the American geologist whom the Chinese communists (the Chicoms, to revive a good old cliche) tortured and sentenced to eight years in prison for "endanger[ing] our country's national security." The Associated Press described the victim as "a meticulous, driven researcher." "Meticulous" has never become a cliche, but "driven" now has. This summer, I even heard it in an ad for somebody running for Congress on the Republican ticket. This man is considered qualified because he is "driven."

Clearly, there's something unhealthy going on here. Until 2010, "driven" was never used in a morally complimentary sense. To call someone "driven" meant that he or she was a fanatic or borderline lunatic. It appeared in such expressions as "driven to commit crimes," "driven by his lust for alcohol," "driven by his political agenda," and "driven by his demons." Now, somehow, it's supposed to mean something good.

Why? Maybe it's because of the rough economic times we live in. Many people work two jobs, and many others work hard just to find work. So now it's an honorable thing to be "driven." But that doesn't mean it's a good thing. Actually, it makes good people look like cows or horses, and it transforms fanatics into angels of light.

But "driven" will continue to increase and multiply. So, unfortunately, will "MOU." No, that's not the sound that a cow makes; the thing is pronounced "em-oh-you," and it means "memo of understanding." You're lucky if you haven't heard it already; but now your luck has run out.

Before this summer started, I heard it only in connection with contracts between unions and my university. An MOU specified, sometimes in great detail, the practical effects of a contract. By late May, however, I was forced to listen to those three deadly syllables at every meeting I attended. Somebody would be talking about how the department of economics had worked out a new course in conjunction with the department of mathematics, and somebody else would ask, "Have they finished their MOU?" Then people would open the question of whether X committee had worked out an MOU with Y committee, and whether the vice chancellor's old MOU had yielded to a new MOU, and soon there was nothing but a chorus of MOUs.

the healthcare debate that allowed the Democrats to ram home ObamaCare. But when government healthcare had colossal failures, they never entered the debate.

Here's another story. Consider the curious case of J. Christian Adams. To understand it, take yourself back to the 2008 election. At a polling place in North Philly, members of the New Black Panther Party evidently harassed and intimidated voters. The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division charged three members of the group with violating the federal Voting Rights Act. But after Eric Holder was installed as the nation's attorney general, the case was largely dropped.

This led Mr. Adams, a DOJ prosecutor, to resign and blow the whistle. He has claimed in interviews that the policy in Holder's DOJ is one of not pursuing complaints about violations of civil rights unless the alleged victims are minorities and the alleged perpetrators are whites.

From within the DOJ emerged a story that Adams was a disgruntled conservative ideologue unhappy with (and unpopular among) his colleagues. Adams has heatedly denied the charge, pointing to the fact that he was recently promoted.

Little of this has gotten play in the media. A story about a whistleblower who resigns and openly makes a serious charge about a controversial decision by the organization he was employed by, members of which then attack him personally, would be puffed up mightily if that organization were a business. But if it is a DOJ under neosocialist rule, no comment is made.

— Gary Jason

Signs of the apocalypse — I watch C-SPAN while getting dressed in the morning. Callers address comments and questions to an official or expert in some field. The listener gets fascinating insight into the state of economic understanding in this country, ranging from good down to aggressively ignorant. Some callers are articulate; others irrelevantly pad their ramblings with bits of autobiography.

Today (July 27), the guest was Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. One caller asked him whether it is appropriate to spend government money on political advertising, specifically on signs along highways celebrating federal "stimulus" as paying for the construction work. LaHood replied that the signs are not compulsory on local authorities, that precedents for them exist, and, especially, that making the signs provides jobs in local businesses. Really! Jobs, the all-purpose justification! One might as well advocate government monitoring of right-wing talk shows on the grounds that it would create jobs for censors.

Jobs are not desirable for their own sake, or because they use up human effort and creativity. Jobs are an aspect of the great process whereby people specialize in producing particular goods and services to exchange them away for the products

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A memo of understanding? Who's understanding what? Am I negotiating with you, or do you just want a description of what I intend to do on my own? This morning I got a request for "an MOU on the classes your program plans to teach next year." That meant, I supposed, that somebody wanted our list of courses; but I was afraid to answer, for fear of making a contract.

"MOU" is well on its way to replacing "mission statement," which was the last great bureaucratic mania. That may be progress. Some contracts are necessary and helpful, but nothing good ever came out of a mission statement. A few years ago, I walked into a church and saw, posted on the wall of the narthex, a thing that I instantly recognized as a mission statement. The plastic coating and the funky, self-conscious typography left no doubt. I didn't pause to read it; it might have been only a hundred words long, but there are some things you know you'll never be able to finish without a trip to the hospital. You'll fall into a coma before you get to the last full stop. So I confined myself to laughing about it. At that point, one of my companions revealed the horrible truth: she had not only served — for nine months! — on the Mission Statement Committee; she had actually enjoyed herself.

When you're faced with a declaration like that, your mind immediately summons an army of sarcastic remarks. "You must have enjoyed *yourself*; you couldn't have enjoyed that committee." "I guess it's better than being pregnant." "Purgatory is real after all." Et cetera. But I settled on a simple "Why?"

The answer amazed me. "Oh," she said, "it makes you think about what a church is for."

That silenced me. The only alternative to silence was to ask, "Why the *hell* were you frequenting a church, when you had no idea what a church is for? Did you think it was a movie theater or an art museum? Maybe a supermarket? How many hours of meditation did it take for your committee of sages to decide that a church is, after all, a church? And just how stupid do you think you are?"

I could have put the same kind of questions to the makers of mission statements about public schools, prisons, divisions of motor vehicles, and all the other organizations that are now on a Mission. A mission statement is an institution's confession that it has trouble justifying its own existence. An MOU, on the other hand, is at least a concession to the principle of contract. It's supposed to be an agreement, freely entered into. How libertarian an MOU can seem!

In practice, however, it's something else. The other day I complained to a university administrator about the sudden prevalence of MOUs. "Where did these things *come from*?" I asked. "Well," she explained, "people used to take each other's word. Now they want it all on paper."

I suppose she's right. But notice the context. MOUs, like mission statements, are creatures of bureaucracy. They are redundant evidence of what we already knew, that individuals can often be trusted, but bureaucracies, never. Redundant evidence — and desperate, hopeless remedies. How do we make certain that a church will act like a church? Get it to put up a mission statement. How do we get a lying bunch of labor leaders to keep their word? Negotiate a 9,000-word MOU, thus creating 9,000 words for them to interpret in any way they like. Mark my words, by the time you read this, the marriage counselors will be advocating that every couple create its own MOU.

The purpose, of course, would be to increase the couple's "transparency." And there's another ominous cliche: when you hear that word, you'd better run. Whoever advertises his progress toward "transparency" (A) knows that he's been fooling you; (B) intends to keep on doing it. He's the same kind of person who used to say, "Now, I'm going to be perfectly honest with you"

of other specialists. Production of some things constitutes demand for others. These exchanges take place, however, not by barter but through the intermediary of money and credit. When the money and credit system malfunctions, exchange, production, consumption, investment, and employment suffer.

Since, for good or ill, government dominates the money and credit system, it has a responsibility to understand and if possible remedy the malfunctioning. Nowadays, uncertainty and fear about government policy prompt business firms, banks, and even consumers to hang onto their money rather than invest, lend, and spend it. This disruption to the money and credit system and so to the great process of exchange is what requires understanding and remedy. To glorify, instead, the ad hoc creation of jobs is pathetically superficial.

— Leland B. Yeager

Take a number — According to an AP story, researchers have discovered that in all probability lines in emergency rooms will get longer as the new national healthcare plan takes effect. The AP claims that Medicare patients make up the majority of emergency room admissions, and the bill will expand Medicare enrollment.

This comes as no surprise to those of us who believe in simple economic theory. When something is perceived as free, a limit is removed on how much of it people will use. The cost of healthcare tends to keep a lot of hypochondriacs out of the doctor's office. (It has also been a boon to the vitamin and supplements market.) But once these people no longer have to pay for a doctor to listen to their fictional ailments, they will swarm the system. It has happened in Canada, and it has happened in Massachusetts, where a similar healthcare bill, passed in 2006, has overcrowded emergency rooms.

Massachusetts learned that just because doctor visits are paid for doesn't mean there will be a doctor to visit. Fixed prices alter the supply-demand curve, because busy doctors aren't allowed to charge more. Hence, increased demand will not increase the supply of doctors. So all the newly covered hypochondriacs resort to the emergency rooms.

But wasn't the crowding of emergency rooms one of the tenets that healthcare reform was sold on? Once more, Americans have bought something that the used-car salesmen and the ambulance chasing attorneys who make up the political class have sold to them. And much like other unscrupulous businessmen, the salesmen will disappear into the night, when we try to enforce the warranty. — Tim Slagle

Et tu, Janet? — On July 15, Janet Napolitano, head of Homeland Security for the Obama administration, made the ultimate betrayal of her own state in favor of national Democratic politics.

Obama, as you know, is suing Arizona because of its anti-illegal-alien law. Meanwhile, leftist groups throughout the nation are trying to organize a boycott against Napolitano's home state, Arizona.

Napolitano's betrayal came during an interview with Greta Van Susteren of Fox News.

"As a former governor of Arizona," Van Susteren asked, "do you think those boycotts should be ended?"

"That's up to those who are mounting them," Napolitano replied.

I've often wondered what Napolitano has on Obama. The whole country has been laughing at her for months, yet she continues her career of ridiculous gaffes — claiming, for instance, that all is well with homeland security every time a terrorist attack either happens or is thwarted by someone who has no relationship to her own agency, or saying that the southern border is better controlled than at any time in the

— indicating that he usually isn't honest at all, and thus strongly suggesting that there's no reason for you to believe that he's going to start being honest today.

By now, there probably isn't a bureaucrat or politician in the country who hasn't promised complete transparency in his own dealings or bitterly lamented its absence in others'. Obviously, somebody's not being transparent. And what exactly does "transparent" signify? One way of judging the value of an expression is to see whether you can visualize its meaning. If somebody tells you, as many small charitable organizations do, "Our books are open for inspection; stop in at our office any business day between 9 and 4," you can visualize yourself showing up and looking through the columns of figures. But if somebody tells you, "Our organization is fully transparent," what are you supposed to make of that? If he wanted you to understand it, why would he put it that way?

Besides, do you really want anybody's affairs to be fully transparent? What I picture when I hear that word is somebody living in a building with clear plastic walls, even for the bathrooms. And look. If you're a politician, I don't want to know all the silly things you do and say. I don't want to take my time to watch you through your plastic walls. I don't care to listen while you tell your chief of staff, "I'm really not in favor of repealing the drug laws, but I guess I'll have to vote for repeal, because Cox will attack me in Liberty if I don't." All I want you to do is repeal the drug laws. And I'm well aware that you may not be able to do that if your dealings are fully transparent. "Transparency" is therefore at the bottom of my agenda.

Well, maybe not right at the bottom. There are even worse cliches. I'm thinking, for instance, about "It's for the children!", the slogan of all people who want to raise taxes. This is one of a group of political cliches that includes "family values," "diversity," and "revenue enhancement" (a phrase synonymous with "taxes"). These cliches emanate from various circles, but I think of them all as members of the Obama class, because Obama's distinguishing political characteristic, like that of Bush, is to persevere in counterproductive causes. He'll keep maintaining that his "stimulus" plans are "growing" the economy and "creatin' jobs for all Americans" until his last day in office, and that will keep the associated cliches alive.

There's another class of cliches that Obama uses but that bears the name of a much more important man. I refer to the Orwellian cliche, the political cliche that means the opposite of what it's supposed to mean. Thus, "freedom" means slavery, "truth" means propaganda. For Obama (as for most politicians — why should he get all the credit?), "invest in America" is a good way of saying "give me all your money, and I'll throw it down a rathole." For him, "dialogue" means "listen to me"; and "comprehensive reform," as in "comprehensive immigration reform," means "keeping me in power" by "creating a path to citizenship" for people likely

past. But now I wonder what Obama has on her, if she's unwilling to express the slightest sympathy for her own state.

And by the way, can't we call a moratorium on the particular rhetorical ploy that Napolitano used? It's not just an evasion; it's an expression of disgusting arrogance. It's infuriating. Suppose your business were being picketed by a bunch of strikers, and you asked a friend, "Do you think they should be doing this?", and he replied, "That's up to them." Your husband is suing you for divorce? "That's up to him," your sister says. You're black, and you see your neighbor reading literature from the Klan. "I guess that's up to them," the neighbor comments. Pontius Pilate took the same line.

— Wayland Hunter

Life without the state — At FreedomFest this summer I took part in a debate where I was given five minutes to make a case for liberty without government, or the state. That's a challenge, but I think I can do it in even less time here.

The term "anarchy" means literally to be "without a ruler"; being without a ruler may be a cause of disorder, but disorder is not a part of the meaning of anarchy. So we should ask whether being without a ruler entails foregoing law, or foregoing the security of life, liberty, and property? The answer is, it depends. It depends on the presence or absence of other institutions, and those institutions generally do not depend on the state.

The state, the dominant form of rulership that has almost completely displaced the others over the whole planet, was canonically defined by Max Weber as "that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a certain territory, this 'territory' being another of the defining characteristics of the state."

It is quite possible to think of order in the absence of this "state." Consider four arguments for stateless freedom and order.

1. Law and order have actually existed without states. You don't have to turn to obscure cases in medieval Iceland or Ireland or 19th-century Nevada mining camps. Most of the law and order we observe around us comes from nonstate initiatives. Commercial law is overwhelmingly the product, not of state legislatures, but of private parties ordering their affairs. Debts are overwhelmingly collected by private collection agencies, not by the state. The common estimate is that there are at least twice as many private police — security guards — as police employed and empowered by the state. The overwhelming majority of fugitives from the legal system who are returned to custody are caught by private citizens, bounty hunters employed by bail bondsmen, who are also private citizens. That happens with a tiny fraction of the violence routinely employed by state-empowered agents.

2. What incentives does a monopoly have to produce good products? Monopolies of any kind have little incentive to cut costs, lower prices, increase quality, and so on. Why should the producers of law and order be any different? Why should the state monopoly of violence produce order in a particularly efficient or effective way?

3. States systematically create crimes without victims. Indeed, the definition of a crime is an act against the state. If I were to assault someone, the aggrieved party in any resulting criminal case would be the state, not the person I assaulted. Observe that states systematically expand their powers to punish behavior for which there is no complaining victim. No one turns himself or herself in for smoking pot or having consensual sex or engaging in thoughtcrime. So states employ vast armies of spies, snitches, and surveillance teams to uncover that behavior and punish it. They get away with it by making the victims pay the bill. The costs of their

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to vote Democratic.

Like "MOU," "path" is one of those cliches that emerged from a bureaucratic context, appearing to challenge it but actually reinforcing it. The idea is that modern bureaucratic life is so complicated that "paths" need to be laid out for the people blundering through it. They're like Dante's pilgrim, trying to get out of the wilderness of this world, except that their divinely appointed guides aren't Virgil and Beatrice; they're the bureaucrats themselves, topped by the Great and Wonderful Bureaucrat of Oz, Barack Obama; and of course the pilgrims never do get out. If I were an immigrant, I wouldn't trust Obama to plot my path to citizenship, or anywhere else. Be that as it may, I think we've heard more than enough of "comprehensive" — though we're certain to hear more of it throughout his tenure.

Well, this is a good, though decidedly pessimistic, place to end, but I have to mention two cliches that mean absolutely nothing, yet have stuck themselves to 2010 like pieces of gum adhering to a busy person's shoe. The words are "green" and "sustainable."

Ecological cliches are always lies. I mean, why is milk from Safeway less "organic" than milk from Whole Foods? It's all just cow juice, and if you don't keep your "organic" milk in the fridge, it will soon prove to your nostrils how very organic it is. I know that different things are done in feeding the cows or something, but why don't they find an expression that says *that*?

"Green" goes several steps farther. To me, a "green job" is cutting down trees so that people can make houses out of them. Literally, there's nothing greener than heaving a wad of paper or a past-prime sandwich out of your car window, so it can rot by the side of the road. I don't like that behavior, but don't tell me that it's "greener" to hire a bunch of losers to pick up the refuse and let it rot, if it can, in a landfill, instead of the lovely median strip of I-75.

"Sustainable"? Let me tell you about "sustainable." The cafeteria at my college decided to start winning "sustainability" awards. Its method was to forbid all plastic cups, saucers, wraps, etc. Also virtually everything made of paper. Only "sustainable" stuff was allowed — metal utensils and ceramic dishes.

Sustainable? Why? What was sustaining what, and for what purpose? If one wanted to take food out, which most people do, one had to take out the metal and ceramic as well. And that's what people did, although it's pretty hard to carry a ceramic bowl of hot soup across campus without a plastic cover, unless you don't mind getting medical bills. It didn't occur to anyone that all the artifacts of human sustainability that were taken from the cafeteria, hundreds a day, cost energy to produce. If they were returned, they cost energy to wash. If they were kept in offices or dorm rooms, or simply thrown away, it took more energy to replace them. Was that "sustainability"?

You tell me. And send me your own reports from the front — you've probably seen more sustainability than I have.

victimization are called "taxes." When you eliminate states you make it harder to prosecute or punish so-called crimes without victims. That's a big plus for a friend of liberty.

4. States systematically create the conditions that appear to legitimize their existence. Crises, wars, and the like are exploited by states to legitimate the expansions of their own powers. As Thomas Paine noted in "The Rights of Man," volume 1, "In reviewing the history of the English government, its wars and its taxes, a by-stander, not blinded by prejudice, nor warped by interest, would declare, that taxes were not raised to carry on wars, but that wars were raised to carry on taxes."

I would, of course, rather have a strictly limited state than the kind of state we have today. I also believe that we can do better. I prefer a world without wars, without taxes, without the systematic injustice that comes from any body of persons insisting that they are sovereign, that is, that they are above the laws. I prefer a world of ordered liberty, the rule of law, and peace. And in that world, there are no states.

A postscript on private versus state-empowered police:

How many people are killed by those different bodies of law enforcers? The incentives facing the different categories of parties are fairly clear, but data on this and related questions are very hard to come by. In the 2001 report of the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice, "Policing and Homicide, 1976–98: Justifiable Homicide by Police, Police Officers Murdered by Felons" (Jodi M. Brown and Patrick A. Langan, March 2001, NCJ 180987), it is stated that "Police justifiably kill on average nearly 400 felons each year." It is very doubtful that private police have anything like that large a toll.

The definitions used by the authors of the Department of Justice Study are telling: "In this report, killings by police are referred to as 'justifiable homicides' and the persons that police kill are referred to as 'felons.' These terms reflect the view of the police agencies that provide the data used in this report."

The significance of defining all those killed by police as felons and all killings by police as justifiable homicides will not, I am sure, be lost on the readers of Liberty.

— Tom G. Palmer

Rating confusion — Of course we all know the law of unintended consequences, but some of us don't know that Robert Burns — Scotland's eternal poet laureate — said it better: "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men / Gang aft agley."

Example: the new Obama regulatory package that went into effect in late June makes rating agencies like Fitch, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's liable for bond ratings. In other words, they too can be called to the courtroom upon default or interest nonpayment of the bonds. God knows they're not angels; they are often paid by the bond issuer, which appears to beg for bias. And clearly they and their bloated ratings are partial perps of the housing bubble. But now they're scared witless by this new regulation. Consequently, says The Wall Street Journal, they refused to rate Ford's planned asset-backed bond issue. Ford naturally withdrew the issue.

Can you imagine the interest that would need to be paid on unrated bonds — packages of auto loans, in this case? And do you think that revived the Obama stimulus? Rather, it was an undertaker to the fiscal corpse. Bye, bye new jobs for salesmen, automotive assemblers, mechanics, and parts manufacturers.

Believe it or not, the SEC noticed the chaos with the Ford bonds and other issues. They are considering a temporary solution, by which bonds could be issued without ratings. No explanation was offered as to why this wouldn't affect interest rates. But don't worry; the SEC is charging to the rescue.

— Ted Roberts

VAT's all, folks — A fair description of President Obama's agenda is that it is "neosocialist." This means that his goal is not necessarily to nationalize all industries (though he has nationalized a few) but that he wants a European-style welfare state. He wants us to be like France or Italy, with massive taxes, a wide web of subsidies for individuals and companies, and such a stranglehold of regulation that the state virtually controls all industry, administering the whole by a Mandarin army of bureaucrats.

The goal of neosocialists is to dominate the economy and siphon off the lion's share of wealth and power for themselves, while leaving business owners the chore of actually running the day-to-day operations. Neosocialism is fun for the neosocialists: you get to rule and live well, and when anything goes wrong, you can just blame "Big Business" or "Wall Street."

Neosocialism explains what we see in Europe: slow growth, because socialized businesses are inefficient; technological stagnation, because entrepreneurs can't easily start innovative new enterprises; permanent high unemployment, because the hurdles that the state puts in the way of firing employees make companies reluctant to hire them to begin with; and an aging population, because people can't afford children in the face of confiscatory taxes, and feel that they don't need them since the state will take care of them in old age.

In terms of the growth of government, Obama has certainly advanced his agenda. ObamaCare was a milestone: it set in place the takeover of one-sixth of the economy. But so far, we haven't seen much growth in taxation. He has created programs and spent money like nobody before him, but he has financed it all by borrowing. However, the Taxman Cometh.

Obama has made no secret of his intention to let Bush's tax cuts die in December. But he well knows that income tax hikes won't bring in nearly the revenue needed to fund his neosocialist agenda. "Soaking the rich' — even if the government killed them all and confiscated all their wealth — can't generate that much revenue, for the simple reason that there aren't enough rich people.

The income tax tends to bring in about 19% of GDP, even when rates on upper income wage earners are high. But Obama has pushed spending to 25% of GDP. So he is adroitly maneuvering to put in place the welfare state's preferred tool, the value-added tax (VAT). Point man in this sneak VAT-attack is Obama's White House economic adviser, Paul Volcker, who started the ball rolling by saying that both the VAT and an energy tax have to be "on the table."

The VAT tax is common in Europe. It is a kind of sales tax, but one that is applied at every stage of the chain of production and distribution. Statists love it, because it is hard to evade, and even more because it is largely "invisible": the

citizen only notices that everything costs a lot, for which he blames business, not government.

Obama's pitch will be that a VAT tax of just 1 or 2% would be nothing to consumers. But his veracity is negligible, and anyway, what does observation show us? In the EU, VAT rates range from a low(!) of 15% to a high of 25%. The average rate throughout the EU zone is nearly 20%. European countries started implementing VAT taxes a half century ago, and in every case, the VAT rate only went in one direction — up.

And that is about where Obama would have to set it, to manage his enormous deficits. The latest estimates (which are low, because the full cost of ObamaCare has yet to be reckoned), is that the new deficits will total $12 trillion over the next decade, but an American VAT would bring in only about $250 billion a year at the 5% level. So we would need a VAT set at least at 20% (in addition to all the other existing taxes) to pay for the new deficits.

Now, some are suggesting that while the VAT is a painful solution to the deficits, if it is combined with spending cuts, it might be acceptable. But again the European history of VAT makes this very dubious. The countries that introduced a VAT tax did not use it to reduce deficits or to offset other taxes. Instead, governments used the new funds to increase spending programs, always spending more than the growth in new revenues. In fact, spending rose 45% faster in VAT nations than in those without a VAT. — Gary Jason

Bureaucratic undead — The financial reform bill that Congress passed into law this summer was Christmas in July for statist hacks. Three noxious examples:

1. The "reform" creates 20-plus offices of "minority and women inclusion" at various agencies of the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve, etc. These specious satrapies will demand that agencies hire more women and racial minorities and grant federal contracts first to women- and minority-owned businesses; they will also apply so-called "fair employment tests" to regulated banks and other financial institutions. Such programs are stale stuff — the legalistic two-stepping that enforces quotas without acknowledging them as such.

2. It crudely lumps the financial derivatives used by airlines, utilities, and other businesses to hedge against commodity price fluctuations together with Wall Street trickery. This adds insult to injury — some of the businesses that use derivatives legitimately lost money to shady investment banks during the past few years. Now, they are being regulated as if they were i-banks themselves.

3. It creates a new "consumer protection agency" whose mission and means have been defined only sketchily. Some observers have noted that this agency may essentially replace ACORN as the preferred haven for "social justice" activists and other low-rent partisans. While the agency was promoted as a champion for consumers against predatory mortgage lenders, its charter gives it oversight of almost any company that has a "financial relationship" with consumers.

This last item is typical of corrupt legislation. It's a sleeping monster: even if a future Congress reverses most of the reform's mechanics, the "consumer protection" tripe will be tough to eliminate. It will likely be left in place, as the Community Redevelopment Act was, through the 1980s and early 1990s, to lie in wait until some future opportunity to make trouble.

Reversing this sort of vampire law requires more than just legislative counterbalance. The only way to drive a stake into its heart is to eliminate it completely, word for word.

— Jim Walsh

Killing in the name of — I keep waiting for one of those reporters interviewing the latest captured Muslim terrorist to ask the obvious question: Why exactly do you think that murdering and maiming random victims is going to convince non-Muslims that they should convert to Islam? Is it that you think there is some undeniable appeal to the idea? You mean, I could get to murder and maim others, too? Wow! How can I resist an offer like that?

I guess that's why I would make a terrible news reporter. I would want to ask questions that actually question the logic of those I interviewed, maybe even make them admit that their only goal is (in this case) to use brute force to intimidate others to accede to their irrational demands — demands proven to be irrational by the fact that otherwise they would be supported by rational arguments rather than threats of violence.

Then there are those who say they want to kill Americans on American soil because other Americans have killed Muslims in Muslim countries. I would want to ask them: What about Muslims who kill other Muslims in Muslim countries? Do you want to kill them, too?

But then, no matter what the interviewee answered, my last question would be: admit it, isn't the whole purpose of your actions to force others to do what *you* want, regardless of whether they agree that *your* interpretation of Islam makes any sense? If not, how exactly do you think any rational person could conclude otherwise? — John Kannarr

The new trickle-down — Economic histories tell us that a principal difference between Herbert Hoover and FDR, in responding to continuing unemployment in the early 1930s, is that the latter believed that the federal government should directly support individuals working on public projects. This Hoover refused to do, instead bankrolling institutions with the expectation that such largesse would "trickle down" to those unemployed. It didn't work then.

So far Barack Obama has been redoing Hoover, not FDR, contrary to what some of his thoughtless admirers claim. For those still unemployed, statistics reveal that Obama's "stimulus" ain't working now. — Richard Kostelanetz

Pigs at the trough — On July 29, a commentator on Fox News responded to a question from Juan Williams about the amazing amount of money that the Clintons devoted to their daughter's wedding — reputedly $3 to 5 million. Invoking the spirit of American "free enterprise," she said, "They made it, let them spend it however they want. . . . It's nobody's business." No one, not even Williams, one of the smartest people on TV, contradicted her.

Look. Mr. and Mrs. Clinton did not make their money through free enterprise. They "made" it through politics. Specifically, he made it by getting immense fees for giving speeches, here and abroad, before audiences more interested in his political influence than in any wisdom he had to offer.

Our modern-day Trimalchios are signs, like their Roman

original, of a culture's decay. The vast, vulgar wedding — "complete," as a news report said, "with a vegan wedding cake" — is the best argument I've seen for the repeal of heterosexual marriage. — Stephen Cox

Pitchmen — I believe that a major turning point in the decay of the American political world came in the 1950s, when campaign managers shifted away from presenting politicians as statesmen and began selling them by using the techniques of commercial advertising, their idea being that a politician can be marketed and sold to consumers like a bar of soap.

In Connecticut I routinely see television ads, from both Democrats and Republicans, featuring vaguely defined, nondescript, average-Joe types talking about how their candidate is a real American who can get things done. I see rooms filled with crowds of smiling, enthusiastic people holding campaign signs. I see broad, generalized, meaningless slogans such as "change" or "experience" or "someone new" or "leadership" or "education" or "create jobs."

A recent TV ad for the campaign of the bland, boring Democrat Ned Lamont for governor of Connecticut featured the slogan "Education" along with vague promises such as "I will work with teachers" and photos of Mr. Lamont with children. What does such an ad accomplish except the demoralization of the voters? When was the last time a candidate actually stood in front of the camera in a simple, inexpensive ad and said what he believed and why — instead of trying to paint a dreamy, feel-good picture or featuring survey-tested buzzwords with subliminal associations, as if someone were using depth psychology to sell a brand of car?

If voters were presented with candidates' detailed views on the issues rather than the colorful advertising that their campaigns spew forth, the politicians with original, well-thought-out solutions would stand out. This would give libertarians an advantage (which is perhaps one reason why major-party candidates don't take this approach); it would also give the voters a break. It would make it easier for them to make rational choices, instead of gambling on the choice between vacuous sound bites and smiling faces trying to be all things to all people.

I would like to see the day when, instead of spending millions of dollars on colorful campaign ads, all candidates would simply fill out a questionnaire listing in detail their opinions on the important issues, post it on their websites, and let the people who care about voting read each questionnaire and choose whomever they agree with.

Connecticut Republican Senate candidate Linda McMahon is running on the slogan "create jobs," but she has actually posted on her website a fairly detailed plan for exactly how she means to accomplish this (e.g. lowering taxes, reducing government regulations). That certainly makes it easier for me to know what kind of politician she is — and the payoff for her is that it makes it easier for me to consider voting for her.

It is questionable whether voters must demand this approach from politicians or whether politicians must start adopting it in order to attract voters, but it would benefit both candidates and voters, and it would certainly benefit libertarians. — Russell Hasan

The ethics of opacity — The members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) are seeing red. They are outraged — outraged! — that the independent Office of Congressional Ethics spent so much time investigating CBC members last year. CBC member Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH) was moved to introduce a resolution (co-sponsored by another 19 CBC members) that would prohibit the ethics office from releasing certain of its investigative reports to the public. The resolution also calls for barring the ethics office from starting its own inquiries unless someone with "personal knowledge" of wrongdoing submits a formal sworn complaint. No whistleblowers allowed!

Yeah, that will help keep the Congresspeople honest.

Rep. Fudge is very annoyed that the Office of Congressional Ethics nailed her own chief of staff, one Dawn Kelly Mobley, for improper action regarding corporate sponsorship of congressional trips to the Caribbean. But instead of trying to muzzle what few institutions there are to ensure ethical behavior in Congress, perhaps Fudge should try urging her colleagues to be more honest. Just a thought. — Gary Jason

Give generously, or we'll kill this dog — A few months ago I received a curious letter. I put it with some other junk mail and just recently had the chance to go through the pile and open it. To my surprise, it was Charles Schumer writing me on behalf of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, to tell me that he needed my help to stop the Republican Party — to stop "the party of NO." How about that!

To convince me of the need to act, and to buoy my confidence in the party's abilities, Schumer listed the Democrats' "accomplishments" since Obama's election. They "rescued our economy from the brink of collapse," they "continue to work to achieve a sustained and substantial recovery," they "took on the monumental challenge of fighting for meaningful healthcare reform," and they enacted important antitobacco legislation. Important, indeed!

Also included was a bullet-point list of "why [my] support for the DSCC matters NOW." Here are a few tidbits: the Supreme Court removed the spending cap for corporations' campaign contributions, the DSCC is the only organization dedicated to protecting and expanding the Democrats' Senate majority, and — most critical of all — "the *Tea Parties* have shown they can raise over a million dollars in under one day, and now they've established a *tax-exempt 501(c)(4) to funnel campaign cash to hyper-conservative candidates across the country*." Gasp!

Finally, they assure me, while Republicans focus on causing Obama to fail, Democratic senators are working *with* him. Still, they need contributions ranging from $15 to $1,000 — they kindly placed a star next to the $35 level — to meet their $767,000 goal.

Stopping the party of No — interesting. But I'm a libertarian. The Republicans are not saying "No" often enough for my taste. I'd rather stop the party of "yes, we can." And, although it is probably an exaggeration, if the Tea Parties have raised that much money, I'm ecstatic!

Besides, how dare Democrats ask more money of me or any other "fellow American" to whom they addressed these letters? They've wasted more taxpayer money since the 2008 election than any sitting government ever wasted in a similar

period of time.

I know that Schumer was not inspired to write me because he read my Reflections in Liberty. Not at all. I'll tell you why I got his letter, though I am loathe to admit it. . . . I subscribe to The Atlantic and (shame!) that pretentious, highbrow tabloid Vanity Fair. So, whatever marketing company the Democrats employ for mass support mailings naturally assumed that I'd be "one of them" and receptive to such a plea — though I think they would be hard pressed to find a household less receptive to their hysterical overtures than mine.

All this is good news, however. Because if the Democrats are so worried, and if this is how they are going about seeking popular and financial support, November 2010 is looking better than ever. — Marlaine White

Holding patterns — Greg Mortenson, author of the bestseller "Three Cups of Tea," and builder of schools for girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan, was our keynote speaker at this year's FreedomFest in Las Vegas. He is the most honored American in the Middle East, and the Taliban won't touch him. But his address was postponed because President Barack Obama made an unexpected trip to Las Vegas, keeping Mortenson's plane from landing. Obama came to counter Sharron Angle's talk at FreedomFest and to give support to a floundering Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

We quickly rescheduled Mortenson's talk for the next morning, which he gave before an SRO audience of over 2,000 people on the theme, "Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, not Bombs." His main idea was that there is no military solution in Afghanistan, but to quote an old African saying, "If you educate a girl you can educate a community" and change it for the better. His Central Asian Institute that builds schools for girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan received no federal funds. He got a standing ovation.

After his speech, he was supposed to catch a plane, but again was delayed because Obama was flying *out* of Vegas at that time. So Mortenson signed books for three hours and told us that he was so impressed with FreedomFest that he would come back next year to speak again. All's well that ends well. — Mark Skousen

Head counts — This is chapter 1,559,363 in the long-running serial, "Why Don't the Media Know What All the Rest of Us Do?"

On July 17, there was a parade in my town, San Diego — the annual Gay Pride parade. The parade starts in my neighborhood, in fact, directly in front of my dwelling. Sometimes I attend; sometimes I even take pictures; sometimes I sleep in and miss it. This year, I slept in, so I wasn't available to count the crowd.

I did notice, however, that the media reported that "150,000 people" were going to show up, or did show up. That was a somewhat higher estimate than I remember them reporting in earlier years. No matter: I responded to this as I always respond to crowd estimates, gay or straight, rightwing or leftwing, by calculating how that number of people could possibly fit into the space available. In this case, I figured that if you had a close-packed crowd all along the parade route, you'd need 14 ranks of spectators on both sides of the street, besides a very generously estimated number of people who actually participated in the parade.

My experience of this event is that two or three ranks, here and there, and a lot of stray people elsewhere, is a fair description of the crowd. Maybe at a major intersection you would have to stand on your toes to see over four or five people, but this is doubtful. A friend who did go out for the parade this year reports that "one could have easily ridden a bicycle up and down the sidewalks and not hit anyone."

That doesn't mean the parade wasn't a success. It just means that the media are not. — Stephen Cox

Info dump — Amid much hoopla, the Obama-backed financial regulation bill ("Finreg") finally passed Congress and was signed into law by a gloating president. Supposedly, it was crafted to make future mortgage meltdowns impossible by throwing a leash on the greedy, scheming Wall Street tycoons who caused the mess.

The mortgage mess was in part caused by the greed of Wall Street — and for that matter, by the greed of Main Street, i.e., by consumers who used NINJA loans (no income, no job or assets) to get into homes they couldn't afford, hoping to get rich quick. But this sort of greed is always with us. What specifically caused the disaster, what brought it on, was the massive moral hazard created by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which bought all that toilet paper — not to mention the supply of cheapo money provided by the ever-generous Fed. But Fannie and Freddie aren't even mentioned in Finreg!

Instead we find, stuffed in next to a couple thousands of pages of onerous regulations, all kinds of garbage completely irrelevant to the mortgage mess, such as mandates for metastasizing racial and gender quotas and preferences.

Most interesting among the irrelevant garbage in the bill is a tidbit uncovered by Fox Business News (July 28). Besides doubling the funding of the SEC, the Democrats in Congress put in a provision that essentially exempts the SEC from public disclosure in the form of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Yes, a sneaky provision of the new law will allow the SEC to turn down virtually all requests for release of information to the public or the news media. (Fox discovered the surprising clause when the SEC denied an FOIA request by one of its reporters immediately after the law was enacted.)

Why would the SEC want to end even this small amount of transparency? Could it be because the SEC clowns were watching porn on their government work stations while the mortgage fraud was growing and Bernie Madoff was continuing his Ponzi scheme?

Behold the face of "reform": regulations on everyone but the government agencies that caused the excess, and even more money for and less accountability from the agency that failed so miserably to do its job of stopping it. — Gary Jason

Shifting the balance — The 2010 November elections are going to be very important, and I believe that libertarians should vote for the Republican rather than the Libertarian Party.

It would be an ideal world if the LP could win elections. But it cannot. Its cause is hopeless. The reason has nothing to do with the stupidity of the American public or the incompetence of LP candidates. It arises from the fact that the LP is a third party in a two-party system.

In the United States candidates are elected from geographical regions and the regional winner is the one who reaches a

plurality of the votes, as opposed to a European parliamentary system in which seats are apportioned by percentage of votes. Therefore it makes sense for an American candidate to seek support from as broad a coalition as possible, to find common ground among a large number of interest groups in order to get the crucial plurality. No third party can succeed in a plurality system because the political dynamics motivate all special interest groups to align themselves with the largest majority interests they can tolerate. Hence, the libertarian special interest group must support Republican candidates if it wants to have any chance of challenging the now-dominant modern-liberal Democrats.

Even if a libertarian is pro-choice and antiwar (as I am) and dislikes pro-war, pro-life conservatives, he must concede that only a coalition that includes both conservatives and libertarians can challenge the labor union-backed liberal coalition. The LP will matter when, one day, the majority of Americans are libertarians, but in the meantime Republicans are generally much more pro-capitalist than Democrats. Under these conditions, it would be irresponsible not to vote Republican.

Of course, the counterargument is that the Republicans and Democrats are just alike, that they are destroying our democracy by giving the illusion of voter control without giving the voters a libertarian option, and that the LP provides this much-needed real choice. That argument is wrong. There is a vital difference between the two major parties. Even if, right now, the Republican politicians in Washington are fiscally irresponsible morons, the American public votes Republican because it still believes that Republicans are the party more devoted to free enterprise. The Republicans must appease libertarian voters or watch their coalition decay. Observe the Tea Party movement and its impact on the GOP.

The Republican Party really is our best shot at getting libertarian candidates elected. The Libertarian Reform Caucus' plan to make the LP capable of actually winning elections is motivated by a good intention, but in a plurality system it will only split the vote between the Libertarian Party and the Republican Party and cost us elections.

An unwise strategy is not ameliorated by a noble purpose. If we vote LP then our vote is meaningless, but if we vote Republican we become a crucial swing vote that can actually count for something. — Russell Hasan

Separated at birth? — A year and a half into the Obama presidency, I, as neither Republican nor Democrat, am struck by how much he resembles not Jimmy Carter, as conservatives like to say, or FDR, as liberals prefer, but his immediate predecessor — and not just in similarly pursuing certain unfortunate policies, such as ballooning our national indebtedness, "nation-building," and doomed military activities.

Both men have benefited from a highly biased core constituency, which regards its prez as "our kind of guy," who is thought to do no wrong, and from whom much is expected — until such fans realize that they have stuck themselves with supporting a president whose activities they judge profoundly disagreeable. Just as Dubya failed on his promise to reform Social Security, so Obama failed to pull American troops out of Iraq and violated his pledge against secret dealings. The principal beneficiaries of the "stimulus" have so far been stock-market investors, who mostly vote Republican.

In its comparable girth of over 2,000 pages, Obama's Health Care Reform Act resembles the Patriot Act in hiding a lot of government giveaways that would be objectionable if presented by themselves. (It was not for nothing that insurance-company stocks rose the day after it was passed.) Though commonly oblivious to (or protected from) dissent, both Obama and Dubya discovered that they lacked the political skills they thought they had, surviving not by their own genius but by the opposition's temporary insufficiencies.

The fact that Obama and Dubya are fairly similar — in physical height as well as the aura insulating them from acknowledging disappointment — makes them almost indistinguishable to me, other physical dissimilarities notwithstanding. More predisposed to Obama than Dubya, I surprised myself with this perception in April 2010.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Snakebit — A recent article in Popular Mechanics discussed what I see as the beginning of the end for modern medicine. The antivenom for coral snakes will pass its expiration date on October 31 of this year. After that, the only way to treat coral snake bites will be to put you on a ventilator for a couple weeks until the deadly neurotoxin works its way out of your system.

The reason for the lack of fresh antivenom is because it's been discontinued here in the United States. Production cost exceeds profitability, since there are fewer than 100 coral snake bites annually. So the manufacturer quit making it several years ago.

The FDA has twice extended the expiration date on existing supplies. That's an FDA power I did not know about: refreshing stale medicine with a wave of its magic pen. There is an antivenom being produced in Mexico — Coralmyn — which cannot be sold in the United States without going through FDA approval, an expensive process, which again nobody wants to pay for, because you won't get your investment back.

But the FDA seems unwilling to wave its magic pen about that, so 100 people a year will be put onto ventilators unnecessarily. This tale should dissuade anyone who thinks bureaucracy can actually trim healthcare costs, since one ride on the ventilator could easily buy every bitten American a round-trip ticket to Mexico.

The strangest part about this story is that zoos have access to Coralmyn, but have no mandate to share it outside of their network. According to the author Glenn Derene, "Zoos and aquariums have a special exemption from the FDA for antivenoms." So apparently the FDA isn't beyond waving the pen, just not for you.

Hence, a word of warning to anyone who might stumble across a coral snake: if you're going to get bitten, make sure it happens in a zoo. Otherwise, you'd better hope you have a couple weeks vacation time. — Tim Slagle

Nuclear family — An article by the always interesting Peter Huber in the excellent City Journal (Spring 2010) is well worth reading. It is about Stewart Brand, founder and editor of the Whole Earth Catalog, the Bible of the Green movement. Huber notes that Brand now admits that the Greens were wrong on a number of major issues. As Brand

writes, "Cities are Green. Nuclear energy is Green. Genetic engineering is Green."

Brand thus joins the list of prominent Greens who have flipped and now support nuclear power. The list includes Gwyneth Cravens, who went from the activist scaremonger who helped kill the Shoreham reactor to the author of "Power to Save the World," a massive, detailed defense of nuclear power. It also includes James Hansen, the NASA climatologist who has trumpeted global warming more than anyone else, as well as founders and other bigwigs of Green organizations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

But Huber is rightly nervous about whether these Greens who now favor nukes will flip again, if global warming theory comes into disfavor. After all, their thinking seems still to be premised on the eco-faith idea that man's flourishing (reproducing and growing economically) is inherently sinful (now explained in terms of the production of carbon dioxide, but explainable in any number of other ways should the need arise). I share his anxiety. That is why I think the best case for nuclear power rests on the grounds of economic growth and national security. — Gary Jason

Weenies run amok — Some commentators have moaned that the public exposure of Journolist (a listserv group of snotty leftwing reporters, news producers, and other weenies) deals a mortal blow to the mainstream media's dying credibility. Those moans probably exaggerate. The mainstream media's death will probably continue slowly, as it has for many years.

The exposure of Journolist is probably more of a humorous embarrassment than a mortal blow. Ectomorphic Upper West Side intellectuals fantasizing, like so many internet tough guys, about smashing GOP heads through plate glass. Crunchy West Coast NPR producers dreaming orgasmically about Rush Limbaugh's death rattle.

My own favorite part was UCLA law professor Jonathan Zasloff's suggestion that the Federal Communications Commission should revoke Fox News Channel's license: "I hate to open this can of worms, but is there any reason why the FCC couldn't simply pull their broadcasting permit once it expires?"

Ah, professor, Fox News is a cable channel. It has no "broadcasting permit" for the FCC to pull.

In the end, the greatest damage caused by Journolist may be a kind of opportunity cost. The insecure elitists on the list made a process that could have been democratic and transparent into a petty clique — a hypocritical choice for self-styled "progressives" to make in response to the openness (some say *revolutionary* openness) of the internet. As left-leaning pundit Mickey Kaus has written: "It's as if they'd looked at our great national parks and said, 'Hey, what we really need is to carve out a private walled enclave for the well connected.' Invited to a terrific party, they immediately set up a VIP room."

Clearly, openness is not what they desire. Maybe Prof. Zasloff can look into the possibility of the FCC's pulling the internet's broadcast permit. — Jim Walsh

Burying Byrd — On July 2, 2010, Sen. Robert Byrd was laid to rest in Charleston, West Virginia, where President Bill Clinton delivered a eulogy that, for the most part, hit all the right notes. A clinker was struck, however, when he spoke of the many other eulogies for Byrd that had been in newspapers, saying:

> They mentioned that he once had a fleeting association with the Ku Klux Klan. And what does that mean? I'll tell what you it means. He was a country boy from the hills and hollers of West Virginia. He was trying to get elected. And maybe he did something he shouldn't have done, and he spent the rest of his life making it up. And that's what a good person does. There are no perfect people. There are certainly no perfect politicians.

There is an English proverb that advises us not to speak ill of the dead. President Clinton chose to ignore that advice, and now, in order to respond, so must I. Some things just need to be said.

The relevant facts of the senator's association with the Klan and his subsequent atonement will first be summarized. Then the ethical conclusions of the president will be assessed, and, finally, an attempt will be made to decipher the subtext of the eulogy.

In his June 19, 2005, Washington Post piece, "A Senator's Shame," Eric Pianin laid out the facts of Robert Byrd's time with the Klan, including the following:

(1) Byrd founded a chapter of the Klan in the early 1940s, recruiting 150 of his friends who unanimously elected him as Exalted Cyclops. They had to pay three dollars each for their hoods and sheets.

(2) It was after Byrd had joined the Klan that the regional Grand Dragon suggested that he enter politics.

(3) As late as 1946, Byrd wrote a letter to the Imperial Wizard of the KKK, saying that "the Klan is needed today as never before, and I am anxious to see its rebirth here in West Virginia."

So this was not a "fleeting association." Further, he was not "trying to get elected" when he joined, except to the office of Exalted Cyclops. It was only after he joined the Klan that his political ambition extended as far as the West Virginia legislature. In fact, it is fairly clear that he later distanced himself from the Klan primarily in order to further his political career.

But how did he go about trying to "make it up" after 1946? Pianin tells us that:

(1) He voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, after filibustering for 14 hours on the floor of the Senate.

(2) He voted against the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

(3) He voted against the Supreme Court nomination of Thurgood Marshall in 1967.

(4) He voted against the nomination of Clarence Thomas in 1989.

While these votes do not prove that Byrd was an unreconstructed racist, they do cast doubt on Clinton's hypothesis that he spent his post-Klan adulthood seeking atonement.

Now, what is a good person?

Is a good person someone who organizes a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, not because he is a white supremacist, but because he is "trying to get elected?" Is Clinton suggesting that Byrd was never anything as vile as a white supremacist but was, instead, merely a hypocritical opportunist?

Is a good person someone who leaves the Klan and, a generation later, votes against extending civil rights to African-Americans, votes against ensuring the voting rights

of African-Americans, votes against the Supreme Court nomination of, first, a liberal, and then, more than 20 years later, a conservative African-American?

If this is the definition of a good person, what do we call someone who did not found a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, got elected anyway, voted for civil rights, voting rights, and the nomination of two African-Americans to the Supreme Court? In other words, what would we call the person who was, in these respects at least, the opposite of the former Exalted Cyclops? Evil?

I don't claim to know what a good person is, but I'm pretty sure that Clinton's definition is, at best, incomplete.

While delivering this odd part of the eulogy, Clinton displayed a strong emotion that seemed to be anger barely held in check. When he was in office, he would usually consciously emphasize a point with a bent index finger. Speech coaches will tell you that unrestrained gestures are not persuasive on television. During the Klan bit, however, Clinton's left forefinger was fully extended as he shook it. He seemed to be scolding the mourners. At that moment, he looked and sounded like a Southern Baptist preacher, all fired up.

Was he angry at the editorial writers who had brought up the Klan connection, sullying the reputation of the Senate's longest serving member? That makes no sense. The president himself was bringing it up, and not in print, but aloud, on television, and at the funeral itself, ensuring that the early chapters of the senator's life story would be once more in the news.

There is something surreal about Clinton's remarks, and there is something bizarre about the underlying anger. It is as though there are things going unsaid. Let's slowly read the last part of the passage again and see if, between the lines, there isn't another message.

"Maybe he did something he shouldn't have done, and he spent the rest of his life making it up. And that's what a good person does. There are no perfect people. There are certainly no perfect politicians."

Ah.

This is not a eulogy for Sen. Robert Byrd. This is not even about Robert Byrd. This is a cry of anguish from an impeached president who brought disgrace upon his office and himself. This is a cry of anger from a proud man who cannot have the one thing that he really wants: his reputation restored. This is a man reflecting on his own mortality and realizing that the Comeback Kid will not make that last comeback.

If it means anything, I forgive you, Bill. But please, don't go around using eulogies to vent your anger, whether it's at yourself or others. Does it really need to be said? When you give a eulogy, it's not supposed to be about you.

There is another English proverb that advises us not to hit a man when he is down. Okay, I promise I won't do it again, but you have to do your part. Stay down, Bill.

— Scott Chambers

Workers' paradise — "Raul Castro has made halting efforts to open the economy, while exhorting Cubans to work harder and stop depending on the state for everything" (AP, July 26).

The second exhortation, the one about not depending on the state, represents a refreshing new approach to communism. It's just too bad that the people will have to keep working harder and harder to support a state that gives them less and less.

— Stephen Cox

Debtor states — While the public is rightly growing alarmed at the explosion of national debt, another debt disaster is growing. As noted in The Wall Street Journal on June 14, other government debt is growing as well.

State and local government debt has soared from $1.4 trillion in 2000 to $2.2 trillion today. As a percentage of America's GDP, state and local borrowing went from 15% in 2000 to 22% today, and it is projected to hit 24% in just two years.

And much (if not most) of the money is used to finance projects of dubious value. For example, Charlotte, N.C., dumped $154 million into the NASCAR Hall of Fame, hoping to create jobs and draw tourists. But it only created 115 jobs (at well over a million dollars per job!) and attracts fewer tourists annually than does just one actual NASCAR race.

While voters are increasingly reluctant to vote for new bonds, there remains a serious problem: there has been a growth of special agencies, which are allowed to take on new debt without having to get voter approval. And they are borrowing money like mad. Now here is a form of democracy that statists can support!

— Gary Jason

Brownout — I used to admire UPS, or "Brown," as it calls itself ("What can Brown do for you?"). It seemed a model company, performing a good service, charging reasonable prices, and still managing to make a profit. But of late UPS has been acting like a classic sore loser, trying to use the government to destroy competitors that it cannot outcompete — something economists call (in their snappy patter) "rent-seeking."

To set the scene: UPS is of course a major player in package delivery services. It operates a massive fleet of trucks and airplanes. It is unionized, with its workers represented by the Teamsters. The union has increased the company's costs, naturally, but hey, that's what unions do — that's their *raison d'etre*, as the French say (in *their* snappy patter); and UPS management agreed to the union contracts.

This has no doubt helped UPS' main competitor, FedEx, another company that provides a great service, at decent prices, and still manages to grow and make a profit. Together, the two companies move about 23 million packages a year, and their rivalry goes back well over a decade. And here's the rub: FedEx has so far escaped the Teamsters' clutches, which enrages UPS management just as much as it does the Teamsters.

Now, part of the reason FedEx has been able to keep the Teamsters off its back is that FedEx Express (its delivery division) has been federally classified as an airline, whereas UPS is designated as a trucking company. Being designated as an airline means that a company is under the 1926 Railway Labor Act, which makes unionization more difficult.

So the bigwigs in UPS management and the Teamsters union came up with a crafty idea: they want Congress to switch the designation of FedEx Express to a trucking company as a way to "level the playing field." In other words, inflict the Teamsters on FedEx, so that its prices will rise, too! This is rather like a man with AIDS deliberately infecting another person — for money! It is a truly despicable plan.

But the plan is not so despicable that UPS hasn't been able to find a congressman willing to push it. Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has introduced a measure that would reclassify FedEx Express as a trucking company. And the Teamsters have started an ad campaign to push the measure.

Note that UPS isn't trying to use its lobbying power to get itself reclassified as an airline. That would be entirely ethical, but it tried that ploy in 1996, and lost. Moreover, if it tried it again, it would anger the Teamsters. No, what UPS wants to do is to use its clout in Congress to force unionization on its competitor. It wants to hurt FedEx, not help itself. This is what is so despicable, and justifies the FedEx dig that Oberstar's measure is a "Brown bailout."

FedEx and a number of companies that contract for FedEx are worried that if Oberstar's measure is enacted, costs will soar, and FedEx will have to shrink its operations. Since FedEx uses contracting companies in 19 states, we are talking about a major hit to employment. And the prices it charges would likely be affected as well.

So what can Brown do for you? It can corrupt your Congress, prostituting it to drive its competitor out of business. In so doing, Brown can cost you your job and jack up the prices you pay.

So what can you do to Brown? Rep. Oberstar has an opponent in the November election, Mr. Chip Cravaack, who may need help. And until UPS starts behaving ethically, no one has to trade with it. — Gary Jason

Hiring chill — Two hoary economic truths rediscovered by the Obama administration are not just that the state can't "create jobs" but also that it can, through one opportune policy or another, diminish employer enthusiasm for additional hiring.

That's one sure effect of halting drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, of the new health plan, of extending unemployment benefits, and of many other superficially attractive policies. Nonetheless, the bullshitter-in-chief insists that new jobs are a top priority for his administration. How can he keep a straight face? — Richard Kostelanetz

Preparing to fail — On July 11, Robert Gibbs, the roly-poly, happy-go-lucky White House press secretary, told a television interviewer that his party might well lose the House in the November election — oh well.

His blase comment infuriated Nancy Pelosi, and one can understand her emotion. With her speakership trembling in the electoral balance, Gibbs appeared to be running up the white flag, four months before the battle happened.

There must have been an occasion like this in the past, but I can't think of one — an episode in American political history in which a top party leader said that the party might lose. Merely to imply something like this is regarded as a serious discouragement to political activity. On the other hand, even obvious lies, so long as they are optimistic, are regarded as good for the troops. Libertarian Party candidates, who are always being asked why they're running when they have no chance to win, keep saying things like, "I believe that the American people agree with our positions, and when they realize that we're here on the ballot, they're going to vote for us."

They say that on the morning news, on election day. So do the Democrats and Republicans, no matter what. But here's the spokesman for the White House, telling everyone that his party is likely to lose.

How do the troops in the field react to that? In the same way, I suspect, that General Lee's men would have reacted if he'd told the force assembled for Pickett's charge, "Gemmum . . . There's guhd reason t' blieve that you all are 'bout to lose yo' lahvs." Inspiring, right? Good strategic thinking, eh?

Yet according to the political sages at the Associated Press, Gibbs' comments can be viewed in two ways: (1) as "intended to light a fire under Democrats who are dispirited after about 18 months of Obama's presidency and motivate them to work hard to maintain their majorities in both the House and Senate"; (2) as an attempt "to lower expectations in case Democrats do lose the House majority."

So, choose your poison — the Democrats are dispirited now; the Democrats will be even more dispirited in November, and looking for someone to blame. Someone, perhaps, like the president. And his adviser, Robert Gibbs.

Many observers characterized Gibbs' statement as a cynical attempt to keep Democratic mobs from besieging the White House on Wednesday, November 3. True, no one actually said "cynical" or mentioned "mobs" — but that was the tenor of the analysis. Whatever middle-level Democratic leaders may say in public, they are desperately unhappy, and not with Republicans. They're unhappy with the president and his advisers — people who, they believe, have directed the affairs of the party from the isolation of a political spaceship, a ship in which they intend to escape the slaughter of their troops below.

Fun to watch — but these Democrats' opinions are perhaps not entirely fair. Virtually all of them supported the presidential programs that have made their party unpopular. They knew at the time that the programs were as unpopular as any in American history. They knew how those programs were formulated, and by whom. They were eyewitnesses of the tactics by which the White House enforced obedience. Few of them objected. Of those few, the great majority publicly withdrew their objections — sometimes, it appears, in exchange for political rewards; sometimes merely in response to political and personal pressures. At *that* point, who spoke up?

Certainly not the multitude of little first-term congresspersons whom Obama's victory helped to be elected in conservative districts. They owe their all to Obama, and it does not become them — now, and publicly — to denounce the president as the destroyer of their careers. And certainly not the multitude of safe-district Democratic congressmen, the people who will glide into their eighth, ninth, or tenth term, whatever happens to the party or Obama this November.

You might ask, Why didn't someone from the second group, understanding his or her own political immunity, step in to alert the party or the nation? I'm sure that many warnings circulated in the party, and they were ignored, both by the political fanatics who care more about their "issues" than about either the country or the party, and by Obama and his advisers, who are always sure that they are right. But as for warnings to the nation . . . that's not what party politicians do.

In general, I am sorry to say, this reflects the normal condition of American politics. For months and years, party loyalty, however obtained, obliterates all appearance of dissent. Intellectual honesty completely disappears; the public is led to believe that everyone in the ruling party is blissfully happy with its policies. That's bad. But there's a good side. Criticism, though delayed, comes massively when it finally comes. That's what happened in 1994. That's what happened in 2008. I suppose that's what's going to happen in 2010.

— Stephen Cox

Split decision — In Arizona, where I live, the battle over immigration law has become hysterical. People are flinging charges like "racist" at one another in the way orangutans at the zoo fling dung. When society is in "scream" mode, we pretty much scream at everything. But if words like "racist" are devalued to the point where they lose their meaning, can we be said to have abolished racism as a fact?

How can a country with no standards for citizenship survive? Are immigrants not coming here for a reason? If we destroy the very reasons for which they come, why should they bother? And if refugees from tyranny and corruption can't come to America any more, where can they go? Are we really even asking these questions?

Not everyone, of course, comes for the same reason. Those who retain faith in the human individual recognize this, and suggest withdrawing all the freebies, now given at taxpayer expense, and letting people come as long as they're here to work hard and contribute. For that, the Left thinks we're "mean," and the Right calls us "soft." But why not consider this option?

Two mothers came to Solomon to settle a dispute. One's baby was dead, the other's was still alive — and of course, both wanted the living baby, so each claimed it for her own. Solomon called for a sword, and ordered the living child cut in half, with one half given to each woman. The one to whom this solution seemed good showed she was not the baby's mother, whereas the real mother — whose primary concern was for the well-being of her offspring — agreed to let her rival have him so that he could live.

Those who care about this country's wellbeing want it healthy and whole. Those who don't are perfectly willing to see it pillaged by freeloaders, or starved of fresh and eager workers. Libertarians need to call for the proverbial sword. Those content with one half of a dead baby must be revealed for what they are.

As in the story of Solomon, the solution stands ready at hand. By all means, the baby must survive. This is the only way that our sad soap opera can be transformed into a story from which future generations can draw wisdom for the centuries to come.

— Lori Heine

Swamp on the Potomac — When Nancy Pelosi was campaigning two years ago, she kept screeching the mantra, "We will drain the swamp of corruption in Washington." This was an effective campaign slogan, given that several high-profile Republicans had been caught in ethical lapses. The public bought it and elected the most leftwing Congress in 70 years.

But the public forgot the first rule of draining swamps: don't ever turn the job over to the gators. The Red Congress, run by Pelosi and Reid, has been vastly more corrupt than the Congress it replaced, with more scandals and pork-barrel spending than ever before.

Two especially egregious cases — both involving figures upon whom I have reflected before — are now prominently in the news. The first is Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), who is looking at a public ethics trial for his numerous dubious dealings. These include submitting "inaccurate and incomplete financial disclosure statements," in the meek words of the House Ethics Committee (oxymoronic, no?), using a rent-controlled New York apartment for his campaign office, and — most outrageous — failing to report something like $600,000 in income, mainly from his rental properties in the Dominican Republic.

This last charge is particularly interesting because until he stepped aside earlier this year in the face of the ethics probe, Rangel was chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, which originates all tax legislation. And tax evasion — such as not stating your actual income — is the worst tax crime. This makes the irony complete: when Tim Geithner was selected to head the Treasury Department, it was revealed that he had evaded taxes as well. Great, isn't it? The dudes most responsible for writing tax law and enforcing it are both tax cheats! It is simply too delicious!

The second shoe to drop is that of the repugnant racebaiter, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA). She has also been brought before the ethics committee, charged with using her position as a member of the House Financial Services Committee to benefit her husband, one Sidney Williams. She is said to have arranged a meeting between government regulators and executives of OneUnited Bank, while failing to mention the fact that her hubby held at least a quarter million bucks worth of its stock and had served on its board. As I write, she is threatened with an ethics trial.

The prospect of two high-profile ethics trials going on simultaneously in the fall makes more than a few Dems very nervous. The pressure is growing on these two birds to resign, but given the level of their narcissism and self-righteousness, they will likely hang in.

— Gary Jason

Ancien regime — Yes, I do my share of mudslinging at the Democratic administration. And no, I don't think it's right for the Democrats to accuse the Republicans of being "the party of no" (we're likely to hear that a few million more times this year). I am still a vigorous advocate of voting for the lesser of the two evils, believing that to do otherwise is to vote for the greater of the two evils. And this year, my accolade for "greater" goes to the Democrats.

But I still haven't shaken off the horrors of the Bush administration. There's nothing like a big-spending, war-pursuing, morals-mongering, lying bunch of fatcats stuffed into thousand-dollar suits to depress you for a decade or so. And my rule for political good conduct is, when your party has been discredited, throw out the people who discredited it.

Bush and his closest advisers were, in effect, thrown out of the GOP. But the people who have taken their places in the party leadership appear virtually identical — with a few even more depressing exceptions. I do *not* regard Sarah Palin

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Don't Default on Me

by Bruce Ramsey

The national debt may be out of control —
but writing it off would be a catastrophe.

The Greek bond crisis prompted free-market fantasies of a Treasury default. On Forbes magazine's May 24 web page, columnist John Tamny suggested that default was coming. His message: let it happen! If the U.S. government defaults it won't be able to borrow any more, and that would be a good thing.

The idea resonated with some libertarians. A few had said it before, embracing not just "default" but the more radical idea of repudiation. In 2008, Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, associate professor of economics at San Jose State University and author of "Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men" (1996), had written, "I favor total repudiation of all government debt for the same reason I favor abolition of slavery without compensation to slaveholders."

Hummel said, "Treasury securities represent a stream of future tax revenues, and investors have no more just claim to those returns than to any investment in a criminal enterprise." Hummel also called repudiation "a balanced-budget amendment with real teeth."

Before him, libertarian economist Murray Rothbard had written in Chronicles (June 1992) that it would be good for government to be cut off from private credit:

> Why should more private capital be poured down government rat holes? It is precisely the drying up of future public credit that constitutes one of the main arguments for repudiation, for it means beneficially drying up a major channel for the wasteful destruction of the savings of the public. What we want is abundant savings and investment in private enterprises, and a lean, austere, low-budget, minimal government. The people and the economy can only wax fat and prosperous when their government is starved and puny.

That is one way of looking at it. But if you own a government bond, the rat hole is you. You may therefore find it strange that defenders of capitalism are proposing to let the government walk away from its contract obligations, thereby cheating people to whom it owes money.

Radicalism is such fun. A damn-the-consequences stance shows how bold you are. Sometimes boldness may be right, as in the case of boldness about slavery: just get rid of it! But comparing normal (even regrettably normal) political issues

to slavery is like comparing normal politicians to Hitler. There is a statement circulating in the blogosphere that in any argument, whoever brings up Hitler first, loses — because comparing almost any figure to Hitler is engaging in gross exaggeration. It is the same with slavery.

Radical libertarians like to compare taxes to slavery, and there is a philosophy-class sense in which they are right. But if it were a deep and valid comparison people would be under immediate compulsion to divest themselves of everything touched by the slave money, including San Jose State University.

The issue here is debt — the government's debt. The government has sold a bond. It takes the cash and proposes to repay it over 30 years. If you want to make a comparison, consider the man who takes out a mortgage. He takes the cash, and he proposes to repay it over 30 years. Now suppose he *repudiates* his mortgage. He walks away from it, even though he can pay it.

We don't celebrate this man, or what he does. It is a predatory thing. He is breaking his word, taking from others without giving back.

If you are the mortgage holder, at least you can get the property back. If a government repudiates its debt, you will get nothing. Of course, you can keep the government's bond. It is now a piece of paper that you can put on the wall, so that other people can laugh at it or admire its artistry.

I have one of those pieces of paper. It says: *"Imperial Chinese Government: 5% Hukuang Railways Sinking Fund Gold Loan of 1911."*

The bond has a red border that makes it look like paper money, a masthead image of a speedy black steam locomotive, some legal text in fancy cursive, and British and New York tax stamps. It is signed with the fist-sized chop of His Excellency the Kung-Pao Sheng Hsuan-Huai, minister of posts and communications. It is countersigned by a representative of J.P. Morgan & Co., New York. It promises to pay the bearer 2 pounds, 10 shillings, twice a year, until June 1951, whereupon the bearer will be paid 100 British gold pounds.

I bought the bond as a curiosity. But some poor guy, decades ago, bought it as an investment, and lost his money when the bond was repudiated. In those days, 100 pounds would have been worth about $10,000 in today's money.

"Instead of a medal, could you just give me a tax cut?"

What's being advocated by the let's-default-on-the-debt people is that all U.S. Treasury bonds and notes, representing more than *$13 trillion* in U.S. government debt, be turned into Hukuang Railways bonds. And what would be the consequences of that?

The most obvious consequence is the theft of that $13 trillion from the millions of people to whom it is owed.

About 28% of the debt is held by foreigners, much of it by central banks. Here are the totals, in billions, as of April 2010, listing only those in three digits:

China	$900.2
Japan	$795.5
UK	$321.2
Oil exporters	$239.3
Brazil	$164.3
Caribbean	$153.2
Hong Kong	$151.8
Taiwan	$126.9
Russia	$113.1

A second consequence readily appears. If all these assets were vaporized, the leaders in these alien lands would be really, really pissed off. God knows what they would do. The United States would have about as many friends as North Korea has. Imagine if you, an American, owned assets in those foreign countries, including any of their bonds, or worked for a company trying to sell them anything. Imagine what might happen to the assets you thought you had, or the business you thought you were developing.

A big chunk of the American national debt, more than $2 trillion, is held by the Social Security trust fund. To the government, its own bonds are promises to itself, not net assets. They are symbolic promises only. But the Treasury bonds held in a private pension fund may be the most solid assets in that fund. Imagine the effects of a repudiation.

Treasury bonds are also held by financial companies. What happens to the banking system, and the insurance system, when the largest class of triple-A assets goes *poof*? Recall the bank and insurance company panic of September 2008. It happened when a whole class of assets — mortgage-backed bonds — became of indeterminate value. The mortgage bonds were not gone, or repudiated. They were not all bad, either. But the uncertainty about them was enough to implode the financial system.

Who came to the rescue? The U.S. government. Imagine if the deadbeat were the government itself. Imagine a financial vacuum imposed on all these things — banks, insurance companies, the Social Security fund, the private pension funds, foreign central banks, and individual investors — all at once.

Enough of imagination. The U.S. government is not going to repudiate its debt. A U.S. Treasury bond is, as James Grant said in "The Trouble with Prosperity" (1996), "the promise to pay dollars by the very government that prints them." The Greeks, who borrow in euros, don't have the ability to print the material of repayment, but the United States does. The risk of a Treasury bond held to maturity is not of default but of inflation.

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Seeds of Liberty

by Wayne Thorburn

The history of the libertarian movement is still being written, but one important chapter is an event that happened 50 years ago.

It was a late summer day in September 1960 when 96 people gathered in Sharon, Connecticut to establish Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) and adopt a set of principles they called the Sharon Statement. Many leaders of the contemporary libertarian movement in the United States experienced their initial involvement in politics through membership in YAF. At this, the 50th anniversary of YAF's founding, it is interesting to look back at the significance of this organization and its role in preparing the way for a distinct, politically-involved libertarian movement in the United States.

Without question, libertarian ideas were espoused by many people before 1960, both by economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises and by literary writers such as Albert Jay Nock, Rose Wilder Lane, Isabel Paterson, and, especially, Ayn Rand. From 1946 onward, the Foundation for Economic Education had been promoting free-market economics. Other organizations, such as the Volker Fund, predated the '60s. But it was not until the Sharon conference in September 1960 that there was a vehicle for political involvement by young people who were dedicated to libertarian principles. YAF was not by any means an exclusively libertarian entity. It was intended to be a broad-based organization for young people on the political Right. But those who gathered in Sharon on September 9–11, 1960, determined to adopt an inclusive name that would allow the participation of libertarians and anticommunists who did not associate themselves with the conservative label.

The Sharon Statement concisely summarized a philosophical and ideological position on which there could be broad agreement: political freedom cannot long exist without economic freedom; government's purpose is to preserve internal order, provide for defense of the nation, and administer justice; the Constitution is the best document to ensure a balance between empowering and limiting government; the market economy maximizes individual freedom and produces goods more efficiently than any other economic system. Writing about this document a decade later, in the September 1970 issue of YAF's magazine, the main author of the Sharon Statement,

Stan Evans, explained the reasons behind its inclusiveness:

> In broad terms, the statement was meant to embrace both the 'traditionalist' and 'libertarian' schools within the conservative community. . . . The statement assumes these emphases are inter-dependent and that it is impossible to have one without the other.

Barry Goldwater's "The Conscience of a Conservative," William F. Buckley's "Up From Liberalism," and the novels of Ayn Rand influenced these early members of YAF. In Rebecca Klatch's "A Generation Divided" (1999), Sharon Presley recalled that she had been totally apolitical until she read Rand's "Atlas Shrugged":

> It was like, "Oh, my God, what a revelation!" . . . I read the book; it came along at just the right time. . . . What she did for me was get me thinking about . . . things in those kinds of philosophical terms that I never had.

Presley started attending groups that studied Rand's philosophy and also became active in YAF in California. In a similar manner, Louise Lacey was influenced by Rand's writings and helped start a YAF chapter in San Francisco. As she recalled in the 2008 YAF alumni survey, "I was having fun, stretching my mind in very large ways, and meeting people, some of whom I still know today."

Three thousand miles away, a number of followers of Ayn Rand's philosophy were active on campus. Robert Poole, who later became the publisher of the libertarian Reason magazine, was an engineering student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who joined YAF. "It helped steer me away from engineering to public policy," he said. "It was my introduction to grass-roots politics and one important source of my life-long commitment to libertarian principles." Poole recalls, "At MIT, the majority of us were libertarians, not conservatives, and mostly Objectivists [followers of Rand's philosophy]. We were very involved in the Goldwater for President effort, and had the largest campus Goldwater group in New England." One fellow member of the MIT YAF chapter was David Nolan. Nolan would go on to become a founder of the Libertarian Party in December 1971.

In "It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand" (1971), Jerome Tuccille claims that "many Objectivist students joined YAF for the simple reason that they had no place else to go in order to engage in political activities." Given their support for laissez-faire capitalism, their commitment to strong limits on the size of government, and the anticommunism inherent in Rand's philosophy, it is not surprising that these followers of Rand would join Young Americans for Freedom. An additional factor in the early years was the personal appeal of Goldwater, a political figure with whom many Objectivists could identify. Since YAF was closely identified with Goldwater and his likely presidential campaign in 1964, YAF was the place to be for political activity. While YAF never took an official position on Objectivism or Ayn Rand, her writings did stir up controversy within the organization as many, if not most, YAF members looked to William F. Buckley, Jr. as a mentor and philosophical spokesman; and Buckley's "National Review" had read Rand out of the conservative movement with a slashing attack on "Atlas Shrugged" in 1957.

The Sharon Statement concisely summarized a philosophical and ideological position on which there could be broad agreement.

In addition to those who identified themselves as Objectivists, a significant element of YAF's membership had from its beginning described itself as libertarian. Before and after the Goldwater campaign, some YAF members advocated a classical liberal position associated with Hayek, Mises, and Milton Friedman, and the people associated with the Foundation for Economic Education. A contingent of YAF members worked in support of the Liberty Amendment to the Constitution, which aimed at repeal of the 16th Amendment and abolition of the federal income tax. Some members joined YAF as conservatives, then moved closer to the libertarian position. Still others joined YAF as the only viable group for young people on the Right, bringing with them their strongly held libertarian or anarchist beliefs, and hoped to influence the organization ideologically. As Brian Doherty notes in his "Radicals for Capitalism" (2007), "most of the quasi-mass libertarian activism in the last years of the 1960s was conducted under the aegis of Young Americans for Freedom. . . . YAF attracted in the wake of Goldwater many liberty-loving individuals, among them many Randians, who found themselves leaning more libertarian than conservative." Throughout the '60s these people were willing to work together in a coalition with more traditionalist members, using Young Americans for Freedom as the appropriate vehicle. In fact, most YAF members supported what they viewed as a fusion of libertarian and traditionalist positions, an outlook advocated especially by Frank Meyer in his "In Defense of Freedom" (1962).

Though YAF members held divergent philosophical orientations, they could unite in opposition to the modern liberal orthodoxy that had been prevalent in the United States for at least the previous 30 years. A survey of YAF leaders in 1966 showed that 26% identified themselves as either libertarians or Objectivists, with about 40% calling themselves traditionalists and 34% fusionists (those who followed Meyer's attempted marriage of the two positions). One observer at the 1967 YAF National Convention asked various delegates about the survey and the accuracy of the results. Writing in the February 1968 issue of the national campus magazine Moderator, Philip Werdell reported that by the people he asked the survey was viewed as an accurate reflection of the relative strengths in YAF.

Libertarian David Nolan found some allies at that 1967 convention, claiming in a November 1974 issue of New Libertarian Notes, "I found that there were strong pockets of libertarian or crypto-libertarian YAFers in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio as well as in my then native Massachusetts." When the convention ended, Nolan and others attempted to form a Libertarian Caucus and held a meeting attended by 80 people. One of them was a new YAF national director and state chairman from Pennsylvania, David Walter. Writing in the same issue of New Libertarian Notes, Walter maintained that "1967 was the year that Libertarianism made breakthroughs in YAF. We became aware of each other . . . we became aware of the

other pockets of libertarianism in YAF and of other libertarian leaders such as Jarret Wollstein in Maryland, Dave Friedman in Illinois, Frank Bubb and Ted Frech in Missouri, Dave Nolan in Massachusetts, and many Californians." The list of the attendees at that 1967 post-convention meeting became the beginnings of a libertarian network at a time when there were few libertarian organizations or publications outside of YAF.

YAF had always advocated free-market economics. From 1967 forward its magazine, the New Guard, began featuring even more articles by libertarian writers. In fall 1967, Arnold ("Arnie") Steinberg followed David Franke as editor, soon after introducing a regular column called "The Radical," written by David Friedman, son of economist Milton Friedman, and another by Philip Abbott Luce called "Against The Wall." Friedman's column reflected a clear libertarian perspective on economic issues, while Luce was more representative of a social libertarian outlook. Jarret Wollstein had articles published in 1967 and '68, while the writings of Rod Manis and Jerome Tuccille appeared three times each during this period. Other articles by libertarians — Dana Rohrabacher, Alan Bock, Joseph M. Cobb, Tibor Machan, and Ron Kimberling — also appeared. Kimberling described himself in the magazine as "one of California's new crop of super-libertarians," but all these people were viewed as libertarians and known among YAF members as representative of the libertarian philosophical outlook.

An additional factor in the early years was the personal appeal of Goldwater, a figure with whom many Objectivists could identify.

Besides opposing the draft, some local YAF chapters began undertaking more clearly libertarian projects, including support for the decriminalization of marijuana and the abolition of Social Security. In spring 1969, Orange County, California, YAF members conducted a demonstration in which they burned Social Security cards. Ken Grubbs, chairman of the Cal State-Fullerton YAF and later editor of the New Guard, was quoted as saying that the Social Security system was a fraud and should at the very least be rendered voluntary. John Schureman and YAF State Chairman Dana Rohrabacher lit a Social Security card at the demonstration, while other YAF members looked on. In April, two other California YAF chapters cosponsored a Libertarian Action Conference that offered Mises as the featured speaker.

While libertarian writers and projects attracted new people to YAF, several interlocking developments contributed to a rise in libertarian sentiment among already existing members. Foremost was a more favorable attitude by some YAF members toward the counterculture that was becoming more dominant among mid-decade American youth. YAF had developed as a radical challenge to what was perceived as the modern liberal establishment. College professors and administrators were viewed as representative exponents of the modern liberal outlook. As the 1960s progressed and the Left began to attack those in power on campus, many in YAF joined in. Some adopted a general antiestablishment posture, supporting the counterculture and its supposed opposition to the establishment. Indeed, as Bill Rusher noted years later in "The Rise of the Right" (1993):

> the beauty of libertarianism was that it seemed congruent with many of the things that students of that generation were beginning to say and feel: Big is Bad. Do Not Fold, Spindle or Mutilate Me. Let Me Do my Own Thing. Stop The World — I Want to Get Off. It's My Life — Let Me Live It. Big Brother Will Get You. And so on.

One aspect of the counterculture was the use of marijuana and other drugs. While use of marijuana certainly wasn't limited to the libertarians in YAF, they saw the laws against marijuana possession as an example of government intervention that prevent the exercise of individual rights. From the beginning, some in YAF had advocated the decriminalization of the substance — a position subsequently advocated by Buckley. One of the people who attended the Sharon conference and served on the YAF National Board of Directors in its early days, Yale graduate Richard Cowan, has devoted his life to the legalization of marijuana.

There was also a wide range of other issues, such as the extent to which demonstrators should be restrained, the extent to which use of personal property should be restricted, and the extent to which government can properly make demands on its citizens. Beyond all specific issues was an identification with the music, clothes, and lifestyle of the counterculture. Belief in individual liberty led to a practical insistence on the freedom to "do your own thing." Libertarians were more open to these ideas than traditional conservatives. The difference in attitudes, values, and outlook would surface in practical political terms as YAF members gathered for another biennial national convention in St. Louis over Labor Day weekend in 1969.

David Friedman saw the difference as one that was also caused by a fundamental disagreement about strategy and target audiences. In an undated paper he circulated entitled "What are we fighting over?" he maintained that when you are selling an idea, how you sell it and what you label it are influenced by the values and outlooks of those you are trying to reach. He saw the fusionists and traditionalists in YAF as seeking "to convert and to organize people who wear ties, people who live in suburbia, people who live in the South — people who, however much they object to certain elements of present-day America, basically identify with it, and see their objective as the preservation of existing freedom." Libertarians, on the other hand, were attempting to reach a different audience, "those dissatisfied with our existing society, especially the young, [and who believe] that what is wrong is not too much capitalism but too little. [Their approach] is directed at those who seek, not to preserve freedom, but to gain it."

Though YAF members held divergent philosophical orientations, they could unite in opposition to the modern liberal orthodoxy.

Thus, according to Friedman, people's approach to the counterculture depended not just on the inherent value of that or any other cultural phenomenon but on whether people in the counterculture were the audience they were trying to reach. Libertarians and traditionalists reacted differently to changing attitudes among students and emphasized different issues when appealing to them. Friedman believed that "for the 'traditionalist,' anticommunism and support of the war are useful issues. For the 'libertarians' they are liabilities. The people we are trying to persuade are already strongly antiwar." For Friedman, one's stand on the counterculture could be seen as a marketing decision. What is the product you want to sell and who is your target audience?

For some in YAF, a logical extension of libertarian opposition to the state's involvement in the lives of its citizens was a move to anarchism or, as it was sometimes formulated, "anarchocapitalism." Should there be limited government, or no government at all? The debate was joined in companion articles that appeared in the April 1969 issue of the New Guard, a few months before the upcoming YAF National Convention. Leading off was Jerome Tuccille, who criticized radical libertarian Karl Hess for advocating anarchy as well as a wrongheaded view of the New Left as in some way libertarian. Tuccille maintained that any system that moved to anarchism would quickly be supplanted by a dictatorial order. In effect, he claimed that an anarchistic society could not long survive. Reflecting on Hess' fascination with an alliance between libertarians and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other elements of the New Left, Tuccille failed to discern any strains of libertarianism in these organizations.

In his own New Guard article, Hess maintained that those he labeled conservative libertarians or "reform statists" are pessimistic about Man (his capitalization) and optimistic about the state. For him, this constituted a reversal of reality. People who believed in individual liberty, in his opinion, must have a favorable view of mankind. Proper understanding of the individual leads to distrust of government and an understanding that it must be abolished: "Anarchy is the social 'yes' of every man who believes in Man and believes him fit to be fully free." From his discussions with people active in New Left organizations such as SDS, he developed the idea that common cause could be made with those who, while on the Left, shared a belief in individual liberty. He concluded his article by declaring, "I stand with those who stand with Man and against the state. If this means anarchy, I hope we all make the most of it, left and right."

"A lot of successful politicians *opposed* the Vietnam War, Senator, but if you were actually a *member* of the Viet Cong. . . ."

Hess became a regular feature of debates and discussions in YAF. In April 1969, at YAF's Mid-Atlantic regional conference in New York, he participated in a panel discussion with Tuccille, fusionist guru Frank Meyer, and Professor Henry Paolucci of St. John's University. The panel was a turning point in the process of separation between traditionalists and fusionists, on the one side, and libertarians and anarchists, on the other. Tuccille maintains that he became radicalized by the reaction of a predominantly antilibertarian audience of YAF members, although his recollection of a traditionalist-dominated gathering was not shared by a number of libertarians who were also present. According to Donald Meinshausen, "The debate made an impression on me and many others who later became libertarians. It was here that I first met Karl, and Murray Rothbard, the Karl Marx of Libertarianism. It was here that the East and West Coast leaders of YAF first met to plan to organize a libertarian caucus." Writing a few years after the meeting, David Walter remembers that "libertarian ideas carried [the] conference — laissez-faire and TANSTAAFL [There Ain't No Such Thing as a Free Lunch] banners hung on the walls, speeches were libertarian in tone, and the trads came off looking like a mob of slightly dimwitted high schoolers." (Both Meinshausen's and Walter's comments appeared in the November 1974 issue of New Libertarian Notes.)

In August 1969, just before the YAF National Convention, Hess debated Luce at the New Guard offices on the topic of anarchism, with a transcript subsequently published and distributed by YAF. While the vast majority of YAF members did not support anarchism, Hess had become a new political personality on the youthful Right. Being featured in the New Guard and taking part in YAF debates made Hess a draw to some YAF members, while also bringing to the organization some libertarians who were enamored of the Hess persona and philosophical position.

The next act of the drama was the 1969 National Convention at St. Louis. The Libertarian Caucus promoted a slate of candidates for the National Board. All were unsuccessful. But the critical event took place during the debate on the platform. While a strong majority of YAF members advocated a voluntary military, differences existed on how to express that opposition. Many libertarians maintained that opposition to the draft called for resistance, including going to Canada, a position deemed unacceptable to most conservatives in the organization. During the platform debate on draft resistance, one libertarian member, Dave Schumacher, lit a photocopy of a draft card on the convention floor, an action abhorrent to the more conservative members. There was now no turning back. For some libertarians the marriage with their more traditionalist partners in YAF had been broken. On Vietnam, draft resistance, the legalization of drugs, and other issues, the differences were perceived as too great for a continued coalition with the young conservatives who made up the majority of YAF.

A good argument can be made that it was from this event that a distinct politically active libertarian movement began. Samuel Edward Konkin, begins his "History of the Libertarian Movement," by saying, "Prior to 1969, there was no 'organized' Libertarian Movement." He cites the 1969 YAF convention as its origin. Likewise, in her "Roads to Dominion" (1995), historian Sara Diamond claims, "The pivotal event in the formation of the 1970s libertarian movement was the 1969 convention of Young Americans for Freedom." Two years after that YAF convention, the Libertarian Party was formed, and several new purely libertarian entities came into being.

But despite all the dispute and dissension that occurred at the 1969 National Convention, there continued to be a very important libertarian segment in the organization. Two additional surveys of the YAF leadership — one in 1969 before the YAF National Convention and the other in 1970 — indicate that YAF's philosophical distribution remained relatively stable. The percentage selecting "Libertarian" or "Objectivist" was 26% in 1966, 22% in 1969, and 29% in 1970. The similarities from 1966 to 1970 are striking, with a small increase among libertarians in the year following the divisive 1969 convention.

David Friedman's column, "The Radical," continued to appear in the New Guard into 1970. Contemporary with the events in St. Louis, Friedman had written Frank Meyer, an editor at National Review and the most prominent advocate of the fusionist position, about the value of interaction among the various components of the conservative movement:

> The libertarian-traditionalist alliance was useful to libertarians, if only as a restraint keeping them from the excesses of people like my friend Karl Hess. It was also useful in other ways. . . . I feel that there is much of value in the traditionalist view of man and society. The decision to be in favor of freedom does not answer all questions. If I, and those who agree with me are entirely cut off from contact with the traditionalist view, we will be the poorer.

In the 2008 YAF alumni survey Friedman recalled that his time in YAF "provided me an opportunity to improve my writing. Helped encourage me to write on political/economic/philosophical issues. Some of what I wrote for the New Guard ended up in my first book."

Luce also continued to write his column in the New Guard well into 1970 and remained on YAF's national staff as chapter director and featured speaker at chapter events and conferences. Nevertheless, to Jerome Tuccille and some others who had abandoned YAF, he was not a libertarian but only "an effective weapon for the New Right in its attempts to co-opt the libertarian Right and, in its desire to cloak its authoritarian nature with a façade of superficial libertarianism." To the dismay of critics such as Tuccille and his fellow radical libertarians and anarchists, associated with The Libertarian Forum, not all libertarians were leaving YAF. Those who stayed must therefore be declared outside the movement.

In addition to the Friedman and Luce columns, YAF kept publishing the works of libertarian writers in its monthly magazine, including Lowell Ponte, Tibor Machan, and David Brudnoy. Shortly after the national convention, California libertarian Ken Grubbs became editor of the New Guard. Two years later another libertarian, Jerry Norton, became editor. An associate editor during much of the 1970s was David Brudnoy, whose libertarian positions generated much discussion, including those evident in his 1973 cover article on "Victimless Crimes." Other libertarian writers also appeared in the pages of the New Guard; and in 1976, libertarian David Boaz became editor.

New York continued to have a significant libertarian segment among its campus members. At Baruch College, the YAF chapter proposed an alternative libertarian program in place of the national office's "Young America's Freedom Offensive." Basically, the proposal emphasized "Taxation is Theft," "Community Affairs and Community Control," and the legalization of abortion. The last objective was being promoted at a time when abortion remained an illegal procedure in New York state and the Supreme Court had not yet issued its landmark decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*. This was also a time when a significant portion of the YAF membership supported a woman's right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy.

In spring 1969, Orange County, California, YAF members conducted a demonstration in which they burned Social Security cards.

Despite its differences with the national organization about the appropriate projects to be emphasized, the Baruch chapter wanted to become "the model for Young Americans for Freedom chapters throughout the country." Baruch YAF and its allies were committed to working within Young Americans for Freedom. Although the national organization never did adopt the proposed new projects, the autonomy of local chapters of YAF allowed them to choose, adopt, or adapt whatever was being emphasized nationally as well as undertake other projects, developed locally.

YAF's libertarian influence continued into the 1970s and well beyond. Eric Scott Royce, who became active in YAF at the University of Virginia after the 1969 convention, attended the 1973 convention and noted the presence of many fellow libertarians. Royce reported himself "amazed at the proceedings. There was a brand new libertarian caucus, small to be sure, but remarkably vocal and a definite thorn in the side of the National crowd." Four years after the St. Louis convention, "Libertarians and their allies made themselves felt both in the voting for officers and in floor discussion on platform planks such as [the Vietnam War draft] amnesty and pot." In later years, several libertarians served on YAF's national board or staff. In the '70s, David Boaz was a national director as well as (later) the editor of the New Guard. John Buckley was elected national chairman in 1977, and Roger Ream served on the national board. In the '80s, Tom Lizardo of New York (who until earlier this year was chief of staff to Ron Paul) served as a national board member, vice chairman, and executive director. In the early '90s, Jim Bieber of California was one of several libertarians on the YAF National Board.

A number of other people who were involved in the libertarian caucus campaign at the 1969 YAF National Convention went on to careers in politics. Some served in Republican administrations. William (Shawn) Steel is currently the

Republican National Committeeman from California. Dana Rohrabacher was elected to Congress in 1988 and continues to represent a California district. Joseph Michael Cobb served during the Reagan administration as Deputy Director of the White House Office of Policy Formation. C. Ron Kimberling was a presidential appointee in the U.S. Department of Education from 1981–88, then became the first executive director of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and is now president of the Chicago campus of Argosy University. Though he was a member of the California libertarian faction that challenged the fusionist leadership of the organization in St. Louis, he looks back with a belief that "time and the common enemy of collectivism have healed most" of the wounds from that convention. Retrospectively, it appears that YAF provided him with a base of lifelong friends and sharpened his political beliefs. He said in his YAF alumni survey,

The Libertarian Caucus promoted a slate of candidates for the National Board. All were unsuccessful.

> I owe my seven years of service in the 1980s Reagan Administration to those formative experiences, and I feel I know exactly where to turn for information and opportunities for political engagement as a result of those formative years. Most people I have met have episodic experiences with politics and political philosophy that leaves them largely uncertain about most issues. YAF in its heyday truly attracted the "best and the brightest," and many of its young leaders have made a major imprint on America and the world.

Considering YAF's strong emphasis on free-market economics, it is no surprise that some of its libertarian members would want to create nonprofit organizations and publications to advance an understanding and appreciation of laissez-faire. To this end, many went on to develop their own organizations with an appeal beyond students and youth.

The International Society for Individual Liberty came about in 1989 through a merger of the Society for Individual Liberty and the Libertarian International. Among its founders were Jarrett Wollstein, former YAF chairman at University of Maryland; David Walter, YAF national director from 1967–69; and Donald Ernsberger, YAF activist at Penn State.

Robert Poole started the Reason Foundation and was its chief executive officer from 1978–2001, continuing his involvement as the Searle Freedom Trust Transportation Fellow at the Reason Foundation. Llewellyn Rockwell, Jr., a YAF member while an undergraduate at Tufts University, founded the Ludwig von Mises Institute in 1982. Among its adjunct faculty are Harry Veryser, a professor at University of Detroit Mercy who was a Michigan YAF activist, and William Luckey, YAF chapter chairman at St. John's University and now professor of political science at Christendom College.

The executive vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute is David Boaz, former YAF Vanderbilt University chairman, Kentucky state chairman, national director, and editor of the New Guard. Serving as vice president for legal affairs and director of Cato's Center for Constitutional Studies is Dr. Roger Pilon, a YAF activist at the University of Chicago. Daniel Griswold, a YAF leader at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, is Cato's director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies. Griswold claimed in his YAF alumni survey that his time in YAF "made [him] more politically aware and more supportive of the ideals of the Reagan Revolution." Ted Galen Carpenter, a YAF chapter chairman while an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, is Cato's vice president for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies. Both Doug Bandow, former Stanford YAF chairman, and Daniel J. Mitchell, former University of Georgia YAF chairman, are Senior Fellows at the Cato Institute.

The Future of Freedom Foundation was established in 1989 and has posted nearly 2,000 articles on its website. It is one of the most comprehensive libertarian economics resource banks on a wide range of issues. Serving as senior fellow is Sheldon Richman, YAF chapter chairman at Temple University in the late 1960s. Richman is also editor of The Freeman, a free-market periodical. It is sponsored by the Foundation for Economic Education, whose current president is Lawrence Reed, an active YAF member in high school and at Grove City College. Reed recalled his experiences in high school in the 1960s when he reported in his YAF alumni survey:

> In those days, YAF provided its new recruits with a wealth of books, magazines and articles — most notably for me, F.A. Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom," Henry Grady Weaver's "The Mainspring of Human Progress," Henry Hazlitt's "Economics in One Lesson," and a subscription to The Freeman, the monthly journal of the Foundation for Economic Education. The message was simple: If you want to be an effective anticommunist, you had better know something about philosophy and economics.

Reed went on to join the faculty at Northwood University and became president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy before assuming his current position with FEE in 2008.

The Atlas Society promotes a culture that affirms and embodies the core Objectivist values of reason, individualism, freedom, and achievement. From 2005–08, the editor-in-chief of its publication the New Individualist was Robert James Bidinotto. While in high school in the mid-1960s, he became active in YAF. As he explained in an October 2007 issue of the New Individualist,

> I formed a local chapter of Young Americans for Freedom. Back then, YAF was *the* national organization for conservative and libertarian youth (I mean, there weren't enough of us to have even *two* national right-wing organizations). . . . I graduated from high school in June 1967. . . . That same summer, prior to starting my first year of college, I attended the national YAF convention in Pittsburgh, as an official voting member of the Pennsylvania delegation. It was a heady experience to meet hundreds of very smart kids who shared my political interests. I didn't feel quite so weird and alone anymore.

Bidinotto went on to be chairman of a YAF chapter at Grove City College, a chapter that also produced Dr. Camille Castorina, a former associate professor of business at Brewton-Parker College, Jeffrey Hummel, assistant professor of

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Ends and Means

by Stephen Cox

Vermillion College wanted a library. Calvin Brattle wanted to make a stand. But was he right?

The ball came bouncing down the sidewalk, and a yell came after it.

"Hey, Mr. Brattle! How 'bout a game?"

"Yeah, Mr. Brattle! Before you bulldoze the place!"

It was Jason Chang, the president of the History Club, and his buddy, Phil Hawkins, who wasn't president of anything but was a pretty good basketball player. Phil and Jason had been by far the nicest students in the Sophomore Seminar.

Calvin Brattle caught the ball and yelled back to them.

"Sure, guys. If you don't mind playing with the enemy."

"You're on, Mr. Brattle," Jason said. Then he took off his sunglasses and set them on the improvised bench near the improvised basketball court in the vacant lot that was soon to become the site of the new library of Vermillion College. He set the glasses neatly on the edge of the bench, so that no passerby would be denied a right to sit there. That was the way Jason was.

Calvin took off his coat and loosened his tie and prepared to shoot some baskets. When the end came, he was tired and happy. Nostalgic as well. "I'm getting old," he thought, watching Jason's swift, bashful motion as he scooped up his shades and nestled them back on his nose. Yet the sharp October air, the air that carried predictable memories of Calvin's first days in college, was also the air of progress.

"Sure you're not mad at me because of the library?" he asked.

"Nah," Jason said, and his buddy repeated, "Nah." "I like to read books, too," Jason added, wrinkling his brow like a thoughtful 60-year-old. "Anyway, I guess the college has a right to build a library on its own land." "I agree," Phil said, like another aging statesman.

"Thanks, guys," Calvin said, tossing the ball back. "If Vermillion doesn't have that right, nobody does. It's a crucial part of American history — private property."

The two boys grinned and nodded. Vermillion had always been a private college, and it had always been proud of the fact.

Calvin said goodbye and walked across the street behind the vacant lot, headed for the side door of what was already being called the Old Library. That door led to the archives section, where he had some work to do.

Calvin Brattle was Dean of Students. His title meant a number of things. Primarily it meant that he was not a professor, which he would have been if he had managed to parlay his Ph.D. into a real, tenure-track, academic job. But times were rough the year he graduated — that year, and the next year, and the year after that. Finally he decided to take what he called a "para-academic post."

He liked it, actually. Despite all the bureaucratic stuff, it let him teach a course or two in history, as long as he taught it on his own time. Last spring, he'd taught the Sophomore Seminar, which nobody else wanted to teach, because it meant that you had to grade 30 naive, badly written papers, each of them 50 pages long. His subject was The History of Liberty, because he was a libertarian.

He had to admit that it was a pretty good life for a 32-year-old — a perfect life, maybe, if he had only managed to maintain some kind of sexual relationship . . . But that wasn't a good thought for a beautiful Wednesday morning. The important thing, that morning, was to make some progress on the Groundbreaking Project.

On November 15 (Founders Day), construction would officially begin on the New Library. With that event in view, Calvin had been commissioned — by President Winslow, himself, in person — to provide a historical account of "the early days of Vermillion College . . . You know, pioneers, and so forth. And the library of course. Early hardships. . . . Make it, say, 30 pages. A 30-page brochure . . . Pictures. Plenty of pictures . . ."

Grantholm Blandish Winslow, known by his employees as the Great White Hope — or simply The Great White, or even more simply, GW, the Founder of Our Country — gazed persistently at the ceiling, as if Calvin's brochure had already been tacked to the pale-blue plaster. After two or three minutes the gaze remained fixed, yet the volume dropped off, and Calvin realized that he had been dismissed.

But he was a historian, after all. It wasn't everyone who got to enter the little door in the Old Library that was stenciled "Researchers Only." It wasn't everyone who was allowed to sit at the scarred oak table, waiting for a cranky librarian to deliver long gray document boxes for his inspection, rank on rank, like soldiers in uniform. "Vermillion College, History of, Libraries . . ." "Vermillion College, History of, Properties . . ." "Vermillion College, History of, Student life . . . "

"Student life" was the easiest. It was mainly pictures, most of them showing young men and (later) women, studying or pretending to study in various buildings that had long ago ceased to exist. Any of these shots would be good enough for the brochure. The more relevant "History of, Libraries" consisted mainly of two dogeared copies of "Rules for Patrons" (1874); some documents about computerization (1985); and floor plans for the New Library, now the Old Library (1913) — a dollhouse version of the libraries at Michigan and Berkeley, themselves reenactments of the library of the Sorbonne. He could get two pages out of that stuff, tops. There were also some small items, largely obituary, about the string of nonentities who had served as College Librarian. You'd think that the library, of all places, would squirrel away some important material about its history. No such luck.

"History of, Properties" was the long shot, but it had the only fat files in the bunch. Property records began with the so-called Bison Tract (donated by Edward T. Fenwick "for Support of the New College," 1833), and concluded with Vermillion's last land acquisition (the Donaldson Lot, 31 years ago), all apparently in good order. It was wonderful, he thought, this exacting concern with the rights of property. Year after year, generation after generation, ownership was contracted and recorded, with as much respect for an acre of Midwestern bottomland as Europeans once entertained for the Salic law. More, indeed. It was a wonderful thing, and a deeply satisfying thing to Calvin. He knew that there could be no personal rights without property rights; and here, in unbroken succession, was the evidence of a culture's devotion to ownership. So long as property was sacred, Vermillion's future was secure.

And then he saw it. It was an ordinary piece of paper, eight by eleven, more or less, but browned by age, as if some secret fire had been gnawing slowly, slowly inside it. Yet it was still sharply legible – still clear and conclusive evidence of a right to property.

Calvin held it in front of him. He turned it toward the light. He studied it, comparing it with the other papers. He transcribed it. Then he furrowed his brow and studied it again. Five minutes later, he had made his decision. He called for an appointment to speak with President Winslow.

Alexandra Nathan, Executive Vice President of Vermillion College, was the subject of many witticisms.

"Winslow is God, and Nathan is His Prophet."

"On the one hand, she doesn't like men. On the other hand, she doesn't like women, either."

"It's never safe to stand between a nickel and Alex Nathan."

"Question: What's the difference between hell and a visit to Dr. Nathan? Answer: Nothing."

If anyone was responsible for building the modern Vermillion College, Alexandra Nathan was that person.

It hadn't been easy. She was 61 years old, and she had seen a lot. When Calvin entered her office, she didn't bother to shake hands. Her time was valuable.

"So," she said, "you want to destroy the New Library?"

"Pardon me?" he said.

They sat for 30 seconds, facing each other. Thirty seconds can be a very long time.

"As I understand it," she continued, "you've found what you call a deed of property, and you intend to announce your discovery. This 'deed,' as you construe it, mandates the transfer of the land that we intend for the New Library at Vermillion College to someone other than Vermillion College. In fact, it mandates the transfer of this land to someone who couldn't care less about Vermillion College — or libraries, or knowledge, or anything else that you or I would remotely connect with education. It provides for the transfer of this land to someone who wants to destroy those things."

Calvin wasn't used to hearing statements like that. They were harsh, dogmatic statements. Angry statements. But fact spoke for itself; personalities had nothing to do with it. He kept calm.

"Here's what happened, Dr. Nathan. In the document I discovered, Amos P. Fenwick, grandson of the founder, grants 1.4 acres of land to Vermillion College to use as it pleases, provided that on some portion of the land a chapel be built and maintained, 'dedicated to the glory of God and to the eternal truth of the Protestant religion, according to the established creed of the Church of God of the Holy Inspiration.' The document directs that if such a chapel is not built, the land will revert to the donor, or to his heirs. Of course, the chapel was never built, so therefore . . ."

He paused. Dr. Nathan had not changed her expression. She was looking back at him, gravely but skeptically, like one of those allegorical goddesses gazing down from the ceiling of the Old Library. Goddesses, it occurred to him, usually demanded obedience.

"I'm sorry about this," he said. "I'm . . . I'm sorry about the trouble it might cause for . . . all of us. All of . . . you, I mean." It was an ungainly remark, but Dr. Nathan didn't react. She was sitting behind her desk, imperturbable. "In spite of that," he said, "I consider it my duty . . ."

"Your duty," she said, leaning forward. "You consider it your duty to announce this great archival discovery — is that right? Thereby returning the property to its rightful heirs?"

"Yes, Dr. Nathan. You see . . ."

"I do see. I even agree, in a sense. You believe in the right to property. I do too. So did the founders of Vermillion College."

She smiled. Calvin smiled in return.

"But that doesn't mean," she said, "that I'm prepared to surrender that land to Heather Fenwick Crosby."

Suddenly, there was another being in the room — spectral, yet vivid nonetheless. Calvin had never seen the famous HFC in the flesh. No one at Vermillion had. Her ancestors had founded the college, but for that very reason she had never visited the place and never, as she was proud to say, intended to — "except, perhaps, to tear it down." She had said that to Larry King. She had said that to Time magazine, when she appeared on its cover as "The Feisty Lady of Philanthropy." She had said that to Chris Matthews, immediately after confiding that her purpose in life was "the fulfillment of John Lennon's song 'Imagine' — the creation of a world in which all beings can live in peace. Imagination, you know, is very different from this hand-me-down stuff that some call education." She hadn't said that to Oprah, not exactly, but she had discussed with her "the ways — and I can tell you, they are countless — in which so-called private property, private enterprise, and private education are ruining our country. My goodness," she said coquettishly, "what would have happened to my own life if I'd insisted on my *privacy*?"

"Maybe," Oprah replied, with a sly little smile, "you wouldn't have met Bill Clinton."

Then the audience was on its feet, applauding, while Heather Fenwick Crosby buried her laughing face in her little hands, like an innocent girl who has said something "wicked." It was well known that she had slept with President Clinton.

"But seriously," she said, when the tumult died. "Education doesn't come from books. Education comes from the heart, from a heart that overflows with the spirit of giving." Then the applause broke out again, and as the commercials began, Oprah and HFC stood on center stage, locked in a philanthropic hug.

Calvin shuddered at the memory. In the bad days after grad school, the days of unemployment, he had watched a lot of daytime television. HFC was the kind of spectre that appeared to you when you were unemployed.

"The sole heir of the Fenwick estate," Dr. Nathan reminded him, "is Heather Fenwick Crosby."

"Yes," he said, wincing. "But that's not . . . I mean, that has no relevance to the moral issue . . ."

"Ah," she said. "I thought that would be your position. No relevance. No possible relevance to any issue of right or wrong. As far as you're concerned, it's just words on a piece of paper — correct? Isn't that correct, Mr. Brattle?"

"I'm sorry," he said. "I don't think I understand."

"No? You don't understand? But you understand so many other things. Well, never mind. Let's take a moment and discuss your own perspective on your discovery."

If you had looked at a picture of this scene, and studied the face of Vice President Nathan, you would have thought she was having a good time. She was relaxed. She was smiling — faintly yet pleasantly. But that's not what Calvin Brattle thought. What he thought was, "She's moving in for the kill." Then he thought, "That's ridiculous. Why should she want to kill me?

"Thank you," he said, pulling himself together. "The importance of the document is, at least in my view, that it gives us the opportunity to educate the public about the

"Gentlemen, we make money the old-fashioned way, and it's got to *stop*!"

nature of rights, including, and fundamentally including, the right to property. What I mean is . . ."

"Opportunity?" she interrupted. "Yes, we have many opportunities to educate people. We are a college, after all. But first, about the document itself — I mean the transcription you showed to President Winslow. I wanted to ask you, is there any possibility that this copy may not be a *fully accurate* reproduction of the original? You don't think there's any chance that . . . Well, mistakes are sometimes made, and mistakes of this kind can easily be forgiven. What's that sports expression — no harm, no foul?"

Calvin had never heard that the vice president possessed a sense of humor, but now, for some reason, she was smiling broadly, as if they were sharing a joke, a good joke, a joke meant for them alone. The problem was that he didn't understand this joke.

And then he understood it. She was trying to persuade him to destroy the deed. Destroy it, or refile and forget it. The same thing. That's what she was trying to do!

"Yes," he said. "I mean no! I mean, there's no possible, there isn't any possible way that I . . ." He stopped, astonished by what was happening. She wanted him to destroy a historical document — just for the sake of Vermillion College!

She nodded, as if Calvin were making progress on solving some obscure mathematical problem. "At present," she said, "there are only three people who know about the existence of that document: you, me, and the president. I'm sure that the president only had time to glance at it – at the transcription you made. That's why he asked me to speak with you. He wanted me to explore the significance of this issue with you."

"I . . . uh . . ." Their eyes locked. Calvin had never "explored the significance" of any issue, except in his speeches at the Libertarian Supper Club. It had all seemed so simple on those occasions.

"In my own view," she said, "the matter is fairly clear. See whether you agree. Unless we build a chapel on that land, a chapel dedicated to the doctrines of an insane Christian sect, which is probably extinct . . ."

"Not entirely," Calvin said. "I researched it. There's actually a congregation in . . . I think it's Elizabeth, New Jersey. In or near Elizabeth . . ." Even as he said that, he knew that he was missing the point.

"I repeat. Unless we build that chapel, for the use of an insane Christian sect — an action that would deprive Vermillion College of its intellectual integrity — the land will revert to the heirs of the estate. And it may be too late to build such a thing, even if we decided to forfeit all principle and do it. Which we will not. Furthermore," she continued, her voice rising, "as I've noted, the sole heir is Heather Fenwick Crosby."

"I . . . I don't know what to say . . ."

"I would think you'd have a good deal to say, given your actions so far. And you can go to the press and say it. You can tell them about the inviolate nature of property rights. You can tell them about the document you've found, a document that awards the last undeveloped land on or near our campus to a crazy person."

"Crazy?" he said. "There are so many definitions of insanity. . ."

His voice petered out.

"Now look here, Mr. Brattle," she said. "Have you ever read Hume's 'Of the Original Contract'?"

Most people would have been startled by this apparent change of subject. But to a libertarian like Calvin Brattle, it seemed perfectly natural.

"Yes, of course," he answered, with some relief.

"You'll recall Hume's argument," she said. "To put it plainly, he argues that time justifies crime. He observes that every piece of real property in the world was stolen at some time, but we can't overturn society in order to fix it. Liberty can't exist without a social structure that people can depend on. Invest in. Have their rights protected by. Abstract morality doesn't count." Her brow knitted. "Would we have more liberty if we turned the country back to the Indians?"

"It was stolen," he said.

"At this point," she said, "who cares?"

"Surely," he said, "you aren't arguing against the harmony of ends and means. You can't believe that we can defend people's rights if we're violating them at the same time?"

"No," she said. "Not if you put it that way. But I wouldn't put it that way. There are too many undefined terms. And there's no reason to talk about harmony if what you really mean is identity."

She wasn't sure he understood. No, it was obvious he didn't.

"Tell me," she continued, "what would you do if you had the chance to kill the 9/11 terrorists, a week before they did what they did?"

"That's a hypothetical question."

"I know it is."

"You want me to kill them?"

"Maybe. But suppose you just stole their money, so they couldn't get to those planes. Wouldn't that be worth it?"

"You can't calculate a thing like that. Ethics isn't a matter of calculation. Rights are indivisible."

The vice president looked at Calvin Brattle. He was an attractive young man. An idealistic young man. A pompous young man.

"So," she said, "you wouldn't care to calculate the difference between the investment that Vermillion College has

I'm going out to forge an alliance."

already made on what it assumed, for good reason, was its own property, and the amount of time, money, and effort that Heather Fenwick Crosby has invested on that property? Perhaps the difference is, in strict terms, incalculable. It's the difference between something and nothing."

It's very unfortunate, she thought, this pleasure I take in torturing him. It's like the pleasure Jesus must have gotten from his conversation with the Rich Young Ruler. I know it's hopeless, but I can't resist. It's idealists like Calvin Brattle who cause most of the trouble in this world.

"I remember," she said, "that when you were interviewed here, you made a point of mentioning that you were a follower of Ayn Rand."

"Follower? No. But I've certainly been influenced. Strongly influenced. I didn't want to interview under false pretenses."

"I thought so. Perhaps this excess of conscientiousness is why you are not, at present, occupying a position in some department of history?"

That, Calvin thought, was a mean thing to say. Mean. Nasty. Unfair. Everybody knew how much bias there was in the academic world. If you were honest about your principles, you couldn't get a decent job. But was that any reason not to be honest?

"Is that any reason not to be honest?" he said out loud.

"Is that any reason," she said, "not to appreciate how far out on a limb I went to give you the job you've got?"

Calvin looked at the old woman in her business suit, and he pitied her. It was one thing to be old, that was bad enough; but to be old and to have no principles, no intellectual legacy to bequeath to others — that was horrible, disgusting, almost inconceivable. Already she was talking like a craven bureaucrat, reminding him of the favors she had done for him. It was true, of course, that he wouldn't have a job if it hadn't been for her, but the idea that he should surrender, that he should pay her back by relinquishing every vestige of morality, of self-esteem . . .

"It's true," he said, looking down at his hands. "I know I wouldn't have a job if it hadn't . . . if you hadn't signed off on me. And it's a good job. I like it a lot. It's just that I can't . . . I can't give up my principles."

He didn't see that she looked at him with pity, too.

"Perhaps," she continued, "that's why you hired Joe White. Your principles."

Another cheap shot, Calvin thought.

"José Blanco," he said. "And I don't like him any better than you do."

"Then why did you hire him? Here was a man who had spent his life agitating for radical causes . . . "

"Radical by some definitions. Antiwar. Anti-imperialism. Immigrant rights. The rights of Native Americans . . . . "

"Indians, you mean. I'm exactly as native as they are. And so are you. We were both born right here in this country. But I suppose you're referring to those protests he started."

Calvin winced again. "You mean the ones about 'the absence on our campus'?"

"That's right. Every Thursday on the plaza. The 'absence' being 'the absence of Native Americans.' And, I suppose, of as many brains as Joe White can 'inspire' with his 'message of hope.' "

"People have a right to demonstrate."

"On private property?"

He had to admit that she had him there. "No," he said. "It's true, however, that Native Americans have, historically, been victims of the, of the . . . "

" 'The government,' I think you're about to say. Rather than 'Vermillion College.' But let's not rehash the history of North America. Let's talk about the history of your erstwhile assistant, Joseph White, as he called himself until he decided to revive his career as political agitator. You know as well as I do that he isn't an American Indian. He isn't a Mexican, either. His parents were as American as . . ."

"His grandmother was from Guatemala. At least I think so. When he changed his name, he told me . . ."

But a strange thing had happened to Dr. Nathan's face. It was turning red, with little flecks of white. "For Christ's sake!" she shouted. "What God damned difference does it make! Can't you see what's right in front of you? He's a troublemaker and a demagogue – it's obvious, and it always has been! And you hired him. That's why he's here. That's why he's leading these inane demonstrations. That's why he's giving us a black eye in the press."

"I know, I know!" Calvin yelled. Although he wasn't used to shouting, it turned out to be infectious. "But I'm sure he's sincere in his convictions!"

"Sincere? Is that why he changed his name? Is that why he organized a bunch of students to picket the president's office over 'the racist refusal of Vermillion College to hire people of color'? Disregarding himself, of course, the supposed person of color. Disregarding Danny Wong and Mirasol Sanchez and Ruby Jones. Admittedly, Ruby got married and is now Ruby Steinberg, so I guess that explains his adverse reaction to Ruby. And of course he hates Mirasol, because she is 'wearing a white mask.' And you, of course. His former boss. You can bet he hates you too."

That was a shock. "What do you mean?" Calvin said. "I'm not a person of color."

"No, you're not. I guess he's just decided that gays are entitled to affirmative action in the hatred department."

"Gays!"

"You're gay, aren't you?"

"Well . . . I mean . . . Yes, I guess I am. I mean, I am. But I don't see why . . ."

"I suppose," she said, "you're going to sue me now. What I said is contrary to the state labor code."

"What? I'd never do a thing like that. That would be wrong."

It was just an accident, just that word "gay" that cued it in, but suddenly Calvin remembered what Mike had said, the night they broke up. "Why does everything," he said, or rather, screamed, "have to be either right or wrong with you! Huh? It can't be *just* because you're a libertarian!" That was an unfortunate memory. You had to feel sorry for a guy like Mike, a guy with no moral consciousness.

"And anyway," Calvin said, "my sexuality is irrelevant to the issue."

"It isn't irrelevant to Joseph White. He was in my office yesterday, complaining about you. Seems you don't agree to the establishment of a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered dormitory."

"No, of course I don't. That's just another form of

discrimination and ghettoization."

"Of course it is. Nevertheless, he took offense. He believes you should be fired. Something about how 'we don't need no Uncle Toms round here.' You know how he sounds when he gets excited."

"I . . . I can't believe it!" Calvin said. "I hired that guy!"

The old face had calmed itself. It was no longer red. It was smiling again.

"Let me review," she said. "You hired this guy as your assistant. You said that he had the proper background. You said that he was 'articulate, intelligent, and very well versed in university policy and management.' You noted that 'his experience in the field' had 'already been extensive.' You see, while you've been reading records, so have I. Then you said that because he had the requisite institutional qualifications, we had no legitimate reason not to hire him. It was obvious that you didn't like him, but you took a principled stand. Didn't you?"

"Yes, I . . . yes I did."

"And I went along with you," she said, looking down at her hands. "And that was a mistake. A considerable mistake. I went along with your hiring a person who wrote his master's thesis on 'The Role of University Administrators in Blocking Social Change.'"

"Fuck!" Calvin thought. But what he said was, "That was his right. He had a right to choose that topic. That doesn't necessarily interfere with his ability to do his job."

"Somehow," the vice president said, "I knew you were going to say that. But what gave you — what gave us — the right to hire him to work here? What gave us the right to hire a guy who got into the news for three months running, telling people that Vermillion College — that's us — was desecrating Indian ceremonial grounds? A guy who made us appease the press and the donors and the man in the moon by creating two or three Programs for the Study of This and That, to atone for our so-called crimes. Despite the fact that somebody in the Anthro department finally discovered that the land where we put the Biology Building had been under water for 14,000 years, until Vermillion filled in the swamp. There couldn't have been any Indian ceremonies. But by then it was too late. And because of your colleague's magnificent effort at speaking truth to power, and the notoriety that ensued, we couldn't fire him. We had to transfer him out of your office and make a new job for him. That, as you know, is how he became Director of Multicultural Affairs, with a salary three times your own. There's national competition for these people, you know. We have to pay them a lot if we want to *keep* them."

"All right," Calvin said. "All right! But we had no legitimate reason to discriminate against him, just because he was interested in . . . ideas that you and I might not hold. After all, that's the way libertarians are discriminated against, all the time. Conservatives too," he added, hedging his bet.

"I am not a conservative," she announced, rearing up like F.A. Hayek. "I'm a classical liberal."

"Pardon me? I'm not sure I . . . "

"Never mind," she said. "Just listen." She leaned across her desk, looking as if she'd found an ugly spot on the carpet, exactly where he was sitting. "What I want to know is this: why do you insist on spending your time doing nothing but damaging the cause of liberty? Today there's this alleged deed that gravely damages one of the few truly private colleges in the country. Before that, there was Joe White, who's made us spend three million dollars on nothing, absolutely nothing, including himself, just because of the phony publicity he's generated. And you're the one who hired him, because you took a *principled* position that politics should be irrelevant in hiring."

"And so it should be. As I said, I don't believe we should practice the same kind of discrimination that's been practiced against us."

"But I do," she said. "If it's 'discrimination' not to hire people who want to destroy you, then I say, start discriminating."

"That's a slippery slope," he said. "You can't tell what will happen if you do that."

"Yes you can," she said.

"So you're basing your sense of right and wrong on 'what will happen'?"

"What else?"

"It's incalculable."

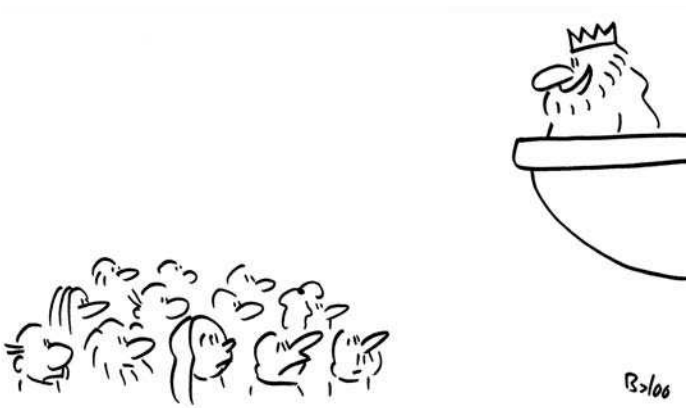
"You can calculate it. You know what will happen if HFC gets hold of that land. Or rather, you know what won't happen. Do you think she'll build a library? Do you think she'll build a gym? Do you think she'll do anything of value for our students? I don't think so. Neither do you. And you'll be responsible for whatever she does — the same way that you're responsible for whatever Joe White is doing right this moment, because you enabled him to do it."

"What's that? The myth of collective responsibility?"

"No. It's the truth of individual responsibility. Yours. It's you who hired that maniac. It's you who are determined to surrender our land to another maniac."

Even a nerd gets angry, sometimes. "Look," Calvin said. "I've had enough. I'm not responsible for Joe — I mean José. I'm not responsible for his politics. And I'm not responsible for this deed I found. If we don't own that land, we have a duty to return it to its rightful owner. Private property is the bedrock of liberty, and if we betray our trust, what can we tell our students? What can we . . . ?" He couldn't think of a way to end the sequence.

"Ah," she said, beneficently. "You actually don't mind using that word 'we.' Which in this context means the college and those who support it. The community that employs you. The community that gives its money to Vermillion because it



"I need a small, temporary tax hike — I found a great investment opportunity in Nigeria."

provides a traditional education — a libertarian education, if you will, because liberty is the tradition of our country."

"Yes," Calvin said. "But it's not just a matter of some collective tradition."

"No, it's not. So let's talk about the individual. Namely you. What are you doing for that tradition? What are you doing for the money you're paid?"

"Plenty," he said, thinking of Phil and Jason and the seminar and the basketball game and a lot of other things. But she was driving on, like a locomotive.

"In the name of liberty, you hire people who want to destroy liberty. In the name of liberty, you decide to give the resources of this college to a woman who wants to destroy both liberty and the college."

"I didn't decide that. All I've decided is to tell the truth about who owns the property."

"Yes, and if you tell the truth, Heather Fenwick Crosby will seize that land."

"*Her* land."

"She will seize that land, and use if for her own purposes. Which are far from being ours."

"I am not responsible for anyone else's conduct. We are all individuals."

"Yes we are, and it's your individual decision, either to give her that land, by publicizing the document you unearthed, or to keep her from getting it, by saying nothing."

It was true, he thought; he'd be giving her the land. But that was a strange way to put it, because the land was still hers to begin with.

"It's her land," he repeated.

"All right," said the vice president, very kindly. "If you insist on the release of that information I will make sure that you leave this college. Your contract runs till June, and we won't violate it. But we won't renew it, either. Our loyalty will expire eight months after yours did."

"I'm loyal to my principles."

"Go home and think about it."

"I've already thought about it."

He rose quickly to his feet, like a man defying slavery. Then he realized that it was a lie: he had never really thought about being fired; that had been nothing more than a hypothesis. He liked his job. He loved it! Still, there was a principle at stake. "I have to release the information," he said.

"You don't need to bother," she said. "If that's your decision, we'll do it ourselves. I wouldn't want you to claim the credit. Such as it's worth."

On the way back to his office, Calvin crossed the plaza. As usual at that hour, there was a group of students standing on the Old Library steps. They were dressed in black, wearing Día de los Muertos masks, and they were holding signs that said, "We Are the Absent Americans." As he passed, a student in black offered him a copy of José Blanco's latest manifesto.

It's a funny thing, Calvin thought, about boxes. You throw them away, and as soon as you do, you discover that you need to have them back again.

It was only yesterday, it seemed, that he'd moved into his office at Vermillion College. Now here he was, looking at stack after stack of cardboard boxes, each of them labeled "Storage." It would have been better, of course, if the labels had read "Harvard," or "Cornell," or even "Southeastern State Teachers College," but jobs for fired academic bureaucrats were few and far between. Nevertheless, he would survive. Mike and his new friend had certainly been generous, offering him a place to stay.

As soon as he turned the key on the office and walked down the steps, he noticed it was a beautiful day, after all, as beautiful as June should be. And here came Phil and Jason, striding along the sidewalk, passing a basketball back and forth between them.

"Hey guys," he said. "Looking for a game?"

"Hi, Mr. Brattle," Jason answered. "Guess not. The gym is full, and obviously we can't use *this* place any more." Calvin had never seen Jason make an angry gesture, but now there was no mistaking the tilt of his chin as he looked at the chain-link fence surrounding the construction site formerly designated for the New Library.

"Hey Mr. Brattle!" Phil interrupted. "I guess you know that Jason got Best Junior Scholar Award!" He put his arm on Jason's shoulder and rested it there, and Jason began to look happier. So, Calvin thought, that's the way it is with them now. I used to wonder.

"Congratulations!" he said. "Way to go, Jason! But listen. What I want to say is . . . I'm sorry I'm not going to be around next year. I'd always hoped I could teach the Senior Seminar."

"We're sorry too," Jason said, looking angry again. "About *what happened*." His eyes wandered back to the fence and the mounds of dirt and the concrete slabs, and the big sign hanging just under the razor wire: "Future Home of The Heather Fenwick Crosby School of Peace Studies. Dr. José Luis Blanco, Director and President. Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted."

"Believe me," Calvin said. "I'm sorrier than you are."

"I guess it wasn't your fault," Phil ventured. "I know you must have been, like, trying to do something, only they wouldn't let you do it."

I did do something, Calvin thought. I made sure that rights were maintained. You can't do more than that.

"You know," Jason said, in that newly embittered voice. "I really wouldn't mind if it was a library. But this . . ." He shrugged his free shoulder in the direction of the School of Peace. "This isn't anything we can use. And it's wrong, completely wrong."

"That's right," Phil said. "Besides, it's totally ugly. It's gonna be, like, seven stories high. And it's not like it was some . . . cathedral or something."

"No it's not," Jason said, looking at Phil in a way that Calvin found easy to interpret. "Phil and me, we were trying to figure out what they're gonna *do* in there. The only thing we came up with was, this Professor Blanco . . . "

"He isn't a professor," Calvin said.

"The newspaper said he was," Jason insisted. "That's right," Phil confirmed.

"But anyway," Jason went on. "Blanco said he wanted to get this law passed, so that every college in the state would have to start one of these Peace Studies places, or else they

couldn't be colleges or something. And he went up and saw the governor, and the governor must have agreed with him, because now they're talking like it's really gonna happen, because otherwise there will still be racism and so on. Which seems completely bogus to . . . us. So do you know anything about that, Mr. Brattle? Did you have anything to do with that?"

"Yeah, Mr. Brattle," Phil said. "Do you know anything about that?"

"Uh, yes," Calvin answered. "I think I did see something on the news . . . . But listen, about the library. I want to explain. I don't know exactly what you've heard, but what happened was this . . . "

So he talked, going through the whole story and discussing it, weighing both sides fairly but emphasizing, throughout, the importance of individual rights and responsibilities and the harmony of ends and means. "As a result," he concluded, "I found that I could no longer stay at Vermillion College."

Having finished, he expected a lively Q and A about property rights and other issues. Surprisingly, however, Jason got a skeptical look in his eyes, then stared down at his shoes and never glanced up, and Phil's gaze developed into something that Calvin was forced to recognize as pity — despite the fact that Calvin hadn't emphasized, in fact hadn't even said, in so many words, that he had been punished for his convictions.

"Well, thanks, Mr. Brattle," Phil said.

"Yeah, thanks," Jason said. "Thanks and . . . good luck."

"To you too, Jason." That was what Calvin replied. But what he thought was, "You, Jason, will go far in academic life. You've already mastered the polite dismissal — all surface, no sentiment." It was terrible to find that even his two best students couldn't see that individual rights went beyond anyone's self-interest, that you had to stand up for principle, whether anything "good" eventually resulted from it or not. But if they wanted to blame the victim, that was their responsibility. They could go on and enjoy their lives, untroubled by a moral thought.

So he told them goodbye. Afterwards, he turned to look at them. They were walking down the pathway, chatting and jostling each other and dribbling the ball between them, as happily as if they were the ones who had fought a great moral battle and had won their way to freedom. How sad! he thought. What a waste! Soon, though, their path disappeared behind the concrete and dirt of the Peace Studies building, and he never needed to think of them again. ❑

Don't Default on Me, *from page 24*

But the point of the matter is not to think about bonds. It is to think about a way of thinking. It is about the embracing of disaster.

The thing starts, perhaps, with forecasting disaster. There is a long history of this among libertarians. I first wrote about it in the 1970s, when I was on the mailing lists of the Inflation Survival Letter, the Ruff Times, et alia. I received piece after piece of mail warning me of the coming crash — double-digit inflation, *triple*-digit inflation, famine, and social chaos. Of course, it was a sales pitch to send them Federal Reserve Notes in exchange for their Krugerrands, and I may be unfair in taking it too seriously. But they did say it. They used that sales pitch over and over, which suggests that it worked. Bill Bradford used to say that there were libertarians who believed that when the crisis happened they could take a $20 gold piece and buy a block in midtown Manhattan.

In many cases, the people who took it seriously became the survivalists. To listen to some of them is to hear people who not only worry about disaster but would welcome it. Because they would be ready, which means that they would be right.

Much more common are the folks who embrace disaster in theory. I think of the argument over Social Security. Someone will propose that the system allow the payer to put his Social Security tax into a restricted private account. Then some libertarians will say, no, no, no; that's not acceptable. It's statism. The only thing a true libertarian can advocate is abolition. It's like slavery. You have to be an abolitionist.

What would happen to all the people who contributed to the system, planned on it and rely on it? They would be in the same position as the suckers holding Treasury bonds.

Absolutism is a strong wine, and occasionally I imbibe it myself. When asked about the occupation of Afghanistan, I say, "pull the plug." Few people I know who have been involved there agree with me, and sometimes I wonder if my answer is too simplistic. Still, I am sticking with it; it seems to me that for an unjustified war, which daily spreads wreckage and death, "pull the plug" is a good idea. But with problems such as public taxing and spending, retirement systems, welfare, and education, "pull the plug" is often too dire. It sounds good to no one except the already converted, sitting in the pews.

A few libertarians, envisioning a disaster, take the line "the worse, the better." To improve the current system by creating accounts within Social Security, or charter schools within the public schools, is to shore it up and preserve it, when what is wanted is to rip it down and start over. But "the worse, the better" is a Leninist line, and libertarians are not in that camp. We have a political philosophy that derives from classical liberalism. It is a bourgeois philosophy, a creed of people who work, save, and invest. We aren't people who wreck things except in the most grievous extremity.

As I write this, I can hear Bill Bradford say, "Liberty is a radical magazine." The idea of liberty is radical, and radical one's utopian vision may also be. But Liberty encompasses libertarians and classical liberals whose radicalism is of different amplitudes but whose methods are uniformly peaceful. They have fun arguing among themselves, as I am doing here. But what they propose to the public as a thing that could be done now has to be a step forward from the world that is. And that is the world of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, farm subsidies, state universities, public schools, the postal monopoly, Pell Grants, property taxes, the FDIC, the IRS, the UN, Trident submarines, Delta Force, Guantanamo, marriage licenses, and zoning.

And United States Treasury bonds. ❑

Reviews

"The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable," by George Victor. Potomac Books, 2007, 355 pages.

The Pearl Harbor Problem

Jane S. Shaw

For nearly 70 years, a war of words has been fought over the question of whether President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his top associates, especially Army Chief of Staff George Marshall, withheld information about the attack on Pearl Harbor from the commanders on Hawaii. The accusations started almost immediately after the attack on December 7, 1941. They led to official inquiries, charges of lying by witnesses in those inquiries, the suppression of official reports, and a multitude of books, including John Toland's "Infamy" (1981), Robert Stinnett's "Day of Deceit" (2000), and now George Victor's "The Pearl Harbor Myth," in addition to the more standard versions of the story by Gordon Prange — "At Dawn We Slept" (1981) — and Roberta Wohlstetter, "Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision" (1962).

Although I have no special expertise, my effort to understand what happened has become something of a personal hobbyhorse, one that began when I read John Toland's "Infamy."

So let me start with "Infamy," which I came across perhaps 15 years ago. I was struck by it for several reasons. This was Toland's third book about Japan and World War II, and, as he revealed, over the years he had changed his mind. Initially, he believed that the Japanese alone had been responsible for the surprise attack; later, he concluded that warnings had been ignored; finally, he decided that high officials in Washington, including the president, knew about the attack and withheld the information so that it would be a surprise and turn American public opinion toward entering the war.

What also struck me was that Toland didn't get the kind of favorable attention his analysis deserved. He had received a Pulitzer Prize for his 1971 book "The Rising Sun," and I usually saw at least one of his books about the European war on bookstore history shelves, but "Infamy" seemed to be ignored. (Wikipedia says that "Infamy" was "widely criticized.") Whether Toland's change of opinion, or the response to it, had anything to do with his having a Japanese wife, I don't know.

Over the years, more information came out about the circumstances surrounding Pearl Harbor, but I noticed that some prominent people still dismissed out of hand the idea that Roosevelt could have deliberately failed to warn the commanders. (Hans Trefousse's "Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy" [1982] considers the idea and then rejects it.) One such skeptic was the editorial page director of The Wall Street Journal, Robert Bartley. To him, the possibility that the president would conceal such information was "wildly implausible; what commander would sacrifice most of a fleet to open a two-front war?" (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 3, 2001).

Now we have a relatively new book that delves into the question of "who knew what when," while setting it against the broader context of Roosevelt's strategy, the international

scene, including the attack on the Philippines and our allies' experiences, and the ways in which government officials generally act under pressure.

"The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable" is not actually the latest "revisionist" book on the subject. In June 2010, the Mises Institute published Percy Greaves' "Pearl Harbor: The Seeds and Fruits of Infamy." Greaves was chief of the minority staff during the congressional hearings on Pearl Harbor in 1945–46. Never satisfied with the outcome of those hearings (the majority report put the blame exclusively on the commanders in Hawaii), Greaves criticized the investigation and later in his life worked his findings (and additional research) into a book. He died in 1984, and his widow, Bettina Bien Greaves, a contributing editor of Liberty, has edited his work into the volume that was just released. It will undoubtedly enrich our understanding of some issues, although it does not appear to rely on sources revealed after Greaves' death.

What makes George Victor's book especially interesting is that while he presents an unorthodox view of what happened at Pearl Harbor and believes that Roosevelt's actions were duplicitous, he defends those actions. He sees FDR as one of the few government leaders at the time who recognized the menace of Hitler (Churchill was another), while also facing the fact that he could not persuade the public to accept what he regarded as a necessary war against Germany. Thus, he allowed the Japanese attack to occur, in order to embroil America in the world conflict.

While Victor believes that Roosevelt's actions were duplicitous, he defends those actions.

Victor not only accepts the necessity of the war, but he emphasizes that duplicity on the scale of Roosevelt's deception is routine at the highest national levels in times of crisis. He describes the deceptions of Abraham Lincoln, James Polk, and William McKinley, and he observes that the Roosevelt administration's failure adequately to defend the Philippines, in spite of promises to do so, resulted in the conquest and occupation of the Philippines, wreaking far greater havoc on the Philippines than on Pearl Harbor. The suggestion that a president would never do something so awful as to allow a surprise attack does not hamper Victor; he takes it off the table — in his view, and in mine.

In considering Victor's book, one should bear in mind that, in addition to the hundreds of significant books and articles that have been written about Pearl Harbor, the public record produced by the 1945–46 congressional inquiry alone consists of 40 volumes (one source says 39, but that's enough). And much of the relevant source material was classified until 1979, when President Carter made available many, though not all, Pearl Harbor records. Another way of measuring the volume of material is by years of research. Gordon Prange spent 37 years researching and writing. After he died, his manuscript, originally 3,500 pages, was edited into a more readable 873. Robert Stinnett spent 17 years on his book. Victor's book, easily accessible and a mere 355 pages long, is inevitably selective. It summarizes a lot of material and presumably omits a lot.

Only experts can accurately determine whether all the summaries are correct and all the selections judicious; and given the heat of the controversy, expert objectivity is somewhat doubtful. But let me illustrate how Victor deals with one issue — and deals with it fairly, I believe. That is the question of whether it was logical to assume that Pearl Harbor might be attacked. Could reasonable people have foreseen an attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, or was it outside the realm of plausibility?

From the perspective of a novice (and from the perspective of the American people for many years, if not now), the attack has looked like a complete surprise: the Japanese might have been expected to attack the Philippines or Malaysia, but not Hawaii. After the bombing, a number of top leaders claimed that they never expected the U.S. fleet in Hawaii to be attacked.

But they may not have been telling the truth. "Most of those who testified [in the subsequent inquiries] that they had not expected an attack on Pearl Harbor had, however, written or said in the months preceding it that they did expect it," writes Victor. "And their reports and memos saying so were preserved." He backs that up with a quotation from the Army Pearl Harbor Board. The board wrote (sarcastically, Victor explains) that "all expected an attack on Pearl Harbor . . . [but] when testifying after the Pearl Harbor attack, they did not expect it." Another piece of evidence is the fact that in 1941 "there were three separate U.S. war games in which 'Japan' attacked the fleet in Hawaii."

The suggestion that a president would never deliberately allow a surprise attack doesn't hamper Victor.

What I have read in other books suggests that this is a fair assessment. Pearl Harbor was always considered a possible target, although as war drew near, an attack elsewhere in the Pacific may have been viewed as more likely. For over a generation, in fact, the American people had been periodically scared by the possibility that Japan would someday attack the west coast of the mainland.

In trying to piece together who knew what and when, Victor addresses several key questions, which I'll outline in this way:

Did decoded or deciphered radio messages from Japan indicate to Washington that an attack on Pearl Harbor was imminent?

If not, what other indications may there have been?

If there were such messages or other indications, why did they never reach Lt. Gen. Walter A. Short, commanding general for the Army in Hawaii, and Adm. Husband E. Kimmel, commander in chief of the U.S. fleet, also in Hawaii?

To answer these questions (and others), Victor goes back over a broad array of sources, from interviews to memoirs to the records of the many investigations (eight or nine, depending on

how you count them). His book is full of information. Even so, it must be said, one book is not enough. I have looked at other works, not only to assess their authors' viewpoints but also simply to clarify the cast of characters and the chronology of events.

Much of the debate over Pearl Harbor centers on what messages were intercepted and decoded in the last few days before December 7. Victor argues that there were many signs that the Japanese were going to strike Hawaii. For example, the British seem to have known about the course of the Japanese carriers and to have passed that information on to Washington (we may not know for sure; one possibly important message is sealed until 2060!). William Casey (later CIA director) wrote that the British informed Washington that the "Japanese fleet was steaming east toward Hawaii."

Other messages were the "bomb-plot messages" intercepted by U.S. intelligence. These were detailed descriptions of the location of ships that, Victor says, "provided information to be used in planning bombing runs at warships in Pearl Harbor." Pearl Harbor was only one of the spy locations that sent such information to Tokyo, but it rose in importance when an order sent from Tokyo on Sept. 24, 1941, sought "precise locations of warships at anchor" in Hawaii. This, Victor says, was a "serious warning of a combat attack" on the islands. But the message did not reach the American commanders. Victor writes that in October, "the outgoing director of ONI [the Office of Naval Intelligence], Capt. Alan Kirk, and his subordinate, Capt. Howard Bode, proposed sending to Kimmel the 'bomb-plot' messages, indicating that Pearl Harbor was a likely Japanese target." But the new director did nothing.

Whether the Washington leadership perceived such warnings correctly has always been the question. Victor cites the 1962 book by Roberta Wohlstetter, which emphasizes that too much "noise" can obscure perceptions that become clear only in hindsight. To an extent Victor agrees, and he discounts some fragmentary evidence. But he considers the number of credible messages as overwhelming.

Victor is not terribly concerned about the hotly debated question of whether Japanese naval messages had been decoded in time to give any warning. That was the assumption of the 2000 book by Robert Stinnett.

Stephen Budiansky, who has written a book, "Battle of Wits" (2000), about the decryption that enabled Americans to win the battle of Midway, disputes the idea that naval messages were read before December 7. In a persuasive article published in Cryptologia in April 2000, he reveals how complicated it was to decrypt the Japanese codes. Challenging Stinnett's interpretation of a memo indicating that the code had been solved, Budiansky says that the writer (Adm. Royal Ingersoll) meant merely that the code had been figured out, which was a far cry from actually being able to read any dispatches. Budiansky does not believe that any Japanese naval messages were understood before December 7.

Victor takes a middle position. He thinks that some naval messages may have been decoded, at least to the point of getting the general content. He reports that Cmdr. Joseph Rochefort, chief of the naval intelligence unit in Hawaii, said that his team could read one in ten messages. On the other hand, Victor says that "we may never know" whether relevant messages were decrypted in time.

But there were other signals, most spectacularly the "Purple" or "Magic" diplomatic codes. One of the most famous controversies surrounding Pearl Harbor, the furor over the "winds execute" message, stemmed from a decoded Purple message.

A diplomatic message, decoded in November 1941, laid out a plan: if Japan was about to go to war, the fact would be announced by means of a seemingly routine weather radio broadcast from Tokyo. If the weather report indicated "east wind, rain," it meant that war against the United States was imminent (other directions pointed to war with the Soviet Union and Great Britain). On December 4, an "east wind" message was intercepted, and Cmdr. Laurance F. Safford forwarded it to his superior officer.

The "winds execute" message has figured in most discussions of Pearl Harbor, for two reasons. First, it was based on a diplomatic intercept and an open radio broadcast, so the decryption question does not arise. Second, for many years it was one of the few pieces of evidence about pre-Pearl Harbor warnings that were publicly aired and known; it was discussed in the congressional hearing when the issue was still in the public consciousness.

Victor doesn't think this message was all that important — because he thinks that the White House already knew about the impending attack. Even so, he presents it as an illustration of the lengths to which top brass went to suppress information about the attack, even after the war ended.

The first of the eight or nine official inquiries into Pearl Harbor was conducted by the Roberts Commission, which Roosevelt authorized right after the attack. It was pretty clearly an effort to find a scapegoat, and it found two, Short and Kimmel. Later, but still during the war, the Army and Navy, motivated by rumors and by efforts by Short and Kimmel to exonerate themselves, held separate inquiries. The Navy concluded that Kimmel did nothing wrong, and the Army that Short was only partly at fault. He himself admitted that he should have had more experienced radar operators; the two who saw the Japanese planes arrive on December 7 mistook them for American bombers.

But the Army and Navy reports were suppressed during the war, and Victor shows that top-level administrators distorted the findings in their public statements about them. Other inquiries were essentially investigations by interested officials. It wasn't until 1945, after the war had ended (and the 1944 presidential election was over), that a joint congressional committee in the Democratic-controlled Congress agreed to initiate an investigation that led to what Victor calls "sensational" hearings. The investigation, Victor notes, provided a wealth of information and "some surprisingly

Could reasonable people have foreseen an attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, or was it implausible?

candid testimony."

At the hearings, Safford testified that he had seen the "winds execute" message. But he did so at his peril — he wrote later that John Sonnett, counsel for Adm. H. Kent Hewitt, who had conducted his own investigation at the request of the Navy secretary, had tried to get him to change his story. He "attempted to make me believe I was suffering from hallucinations," said Safford.

Sonnett was unable to get Safford to change his story, but he may have been more successful with Cmdr. Alwin Kramer, who at the naval inquiry had stated firmly that he knew of the message and knew that it meant war. But during the war Kramer had two mental breakdowns (Victor doesn't say how severe they were). By the time of the congressional testimony his comments were, Victor says, "confused, vague, and self-contradictory." According to a friend, Kramer told him that he had been ordered to "speak right or undergo more mental treatment."

Victor reports that Hewitt and Sonnett worked to get other potential witnesses to change their testimony in preparation for the hearings. He also writes that some witnesses were simply prevented from testifying. One person who, according to Safford, knew about the "winds execute" message was Warrant Officer Ralph Briggs, a radio operator. Briggs had intercepted the message (or so he said), but his captain told him not to testify. Victor lists three other people who were reported to have known about the message but were not asked for their testimony.

As might be expected, the conclusions of the congressional inquiry divided mostly along party lines. The majority report, which two Republicans also signed, blamed mostly Short and Kimmel; the minority report also blamed Washington higher-ups. Victor does not name the higher-ups, but, according to Gordon Prange they included the president, for "failure to perform the responsibilities indispensably essential to the defense of Pearl Harbor."

The final, big question is not whether Short and Kimmel were informed about any of the warnings; it is pretty much undisputed that at least after November 27, they were not. The question is, why? The standard authors, such as Wohlstetter, take the position that the failures to communicate resulted from a perfect storm of accidental flukes and missteps. In contrast, Victor contends that many decisions not to inform Short and Kimmel were deliberate.

One of the most-discussed issues surrounds the warning sent to Short and Kimmel on November 27. It took the form of two slightly different messages dispatched to them by their superiors. These were warnings of war, but their instructions were ambiguous. Victor discusses the contents in great detail; I will focus on only one point. Short, whose responsibilities were the defense of Hawaii and of the fleet (Kimmel dealt with the offensive use of the fleet), replied that, in light of the message, he was taking action to avoid sabotage. Thus he was keeping most of the fleet in the harbor — exactly the wrong thing in the case of an impending air attack.

Short received no response from Chief of Staff Marshall to indicate that

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this policy was wrong. According to Victor, "By War and Navy Department procedures, when a report from the field was received and not responded to, that meant the report was approved." Furthermore, says Victor, Marshall and his staff had "ample opportunities to correct their error," since they saw intercepted reports from Japanese spies in Hawaii indicating that everything was normal at Pearl Harbor; it was not on "air or sea alert."

In congressional testimony after the war, Marshall was asked about Short's response. He at first said that he didn't recall seeing it — until he was shown that its cover sheet was stamped, "Noted — Chief of Staff." In addition, Marshall had sent a copy to Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Marshall never gave the committee a clear explanation of his reaction. He said, "The fact that it was merely sabotage did not register on anybody's mind." Yet according to a biography of Marshall, one of his staff members said, "For God's sake, do you suppose he means that he is only acting to prevent sabotage?"

As December 7 approached, there was mounting information suggesting that war was close and that the Pacific fleet should be on guard. Some intelligence officers were concerned that none of this information appeared to be reaching the commanders. Victor describes efforts by Safford, Adm. Arthur McCollum, and Adm. Theodore Wilkinson to persuade their superiors to make sure that Kimmel was aware of an impending Japanese attack. Even on the morning of December 6, Safford drafted a message for Kimmel announcing the imminence of war, but the message was watered down by Safford's superiors and didn't arrive until December 8.

The culmination of this seemingly deliberate quashing of information occurred in Washington on December 6 and December 7 (the attack occurred at 7:30 a.m. in Hawaii, which was almost 1 p.m. in Washington). These events are redolent with secrecy and deception.

One illustration involves Adm. Harold R. Stark, chief of naval operations, who went to the theater on the night of December 6. At the 1945–46 congressional hearings, Stark first said that he didn't talk with Roosevelt that evening. Later, at the end of the hearings, he changed his testimony, saying that they did speak on the phone, but not about anything important. However, after Stark's friend, Capt. Harold Krick, who had accompanied him to the theater (along with their wives), told him that his testimony had not been true, he changed his story again. Stark wrote to the committee that "Krick further stated that when I came downstairs after the phone call I said . . . the situation with Japan was very serious." This is quite a lot to slip one's mind, until a friend suggests that the record needs to be sanitized. This phone call was not listed in the White House logs. Further, there is evidence of a late-night (or early-morning) meeting at the White House, one that Stark attended.

The whereabouts and actions of George Marshall are particularly clouded. On Saturday, December 6, an initial "pilot message" from Tokyo was intercepted; it was translated by 2 p.m. on Sunday. It is called the pilot message because it announced that a much longer, 14-part message would follow, as it did. The pilot message led intelligence officials to believe that the longer message would break off negotiations with the United States and thus announce the start of war. A member of the Signal Intelligence Corps wrote later that "it was known in our agency that Japan would surely attack us in the early afternoon of the following day. . . . Not an iota of doubt."

In his congressional testimony, Marshall said that he did not see the pilot message until Sunday. Asked why he didn't, he said, "It was not brought to my attention." Victor points out that, given the importance of the message, his failure to receive it should have led to a reprimand or dismissal of Marshall's staff, but nothing like that happened.

According to Gen. Sherman Miles, Marshall received a "gist" (a short version) of the pilot message on Saturday afternoon. Miles said in congressional testimony, "I think he [General Marshall] is mistaken in saying he did not receive that message on the afternoon of the 6th." Col. Rufus Bratton, charged with delivering the messages to top officials, said later that he had orally informed Marshall of the content of the message on Saturday afternoon. Furthermore, Bratton said that he urged Marshall to send a "war alert." Marshall did not. He said he was going home and did not want to be disturbed. No one knows for sure where Marshall was, but there is evidence that he spent time that evening at the White House.

Marshall's conduct on Sunday morning, when he did get the full 14-part message (not just the pilot or a gist), is even more puzzling. He told the congressional committee that he had been out riding, as he normally did on Sunday morning, and he could not be reached. Victor says, however, that his route was known and his orderly could reach him. Furthermore, Victor cites three people who said that Marshall was not out riding on Sunday morning; he was in a series of meetings at the War Department.

Gen. Miles, who on Sunday morning brought Marshall the 14th part of the Japanese diplomatic message, announcing the end of negotiations, suggests that Marshall stalled for time. That happened an hour and a half before the 1 p.m. deadline for breaking off negotiations (stated in the intercepted message), which many viewed as the time of attack. Marshall read the message aloud and asked Bratton and Miles what they thought of it. When they urged that commanders in the Philippines, Hawaii, and other places be informed, Marshall called Adm. Stark, who said that additional warnings weren't necessary. Marshall then wrote out a warning for Short, discussed it, and proposed that perhaps it should be typed first (but it apparently wasn't). In the end, the message, Victor says, was "hardly worth sending" because of its obscurity; it includes the statement, "Just what significance the hour set may have we do not know." And it didn't reach Short until after the attack had started, anyway.

Did decoded radio messages from Japan indicate to Washington that an attack on Pearl Harbor was imminent?

Victor says that if Bratton and Miles are right, Marshall "performed an elaborate, time-consuming act, which delayed sending a warning," then

delayed it further by choosing to send it by a "secure conveyance," rather than simply calling Short on the phone. He did not even classify the warning as "urgent."

Marshall's conduct, and his vague responses when testifying, are probably the most convincing of all the evidence showing that the Roosevelt administration chose to allow the attack to occur without warning. (The decisive point for me came even before I read Victor's book. It occurred when I read a footnote in Toland's account. Toland wrote that Percy Greaves was told that Marshall had remarked "in the men's room at a social affair that he could not say where he was on the night of December 6 because it might get 'the Chief' in trouble." For me, that explained the vagueness of Marshall's testimony.) By the time he testified before Congress, Marshall was a war hero and the war itself was over. He got away with being hazy. But history should not be so deferential.

So there we are. It is often observed that Roosevelt wanted the nation to go to war, but faced massive opposition. No one can doubt either part of that statement. The question raised by Victor's book, and others, is how far Roosevelt was willing to go in order to bring America into the war. Victor argues that Roosevelt allowed the attack on Pearl Harbor to happen without alerting the commanders. He seems to believe that this was a useful, even a necessary, policy. The question at issue is whether that policy was carried out. I believe that it was.

Questions linger, of course. It is still somewhat hard to believe that Kimmel and Short could have been so totally in the dark. But Victor devotes some pages to discussing why they followed the policies they did.

He observes, for example, that Kimmel's predecessor, Adm. James Richardson, had ordered the fleet to take "full security measures," which meant giving training less priority than before. This violated his standing orders, which demanded that he concentrate on training, and the violation appears to have been the reason why Roosevelt removed him as commander, replacing him with Kimmel. (Victor also says that Richardson thought that the fleet was being used as a "lure" for a Japanese attack.)

The question of whether a president could heartlessly allow a surprise attack still nags at some. While the evidence amassed by Victor resolves that question to my satisfaction, he also offers a mitigating factor: The White House may have expected many fewer casualties. Victor notes that the battleship "Arizona" exploded because a bomb reached its magazine; that was an unlikely event, as was the capsizing of the "Oklahoma." Those two facts explain the deaths of 1,600 men (out of a total of 2,400 killed by the Japanese attack). Furthermore, it should be remembered that military leaders are usually inured to casualties.

All in all, I think that Victor has it about right. There is a myth surrounding Pearl Harbor, and he has dealt a major blow to it. ❑

"The Overton Window," by Glenn Beck. Threshold Editions, 2010, 336 pages.

The Beck Files

Robert Chatfield

Joe Overton was a well respected young leader at a Michigan-based thinktank. Tragically, he died in 2003 in an ultralight aircraft accident at the age of 43, but one of his enduring intellectual contributions was the development of a communications methodology to explain the role of free-market thinktanks.

Overton devised a simple scale to measure the level of freedom created or allowed by any particular public policy. In educational policy, for example, the least amount of freedom is represented by government-run schools with no parental choice, whereas the maximum freedom would be achieved if there was absolutely no government interference in the curriculum, teaching methods, or management of a school system.

For any policy issue, Overton observed that there is only a narrow "window of political possibilities" — everything else is literally outside a politician's view. The role of thinktanks is to produce credible research on policy issues that are outside the window, with the goal of moving the window up the scale of freedom. After Joe's death, the window became widely known as the "Overton Window," and it was noted that the concept could be applied across many platforms to explain shifts in public attitudes.

Because libertarians and our policy proposals are often regarded as outside the window, the concept should be of interest to us. My own curiosity was piqued by the appearance of a work of fiction entitled "The Overton Window," which claims that its protagonist must save both the woman he loves and "the individual freedoms he once took for granted." So far, what's not to like here?

In this case, however, the author is much more famous than the concept — although I must confess that before reading this book I had never read, seen, or heard anything by him. It's not that I live under a rock; I just rarely watch Fox News or listen to talk radio,

and I rarely read books by personalities who inhabit either of those airwaves. I therefore approached the book with no preconceived notions about its writer — only a great deal of historical background about the book's title. Call it my fair and balanced approach.

The protagonist is Noah Gardner, the son of a wealthy and powerful business owner. Noah works for his father at a giant public relations firm in New York. At the onset, Noah meets the strikingly beautiful Molly Ross in his firm's breakroom and is intrigued by her appearance, her attitude, and the bill she is posting on the breakroom wall inviting one and all to attend a radical libertarian event happening that evening.

Again, a matter of some interest to libertarians — despite the fact that Beck's prose reminded me of a bad junior high school creative writing assignment. The overuse of descriptors ("a lush abundance of dark auburn hair pulled back in a loose French twist") coupled with nonsensical emotive phrases ("though he'd been in her presence for less than a minute, her soul had locked itself onto his senses") almost caused an immediate return to the bookshelf.

Still, the first few chapters were short and, frankly, I wanted to find out more about the radical libertarian event, so I soldiered on. Beck turned out to be spot-on in describing an event that could easily be a transcript from any number of Tea Party rallies featuring fiery speeches given by rabble rousing patriots.

When Noah Gardner cleverly pointed out that the room was filled with a bunch of fringe fanatics, I was immediately transported back in time to my first Libertarian Party convention. One speaker expounded the ideas of "Jews for the Preservation of Firearm Ownership." The doors were open and passersby would stop to listen, but not enter the room. Each time that would happen, the speaker would say "militia" into the microphone, which usually caused the passerby to flee. Another speaker, Irwin Schiff, passionately made his case for why citizens are not obligated to pay federal income taxes. For pushing this case, Schiff is, of course, now residing in the Terre Haute Federal Correctional Institution at the tender age of 82. Finally, Bill Baird spoke on birth control and asked us all to join him in an attempt to get arrested by protesting in the streets. Protesting what? Nothing in particular, but Baird did mention that he needed a place to stay that night and he, too, considered prison a viable option. The room was filled with characters who would have been most at home in a comic book store. It was the best convention I ever attended.

But to return to Beck's book. We hear two speeches from characters who will play important roles in the story. One, Molly's mother, leads a (fictional) group called Founders' Keepers. The second runs an internet website called "Overthrow," which (guess what?) promotes radical change. We learn that he is Molly's former lover. Needless to say, he and Noah do not hit it off.

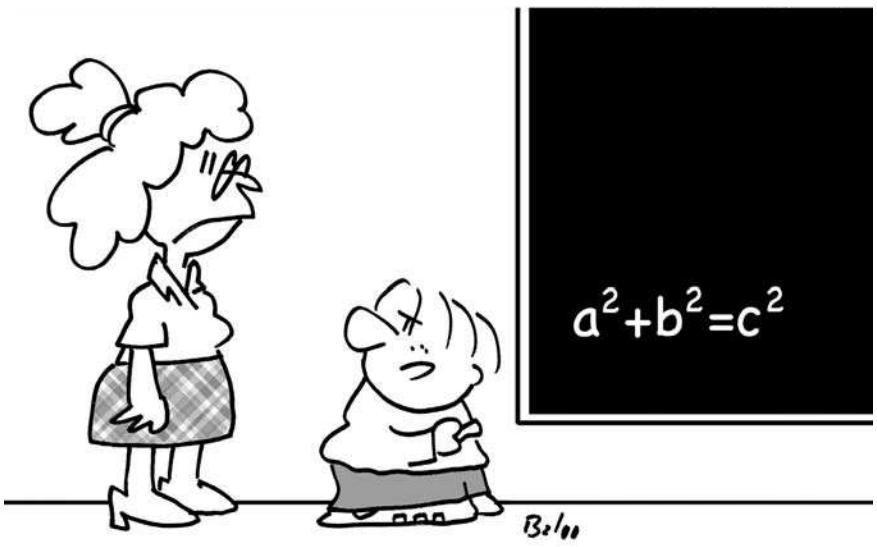
Given Noah's public relations acumen, it appeared that the story might be going in a useful direction. It would show libertarians how to craft messages that would be more likely to achieve public approval, moving the Overton Window so as to make libertarianism a politically acceptable choice.

Instead, we learn that a cabal of wealthy and powerful people is plotting to take over the world by shifting the Overton Window toward public acceptance of a totalitarian world run by wealthy and powerful people. I wouldn't want to spoil the ending for you, but Beck telegraphs this plotline by page 25.

And that's the biggest problem with the book: its cover claims it as "A Thriller," but it's not a thrilling book. Not only are the characters shallow, but there aren't many plot twists, and the action is minimal. The story is tightly wound; there are not a lot of superfluous characters. And while both Molly's mother and Molly's former lover play key roles, they meet with predictable endings.

There are some redeeming qualities that may be of interest to Liberty readers. Throughout the book, Beck intersperses facts that are meant to remind people of real world events that might foreshadow a new, but not better, global order. He even devotes an Afterword to providing sources and links for further reading. And his general approach is sympathetic to individual freedom; its protagonists are the heroes of his tale.

I liked Beck's nods to some of my own favorite stories. For instance, Founders' Keepers are a direct takeoff from Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451," in which the protagonist joins a group whose members have committed themselves to memorizing the classics in order to preserve them in an era in which books are being burned. In Beck's novel, the members each memorize a classic pamphlet, tract, or book from the American revolutionary period — in short, someone memorizes Thomas Paine, someone memorizes Thomas Jefferson, someone memorizes James Madison, etc., in case the powers that be destroy all current literature, and society must be started anew. Also, the movie "Ocean's Twelve" figures rather prominently in one of the story lines.



"Are you sure you're not just making this stuff up?"

But such occasional evidence of intelligence simply emphasizes, by contrast, Beck's lack of creativity and writing acumen. His inattention to detail refuses to allow the reader to suspend disbelief. For example, the story mentions an upcoming presidential election, but it appears to be set in 2010. And Beck's partisanship is annoying. His characters emphasize the idea that both major parties are unfriendly to individual freedom, but the Republicans get a free pass in this story, whereas popular Democrats become easy targets. Bill Clinton is identified as a past client of Gardner's public relations firm. Hillary and Bill are given some good natured ribbing, but Bill is described as particularly ruthless when faced with political opposition. Eliot Spitzer makes a cameo in predictable fashion, and the plot centers on a fictional attack on the federal building in the district of Harry Reid. It would seem that if any author wanted to create a plot featuring a new world order developed by a wealthy and powerful elite, the Bush clan would figure prominently; yet they are never alluded to or mentioned by name.

Conspiracy stories have been told many times before, and this book will remind some readers of a poorly written "X-Files" episode. Indeed, conspiracy theorists will probably be disappointed because the book covers no new ground for them. Libertarians will be disappointed because the book provides no insights, after all, about how they might move toward more public acceptance. And people who don't like Glenn Beck aren't going to read the book anyway.

Joe Overton deserved better. ❑

"Off the Grid: Inside the Movement for More Space, Less Government, and True Independence in Modern America," by Nick Rosen. Penguin, 2010, 304 pages.

Away From It All

Bruce Ramsey

As a boy, I had a fantasy of living off the land. It was an unformed idea, a mixture of Huckleberry Finn and making camps in the woods, and I never got far with it. I had a friend who held on to it longer, because his dad was planning to move to Alaska and live off the sea. His dad did it, too; he went to live on an island near Ketchikan, leaving his wife and kids, including my friend, back in the suburbs of Seattle.

It seemed a lonely thing to do.

At the university I met a libertarian who was living in squalor, smoking dope and living on pizza. His enthusiasm of the moment was to create a self-sufficient farm. He had never lived on a farm and knew nothing about it. He didn't even have a garden, and I thought if he wouldn't get off his butt to sweep the mat of dust under his furniture he wouldn't make it as a farmer. Even then I knew that self-sufficiency means work.

Some folks have done it. For water, they have rainwater tanks, wells, or a handy creek. For power, they have solar panels, windmills, diesel generators, or car batteries. For heat they have wood. For waste they have an outhouse or a composting toilet.

I can imagine the satisfaction of unplugging from the electric utility and turning on my own power. Independence! I remember the day I began telephone service over my internet cable and cut the wire that connected me to the telephone monopoly. It felt good, though it was only swapping one connection for another. What if I had moved *off the grid*?

In his new book by that name, journalist Nick Rosen (www.off-grid.net) sets out to find off-the-gridders and tell their stories. He has sympathy for them; he is attracted to ideas of radical simplification, and as he seeks out interview subjects he keeps an eye out for land for himself. Rosen is British, but he cannot do this in his home country: "In all areas of the UK, one simply cannot get permission to so much as pull a trailer onto a lot, never mind to reside there full-time in it."

In America you can do that, in some places. The places Rosen visits tend to remoteness — Maine, west Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and the redwood country of northwestern California.

Much of the book is about reasons and motives. Rosen himself is an anti-corporate green who detests "the hyper-consumption of the past 30 years" and people's dependence on corporations and the state. "I want neighbors who solve their problems themselves instead of calling the police or county commissioners about every little thing," he writes.

He is emphatically not a communeist. He visits a commune in Maine, and the people are stuck in a meeting. "I must confess my heart sank. . . . Much as we may all rail against the impersonal State, to which we hand over so much of our individual power, the alternative requires that we exercise that power ourselves, and in a responsible way." In a commune, that means meetings and voting and rules. "I am not into cleaning schedules, interminable meetings and the need to reach a consensus with others about every aspect of my life. . . . I don't want to join a social experiment." He just wants to decouple.

Most of his subjects are "pro-market, pro-environment and pro-freedom, and merely want to live a decent life, free of debt, free of utility bills, growing some of their own food, and making a living according to whatever skills they have."

He sets out to find them.

Some are only part-time off-gridders. One is Denise, who works in Manhattan

as a tattoo artist, living in a tiny room. In her off time, she retreats to her ten acres in Connecticut, where she has a cabin and a treehouse in the woods along a river. Why has she bought the land? "Freedom," she tells Rosen. "Privacy. I want as little government involvement in my life as possible, and that sounds like a really Republican thing to say, but it's not. I've been trying to make a life where I can disengage from corporate and government serfdom as much as possible." "Serfdom" strongly suggests Friedrich Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom," but Rosen doesn't pick up that thread. He does say that this was "one of the most political statements" he heard. It is also one of the more rational.

Another subject is Jim, 50, a Ron Paul voter who moved out of Brooklyn to upstate New York. Jim is a scrounger whose life, Rosen says on his web page, "is dedicated to not paying the market price for anything." Jim has built his house from bricks of "papercrete," which is made of sludge from the local paper mill and 20% masonry cement. Jim worries about a societal "spiraling down" to collapse. He has stashed away a year's worth of rice, barley, and oats, and has plans to convert his car to fuel he can grow. He tells Rosen he "feels increasingly aligned with the Amish."

One of Rosen's subjects is Amon, an Old Mennonite who uses horses to power machines designed for electricity. Another is Jassen, a Colorado libertarian who lives out of his car. Rosen respects the Mennonite for his achievements but dislikes his clannishness. The car-dweller's lifestyle, he writes, "feels exciting to me, albeit slightly artificial."

Rosen puts much of himself into his book, which could be annoying but isn't. He is critical of his subjects but leaves the final judgment to the reader. At bottom, he is a reporter and writer, and lets the ills show through, along with the zeal.

Consider Carolyn Chute and her husband Michael, of Parsonsfield, Maine. Chute is the author of the novel, "The School on Heart's Content Road." It was reviewed in The New York Times, Nov. 21, 2008, which carried a photo of Carolyn and Michael dressed in country rustic and proudly carrying guns. The Times reviewer seems put off by the weaponry but likes the novel. She calls it a "depiction of contemporary American poverty: of the slow, relentless grind of never quite having enough."

Rosen visits the author and finds that the poverty she portrays is her own. Carolyn got no care during a pregnancy, and her baby died. She and Michael decided not to try for another child because "it's a mean world." Now they are getting old and will need looking after. They don't want to sell and are considering doing a deal with the Maine commune previously mentioned: in exchange for care, the commies can inherit her land. But there are more risks in this than in a simple capitalist sale.

Then there are Daniel and Kirstin, "urban homesteaders" in Springfield, Massachusetts, who live in a city house they have taken off the grid. They have no car and no TV. They eat mainly homegrown food, light their house with candles, and heat with wood. In the winter, they are cutting and hauling wood all the time. They don't have health insurance, life insurance, or a pension plan.

"Because of their purposely low income," Rosen says, "Daniel and Kristin know they will never put their kids through college. They have thought it through and are happy they are not subscribing to that particular con."

Will their daughter, 14, or their son, 6, ultimately appreciate this? Daniel and Kirstin are homeschooling them, sort of. The kids are learning by doing. As they teach their daughter to follow a recipe, they ask her to double it, "so math is incorporated as well."

Maybe college won't be an issue.

Reading stories like this, I ask: is this worth it? Bob and Wretha retreated to the Texas hills to be away from regulations and rules. Bob says, "I like being able to build what you want without having to get permission from Nanny." That's swell, but they live in a shack among "a mess of old appliances, salvaged lumber, and other junk," and they eat nothing but canned and dried food.

It is a lifestyle issue — but also an intellectual issue, an issue of consistency, if you care about that sort of thing. The rule that off-gridders are trying to follow is to be disconnected not just from the state and the regulated utility grid but also from the *economic* grid of global capitalism. And they can't do that.

Here is Melinda in Big Bend, Texas. She is off the utility grid — but she makes a living by doing research on a laptop, connected to the internet through the Wild Blue satellite service at $60 a month. She powers her laptop with a diesel generator. I draw a parallel to myself. I heat my house in Seattle with natural gas, which is piped from Alberta. I am *on the grid*. If I switched to fuel oil, as Melinda has switched to diesel, would I be in that respect *off* the grid? In the way Rosen uses the term, I would. But in my view, the fact that my fuel would come by truck rather than by pipe is not important. I am still on the economic grid, and so is Melinda.

Carolyn and Michael in Maine are living on the royalties from Carolyn's novels, which have been promoted by The New York Times. Is that being off the grid? Is the actor who makes a living in Hollywood and has a million-dollar house in the Rockies with its own power plant off the grid? His house may be disconnected from municipal water and power, but is that what matters? A Hollywood actor making a living from global film royalties is not *off the grid*.

And how about the scavenger? He is scavenging the castoffs of global capitalism. If mass consumerism weren't creating all this wonderful throwaway stuff, scavenging wouldn't pay.

Rosen recognizes this. He asks: is it a fatal flaw? "I don't think so," he says. "There will be avid consumers for years to come."

Surely he is right about that. But there will also be water and power companies for years to come.

The urban homesteaders, Daniel and Kirstin, are more fastidious. They refuse to scavenge or patronize thrift stores, because such acts are connections to global capitalism. Rosen remarks: "I am not sure if I agree with his logic, because if you take it all the way, if Daniel is seriously committed to severing his dependence on the global economy, shouldn't he have built his house himself?"

That's right. And if Rosen had refused to use petroleum-fueled vehicles and a laptop computer while researching this book, and had, instead, pedaled a bicycle from Maine to California and

taken his notes with a pencil — well then, where would the bicycle and the pencil have come from? As anyone who has read Leonard Read's famous essay, "I, Pencil," can attest, even a pencil is tied to the vast, encompassing network of world trade.

Rosen's answer is not to demand consistency, either of his subjects or of himself. And it is a sensible answer. Off-griddism is not an idea you can pursue consistently while living a modern life. Rosen couldn't make a living off this book if he refused to fly and rent cars and use a cellphone and a computer. So he does those things. He lives with the uncomfortable fact that his anticorporate book is published by Penguin, which is owned by Pearson plc, a London-based multinational corporation that also owns the Financial Times. And I don't complain either; but I do point it out. His ideas can be pursued only so far, beyond which lie the nuts.

And there are some of them in his book. My favorite is the dogged fellow who, after consuming a plate of food, picked up the plate and licked it "clean." "No doubt it saved both energy and water," Rosen comments, "but I'd never seen anyone do that before."

If Rosen were a fanatic, he wouldn't have reported that. But he does. He tells you what he sees. When he visits a "tent city" encampment in Sacramento, he does not push the lefty line about victims cast off by global capitalism. They are not. Some are in an illegal drug business. Some are "professional homeless" living in tents "for political reasons." Some are men sporadically working and saving their money by not paying rent. "The residents I spoke to were not people who had recently lost their stable homes and stable jobs."

I like Rosen. I like his honesty. I like the clarity of his writing. He brings an attitude, and I don't always agree with it, but I smiled when he called Boulder, Colorado, "the smuggest town in America," because it's full of government workers piously "buying organic veggies and recycling their wine bottles." Rosen has written a fun book, and one that libertarians will want to read.

As for his theory about our being subordinated to the economic machine — he has a point. We work, we are paid, and we lock ourselves in with what we buy. Detaching oneself does create a kind of freedom. But detach from what? I can understand detaching from an employer and working for yourself. I haven't done it, but I respect it. It is a capitalist right. I can understand turning off network TV; I have done that for most of my life. Finally, I can understand a revulsion against the culture of compulsive shopping. My parents, who married during the Depression, taught me to moderate my wants, and I thank them for it. But detach myself from municipal water and electricity? No.

I have detached myself from something much more important. Though my house is connected to water, sewer, electricity, gas, TV, telephone, internet, mail delivery, garbage pickup, and, through the property tax, the state, it is not connected to the bank. The heaviest load of all was the mortgage, and it is gone. The others I can live with. ❑

"Atlas Shrugged," directed by Paul Johansson. Strike Productions, unfinished.

Galt's Glitch

Jo Ann Skousen

Who is John Galt? Apparently he is not going to be Brad Pitt. After waiting nearly half a century for the perfect script, perfect cast, and perfect director, fans of "Atlas Shrugged" may now be asking "Who is Paul Johansson?" when they hear the news that this little known television actor has been tapped to star in and direct Ayn Rand's 1,200 page magnum opus. Like it or not, it's a done deal: filming began June 13, and it wrapped five weeks later.

Taylor Schilling, whose only credits include an indie film that didn't make it into wide release and a role on the canceled TV show, "Mercy," will play Dagny Taggart. Grant Bowler, who plays Henry Rearden, has appeared in films with names like "The Killer Elite," "True Blood," and "They Bleed on Both Sides." Johansson, who will direct and play John Galt, is another TV lightweight, whose credits include a long list of minor roles in minor TV shows and occasional movies over the past 20 years; his biggest film was "The Notebook," but he played "Allie's Mom's ex-boyfriend" for heaven's sake! Johansson's directing experience is limited to a few episodes of the cable show "One Tree Hill" and a couple of made-for-TV movies, one of which, to be fair — an after-school special called "The Incredible Mrs. Ritchie" — won two Daytime Emmys for writing and directing. These credentials are not very encouraging for a film that has been 50 years in the making.

What gives? Atlas has shrugged numerous times as this novel has made its fitful way to the screen. In 1972 Rand was approached by Albert S. Ruddy, who was riding high on the success of "The Godfather" (1972), to adapt her novel for the big screen. But when, as one might expect, Rand insisted on maintaining final approval of the script, Ruddy withdrew his offer. Six years later, when miniseries were all the rage, Henry and Michael Jaffe suggested an eight-week television deal with NBC (probably the best format for such a long and intricate plot), and this time Rand approved the script. But before production could begin, leadership at NBC changed hands, and new honcho Fred Silverman cancelled the deal.

Rand then called on her own skills as screenwriter (in the 1940s, she had written several scripts for Hollywood, including the adaptation of her novel "The Fountainhead") and started writing an adaptation of "Atlas." How far she got is unclear, but it is certain that when she died in 1982 it was much less than half finished. Leonard Peikoff, who inherited her estate, then optioned the book to Michael Jaffe, who was still interested in producing a cinematic version. But Peikoff would not approve Jaffe's script — exit Jaffe. Finally, in 1992, Peikoff sold the rights to John Aglialoro. Who is John A? He's CEO of Cybex, a company that manufactures and sells high-end treadmills and gym equipment — not the best credentials for producing a movie. Nevertheless, for a cool million dollars, Aglialoro was awarded full creative control.

Once again Albert S. Ruddy entered the picture, this time with plans to produce a four-part series for TNT. This was a great idea, and probably had the best chance for success in adapting Rand's story and philosophy to the screen. But once again the deal was cancelled, this time because TNT merged with AOL Warner. From there Aglialoro passed the project through a series of promising writers and producers, with big name actors like Russell Crowe, Charlize Theron, Julia Roberts, and the Brangelina darlings demonstrating interest in the major roles. Every time, Atlas shrugged, and the deals fell through. Recently the novel has enjoyed a new surge of popularity among young audiences who thrilled at Rand's ideas about personal liberty. The economic downturn of 2008 and the government's unpopular means of dealing with it — means similar in some respects to those used by the villains in "Atlas" — may also have played a part. Like the bachelor whose expectations for Miss Right increase the longer he waits, fans began to imagine the impossible from the anticipated movie version of "Atlas Shrugged." After all this time, nothing less than perfection would do. And for a while, it looked as if a match made on Olympus might come down to earth.

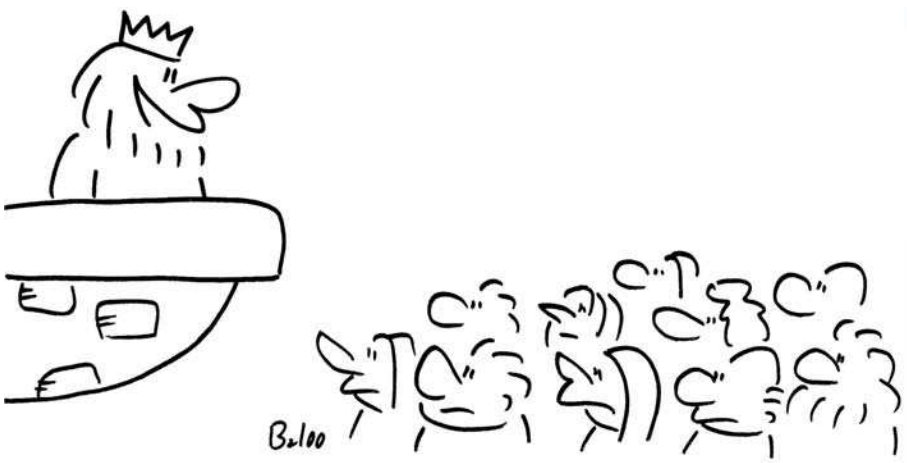
In 2008 Aglialoro told "The Atlasphere" that he intended to make the entire film in one two-and-a-half-hour film. At the time, Lionsgate, one of the biggest names in independent film production, was involved, as were the Baldwins (Howard and Karen, not Alec, Billy, and Stephen) of Baldwin Entertainment Group, who produced "Ray" and "Sahara." Russell Crowe and Angelina Jolie were close to signing contracts, and the project had a budget of $70 million.

Then suddenly, after nurturing and protecting the film for so many years, Aglialoro jumped into production, co-writing the script in May with Brian Patrick O'Toole in order to begin production on June 13. Yes, in May. After courting and rejecting perhaps dozens of potential screenwriters over the course of nearly two decades, he decided to do it himself in a single month. Now, it's true that Handel wrote "The Messiah" in less than four weeks, so it's possible that this script is fabulous. But I have my doubts, especially when one considers O'Toole's body of work: he has written or produced several horror films you've probably never heard of ("Necropolitan," "Evilution," "Basement Jack"), and little else. This may explain why so many of the cast have appeared in slasher films.

What was the rush? Some have suggested that this is just a quickie production (I hesitate to use the word "sham"), designed to protect the option rights while buying some more time. Aglialoro's option was due to expire June 15. He had to begin production, or the rights would revert back to Rand's estate, and his million dollar investment would be lost. There was no time left to bicker over the script, negotiate with actors' agents, or scout around for locations. It was now or never.

The current production, however, is reported as the first of a quadrilogy, and the budget is estimated at a mere $5 million — that's the price of a little indie flick, not a major motion picture backed by a studio. Even if, as friends of the movie say, the budget may be three or four times higher, and money was saved by not hiring enormous stars, that's still very little money for a film of epic scope involving enormous industries and continent-wide action. In fact, as far as I can tell there is no longer an outside production studio attached to the project. Strike Productions is the only company credit listed on IMDB, and "Atlas Shrugged" is Strike Productions' only project to date. ("The Strike" was an early title for Rand's book.)

All of this seems to point to a desperation play to buy time before the rights ran out. It's quite possible that Aglialoro is continuing to look for the perfect screenplay and the perfect cast, even while this version is being filmed. With any luck, the first installment could end up on the cutting room shelf, altruistically sacrificing itself for the greater good, while Atlas turns his head and shrugs once more. Episode two could be the only one to achieve wide release. One can only hope for the best. But if Ayn Rand still exists in some dimension where rolling over is possible, I can imagine that she must be wanting to come back and torch the whole project. Prometheus Enraged. ❑



"It's not a crusade, you sillies! — I just want to maintain a *presence* in the Middle East."

"Salt," directed by Philip Noyce. Columbia Pictures, 2010, 99 minutes.

Saline Dissolution

Jo Ann Skousen

It's always fun when Angelina Jolie makes a new movie. I just love to trash her. Her self-righteous celebrity overshadows any chance of nuanced acting. It's impossible to separate her celebrity from her characters, or to think of her as anyone but Angelina Jolie. Yet she brazens on, dividing her time between "serious" "Oscar-worthy" performances and fluffy popcorn flicks such as this one, with an acting style at least as large and twice as broad as her ego.

There's a reason she keeps reverting back to action movies — she has the appearance, appeal, and intellectual capacity of a comic book character. But there's a market out there for comic book heroes, and there will always be a market for Angie. Just ask her.

The advertising campaign for "Salt," her latest film, is more mysterious than the film itself. It focuses mostly on Jolie's face and the question, "Who is Salt?" One can't help but make the connection with "Who is John Galt?" and Jolie's failed attempt to play Dagny Taggart in "Atlas Shrugged." Not that Taylor Schilling, whose acting accomplishments are hardly noteworthy, is likely to be much better than Jolie would have been in "Atlas." I may actually find myself yearning for Jolie when that film comes out.

But let's get back to "Who is Salt?" As the film opens we find that Salt is a CIA agent in a North Korean prison, being tortured in a lovely and seductive matching floral bra and panties ensemble. I don't mean that wearing the lingerie itself is torture; she's bloodied and beaten in the scene. But come on, does Jolie want to be seen as a serious spy in this film, or as a misplaced Victoria's Secret model?

Later, after she is rescued from North Korea, returns to Washington, and is accused of being a Russian mole, she quickly removes her black lace panties and uses them to cover a surveillance camera so her accusers can't see which way she is going. Wouldn't it have made more sense to cover it with one of the high-heeled shoes that she removes at the same time, so she can run faster? That black lace thong looked mighty peekaboo.

Speaking of running — shouldn't a spy who is able to leap from tall buildings with a single bound, fly through the air to land on a series of moving vehicles, and knock a policeman through an armored car door with a single shove of her shoulder, be able to run across the street without looking like a schoolgirl running to first base in gym class? Oh right — she isn't wearing any panties in this scene. Better keep the knees low. Regardless, Jolie should have buffed up a little for the role, and she certainly should have learned how to pick up her knees when she's running for her life. Later in the film, when the CGI magic kicks in and the stunt double takes over (beware when actors don caps and coats!), the action picks up. But the point is, director Philip Noyce seems not to have been able to decide how best to use his high-profile star — whether to make "Salt" a soft-porn froth or a high-action thriller. Evidently he opted for both.

So just who is Salt? She is a CIA agent accused of being a "K-A" (whatever that stands for), one of several children supposedly chosen and trained in Russia to infiltrate the United States, bide their time, and become killing machines when ordered to stir up trouble. Is she a K-A, or is she wrongly accused? We're not supposed to know her true motives or her true identity, but they're pretty easy to figure out within the first 15 minutes of the film, especially when she starts shooting up St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The film implies that "Lee Harvey Oswald" was a "K-A" who pulled the old switcheroo when the real Oswald was in Russia, where he assumed his identity in order to assassinate John F. Kennedy. Interesting idea — but that was 45 years ago. The Cold War is over! If the plot were changed to something about Arab jihadists, we might have had a timely film at least. But that might also have offended a few terrorists. And it certainly would have required a different set of actors.

The movie is mostly standard shoot 'em up fare, and a series of entertaining, if outlandish, action scenes. Most action thrillers today resemble video games, short on plot and long on body count, with protagonists shooting people indiscriminately around every corner. They make me long for the unwritten code of the Golden Age of film, when audiences' sensibilities required a certain standard of honor and morality from the hero. The heroic Sergeant Ryan (Frank Sinatra) had to die at the end of "Von Ryan's Express" (1965), to atone for the fact that he had killed a woman, even though his reason for killing her was justifiable. Heroes just didn't do those things. We've lost the shock, the shame, and the impact of killing.

Moreover, how many times over the past decade have we seen the likes of Bruce Willis and Tom Cruise leaping onto moving trucks, landing on airplane wings, and weaving in and out of oncoming traffic on hijacked motorcycles? It isn't as breathtaking as it used to be. Still, I suppose it's different to see a woman doing it.

"Salt" has a few interesting, if predictable, twists and turns, cleverly emphasized by Salt's clothes. After the initial rosebud bra and panties ensemble, she is costumed in various gray outfits, indicating the ambiguity of her character — neither black nor white,

but sometimes both. Her name also signifies her character; it's a throwback to the Cold War and its Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). But if you're looking for an engrossing mystery with an exciting "Aha!" moment, this is not it. We know who Salt is. We're not even very surprised by what she does. Unfortunately, a little bit of Salt goes a long, long way. I feel my blood pressure rising — and it isn't from the popcorn. ❑

"Inception," directed by Christopher Nolan. Syncopy-Warner Brothers, 2010, 148 minutes.

Thriller for the Thinker

Jo Ann Skousen

"Inception" is one of the most complex and intelligent films to come along in quite a while. On one level it is an intense and fascinating thriller, full of entertaining chase scenes and story twists. But on a much deeper level it examines our perception of reality and how beliefs are formed. How can we know anything for sure? "You keep telling yourself what you know," one character says, "but what do you believe? What do you feel?" Ultimately it requires a leap of faith, as several characters urge the protagonist to take throughout this film.

The conflict between knowing and believing forms the philosophical foundation of the film. The word "inception" refers to the planting of an idea in another person's mind in such a way that the person believes it to be true. "Once an idea has taken hold in the brain, it is almost impossible to eradicate," the protagonist, Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) explains to a student intern (Ellen Page). "An idea is like a virus, resilient and contagious." This concept can have chilling implications when one thinks of the power that parents, teachers, priests, politicians, scientists, and celebrities have over the minds of those who look up to them. But it can also provide direction and hope for libertarians, for example, who want their ideas about liberty to become resilient and contagious in the minds of friends, family, and coworkers.

Libertarians can also learn from Cobb's declaration that "positive emotion is more powerful than negative emotion. The brain yearns for reconciliation." If we want to infect others with ideas of liberty, we must offer them more than a straw man to vote against. Al Gore could not win with his "Anyone but Bush" campaign, nor can conservatives and libertarians win with "Anyone but Obama" or "Anyone but Reid." Such oppositional tactics just breed resentment. We must seek reconciliation by offering ideas that resonate with truth.

Philosophy aside, "Inception" is an engaging, fast-paced visit to a futuristic world where neuropsychologists have learned how to enter people's subconscious minds through their dreams. Multiple people can enter the same dream, and "architects" are able to construct dream scenarios. To protect themselves and their secrets from mind control infiltration, people can be trained to create "security guards" inside their dreams to fight off the intruders. The resulting film resembles a high-tech video game that takes place inside the mind.

Like all good science fiction writers, writer-director Christopher Nolan provides rules that control the imaginary world he has created. For example, everyone knows that you can't die in a dream; you simply wake up. In Nolan's world, however, if a dreamer dies while sedated, he enters a state of limbo that appears to last for decades, "turning his brain into scrambled eggs." The danger of this happening allows the audience to worry about the safety of the protagonists, even when they are maneuvering through an imaginary dreamland. Another rule, Cobb explains, is that "in a dream you can cheat architecture to create impossible rooms, infinite loops and paradoxes." Nolan's rules also allow the viewer to accept sudden, exciting occurrences, such as a runaway freight train appearing in the middle of the street, or a city folding over on top of itself.

The plot of the film is both deliciously complicated and surprisingly unimportant. Cobb is a rogue dream architect hired by Saito (Ken Watanabe), a Japanese businessman, to plant an idea that will be profitable to Saito's company in the subconscious mind of another businessman, Robert Fischer, Jr. (Cillian Murphy). And since Fischer is about to inherit a conglomerate that will control all the energy in the world, we are manipulated to view Saito as a sympathetic hero even though he is invading an innocent man's mind.

To plant the idea, Cobb creates a dream with several layers of dreams within dreams — a dream that requires heavy sedation and thus, according to the "rules," is inherently unstable and dangerous to the dream infiltrators. Cobb employs a team of inception experts, played by some of the finest actors in the business doing their finest work — Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Arthur, the cool and resourceful sleep facilitator; Tom Hardy as Eams, the wry, wisecracking forger; Cillian Murphy as Fischer, the "mark" in whose mind they must plant the idea; Tom Berenger as the mark's "projection"; Ellen Page as the young, naive dream architect; and Marion Cotillard as Mal, Cobb's demon wife, who projects herself into his dreams and does her best to sabotage his jobs.

The real stars of the film, however, are the director, Christopher Nolan, and his wife, producer Emma Thomas, who spent ten years writing the script

and figuring out a way to put it on film. Unlike James Cameron ("Avatar") and George Lucas (Industrial Light and Magic), who seem to think, "Here's a cool computer technique, I wonder how I can use it in a film?", Nolan seems to have thought, "Here's an idea I want to convey — I wonder how I can portray it onscreen?" Nolan uses many amazing new film tricks, but he uses them to tell his story, instead of using the story to show off his cool movie-making techniques.

The result is a mind-boggling experience — from the Escher-like paradoxes demonstrated by the dream architect, to the collapsing dreamscapes that occur when the dreamer's conscious mind begins to intrude as the dreamer wakes up, to the hyper-emotional moments portrayed in the exchanges between Cobb and Mal. Particularly exciting is the story line that takes place in the middle layer of the dreams-within-dreams, when the characters experience weightlessness during a fast-paced fight scene. Part of this action was filmed in a rotating room, using a technique similar to that used by Fred Astaire when he danced on the ceiling in "Royal Wedding" (1951). Another part of it seems to have been filmed in the "vomit comet" used by astronauts to simulate weightlessness. (Ron Howard used such a device in "Apollo 13" [1995].)

The weightless scenes are simply thrilling. Grappling for a gun without gravity to ground them, the characters are thrown from ceiling to floor, and floor to wall . . . it's irresistibly involving. Gordon-Levitt's willingness to bang into walls and furniture and drop from rotating ceilings and floors to make a scene happen reminds me of the golden age of stunt acting, when Steve McQueen and other good actors eschewed the safety of a stunt double or a green screen and literally threw themselves into their roles.

Even after the film is over and the conversations begin, we never know quite what to think of Cobb. Is he a hero, determined to return to his family no matter what the cost? Or is he a self-absorbed man so addicted to his work and his mind games that he cannot tell what is real and what is imaginary? At one point he leans out a window to see his wife sitting on the ledge of a building across from him. Behind her is the room he is standing in — a logical impossibility, yet there it is. He urges her to come back inside the room behind him. Is he dreaming? Is he crazy? We never know for sure.

More importantly, Nolan challenges us to examine the root of our own beliefs, even as he entertains us with an action packed thriller. Are we, like many of the characters in this film, so certain of what we believe that we cannot see what is true? Nolan uses both inception and deception to plant his multitude of clues, but he leaves it to the audience to decide what we know, what we believe, and what we feel is real about the film, and about ourselves.

Hans Zimmer's brilliant musical score drives the emotional effect of the film, especially as the four layers of dream stories come together in the climax, much as four layers of history stories came together in the climax of D.W. Griffith's seminal "Intolerance." Zimmer isn't as well known as Danny Elfman and John Williams, but his body of work spans nearly three decades and is just as important. He has been nominated for eight Oscars, honoring scores for movies as diverse as "Gladiator" (2001), "The Thin Red Line" (1999), "The Preacher's Wife" (1997), and "Rain Man" (1989). He won an Oscar for his scoring of "The Lion King" (1994). "Inception" could easily provide his next Oscar.

Christopher Nolan has made a name for himself as a director of films about altered states of reality. His films are taut, exciting, and intellectually satisfying. "Memento" (2000), about a man with short-term memory loss (Guy Pearce), has one of the most memorable chase scenes I've ever seen, as the protagonist realizes he's running but can't remember whether he is the pursuer or the pursued. "Insomnia" (2002) is a murder mystery in which the detective (Al Pacino) begins to question his perception of reality when Arctic summer leads to sleep deprivation. "The Prestige" (2006) is one of the coolest magic tricks ever set to film. "Inception" is Nolan's best movie so far — but I hope it is not the best movie he will ever make. I can't wait to see what he does next. ❑

"Micmacs," directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Epithete Films-Warner Brothers, 2009, 105 minutes.

Fun and French

Jo Ann Skousen

"Micmacs" is the latest film from the whimsical and often surreal imagination of Jean-Pierre Jeunet ("Amelie," "A Very Long Engagement," "Delicatessen"). Jeunet likes to explore the idea of how fate and coincidence control our lives, so his films often show how big events can be traced back to small occurrences.

"Micmacs" opens in the Sahara, where a group of soldiers is standing around watching one of their men try to disarm a landmine. Unfortunately he fails and is blown up. The news of his death sends his grieving wife to a sanatorium, where we never see her again, and his young son, Bazil, to a Catholic boarding school, where he is terrorized by the nuns. Years later, while working at a video store, Bazil (Dany Boon) is shot in the forehead by a gun that falls from a speeding car as he stands inside the shop. Debating whether to remove the bullet or leave it where it is, the doctor decides by literally flipping a coin,

and the bullet remains.

While he is in the hospital, Bazil loses his job to a pretty young girl, and he drifts around the city for a while. His experiences are punctuated by several Chaplinesque scenes of homelessness reminscent of the silent era of films, when sorrow was often tinged with comedy. Eventually he meets up with a group of mismatched junk dealers who live together as a quasi-family in a cavernous workshop built inside the scrap heap. Each of these strange characters has an unusual interest or talent. One is a contortionist; another can precisely calculate sizes and distances; yet another holds the Guinness record for distance shot from a cannon. They all look as if they'd run away from the circus. Bazil fits right in.

Through another series of coincidences Bazil discovers the identities of the manufacturers of both the landmine that killed his father and the bullet that hit him in the head. One is a greedy warmonger with a passion for antique cars. The other is a greedy munitions dealer who collects random body parts from historic figures such as Hitler, Churchill, Mussolini, and even Marilyn Monroe. Bazil devises a plan to gain revenge against both men and enlists his newfound friends to help him carry it out. The result is a delightfully unpredictable sting operation full of amusing characters and unexpected gags.

"Micmacs" is not as good as Jeunet's previous films, but fans of his style of cinematography and storytelling will certainly enjoy it. At times he lets his cinematic tricks and techniques overshadow the story, and his characters are often too cartoonish to evoke any true emotional connection. But his background details are delightful. Watch for the unusual gadgets designed by the junk dealers, for example, and the movie posters for "Micmacs" that appear on billboards during the chase scenes. Take a break from the big-budget action films, formulaic romantic comedies, and raunchy teen comedies of summer to enjoy this delightful little French pastry of a film. ❑

Seeds of Liberty, *from page 30*

economics at San Jose State University, and Lawrence Reed of FEE. Present-day trustees of the Atlas Society include Robert Poole and Frank Bubb, former Missouri YAF state chairman.

Belief in free-market economics and a respect for entrepreneurship led a number of YAF alumni to careers teaching business and economics. James Gwartney was Washington YAF state chairman while in graduate school at the University of Washington in the early '60s and since 1968 has been on the faculty at Florida State University. He is the co-author of "Economics: Private and Public Choice," a widely used textbook, now in its 12th edition. Warren Coats, one-time Hawaii YAF state chairman, taught at the University of Virginia, the University of Hawaii, and George Mason University. He is now working on the rehabilitation of the money and banking systems of Afghanistan and Iraq and is a director of the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority. H.E. (Ted) Frech was Missouri YAF state chairman and is now a professor of economics at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

From this brief review of the careers of a limited number of individuals who were active members in the 1960s and '70s it is clear that Young Americans for Freedom played an important part in the recruitment, education, training, and motivation of many people who helped to develop a libertarian movement in the United States.

During the half-century since the birth of YAF, the political and social environment has changed dramatically. There is no longer any one youth organization bringing together students and young adults on the Right. YAF continued training and educating young people, nearly dying out in the mid-1990s but it has had a rebirth of sorts in 2010, once again publishing the New Guard magazine. Today there are several other campus-oriented organizations, including Students for Liberty and Young Americans for Liberty as well as Young America's Foundation, a nonprofit that grew out of YAF and is led by YAF alumni. In addition, there is a multitude of thinktanks, publications, and organizations representative of various aspects of contemporary libertarianism.

This is a world that did not exist in the 1960s and early '70s. A hundred flowers have blossomed, but the seeds of those flowers can be traced in many ways to one organization, Young Americans for Freedom, and its founding at Sharon, Connecticut, 50 years ago. ❑

Letters, *from page 8*

his Maricopa County department were, according to the Phoenix New Times, named in some 2,700 lawsuits from 2004–7. That's 50 times more than the departments of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston combined, at a cost of more than $40 million to his county. Of course, some of those lawsuits related not to arrests, but to the acts of torture, wrongful deaths, and murders commonplace in Maricopa County's jails. Mr. Delacroix opines that "prison should not be fun or comfortable." Neither Arpaio's routine use of hog-tying and asphyxiation, nor his habit of webcasting female prisoners using the toilet are fun or comfortable for the prisoners; are they therefore within Mr. Delacroix's preferred parameters of prisoner care? Bear in mind that many of the prisoners in question have committed no offense more severe than crossing a line on the ground; indeed, in his rush to round up every undocumented immigrant in his bailiwick, Arpaio shows little concern about the potentially dangerous felons whose warrants he leaves unserved while devoting resources instead to his desperate need for camera time. Perhaps that's why violent crime, which since 2002 has declined 12% statewide, has in Maricopa County instead increased by 58%.

Under greater scrutiny, the points Mr. Delacroix chalks up for Sheriff Joe seem not so favorable. The popularity of the female chain-gangs? That was thanks to Arpaio's policy of refusing all privileges such as canteen access or reading material except to those who would "volunteer" for the shackles. And that pink underwear? It's not just for "violent" offenders; Arpaio puts those also on the members of his

juvenile chain gangs — kids aged 15 to 17, sentenced to one-year terms and sent out ankle-chained in groups of five not only to pick up trash but also to bury corpses.

Again, a Google search information on Arpaio from sources other than his army of PR flacks would reveal to Mr. Delacroix that the sheriff's distinguishing features are not "pragmatism" but rather total contempt for constitutional protections and the rule of law, and not "a sense of humor" but rather a mean streak a county wide. This is a man who gleefully pursues political vendettas, who has shielded an officer after his brazen theft of a defense file in the middle of a courtroom during trial, and who vociferously defended his officers after they broke a paraplegic's neck as well as his prison guards after they beat to death a mentally retarded man arrested for misdemeanor loitering. This is a man who has led the way in the increasing militarization of police work, a proud owner of his own armored troop carrier as well as a .50-caliber machine gun he regularly hauls into the desert to aid in his hunt for illegal immigrants.

If Delacroix truly bemoans the determined statism of our society, then he should recognize that there are few more determined statists than Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

Big Chill

In response to Michael J. Dunn (Letters, September) taking issue with my Reflection (August) on geoengineering: the possibilities for geoengineering climate change are very numerous, possibly infinite, and it is unscientific to dismiss them all, *a priori*, as unworkable. I mentioned the Pinatubo volcano only as an illustration of the general principle of aerosol effects; no one suggests it be literally imitated using volcanic ash or quartz particles. The aerosol some scientists suggest is sulfur. In this regard something might be achieved simply by not going to great lengths to remove sulfur from jet fuel.

The use of aerosols is not my "leading" proposal. One idea I find more plausible is the use of vapor-creating ships, as suggested by John Latham of the National Center for Atmospheric Research and Stephen Salter of the University of Edinburgh. One calculation suggests the expenditure of only $3 billion a year on such ships might be enough to counteract anticipated global warming (See: Samuel Thernstrom, "Could We Engineer a Cooler Planet?" Washington Post, June 13, 2009).

James L. Payne
Sandpoint, ID

Reflections, *from page 22*

as a breath of fresh air. When the Democrats talk about how dumb she is, they just remind me of how dumb they are; but then I hear her talk, and I realize that yes, she's just as dumb as *I* thought she was.

The Tea Party members? I'm glad they came to visit, but I hope they don't stay for supper. They'd either chug all the beer in my fridge or insist that I serve only lemonade. Then they'd requisition the TV for a few dozen hours of football and go through my DVDs hunting for something to censor. No, I don't trust their populism or their talk of rights. Some of them know that rights exist in every area of life; others just want them for themselves. In other words, they're normal human beings, and that's not nearly enough.

Less than normal are the congressmen who remain at the top of the Republican totem pole. Aren't you sick of them? They've been there forever, just like the Democrats, and what have they done that's right? Tell me. I hope there are a lot of things I've missed.

At this juncture, I could call for a great intellectual resurgence, for leaders who will stand up and talk, in the most affirmative and optimistic manner, about all the ways in which freedom ennobles and enriches everyone. But you can't have an intellectual resurgence without intellect, and you can't have decent talk without decent talkers. With the exception of a few young candidates — often, I'm happy to say, women and members of ethnic minorities — and a few cogent reasoners and talkers in the media and the thinktanks, I don't see many people who can lead the GOP toward a better future.

The best that can happen in 2010, I believe, is that the Democrats will be soundly defeated, and that the Republicans will then perform their function of blocking as many of the Democrats' big-government initiatives as they can. That would create some time and space for the republic to breathe, for economic investment to return, and for younger and brighter people to emerge.

This probably doesn't sound very cheerful. It isn't meant to sound cheerful. But if libertarians are right, and I'm sure that we are, a free society has immense powers of self-regeneration, so long as the clash of political and economic interests opens that vital time and space for individual thought and action.

— Stephen Cox

Yankee gone home — Unlike Hillary Clinton, I've been a lifelong Yankee fan. I have on my wall a poster with the signatures of every Yankee member of the 1961 world championship team. My favorite baseball is one signed "To Dr. S" by Mickey Mantle.

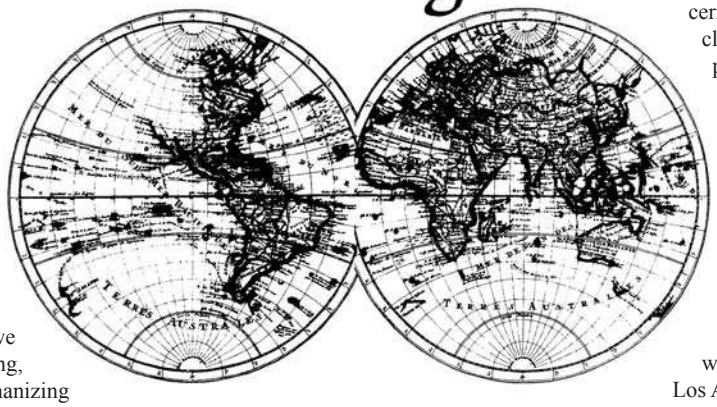
Long-time owner George Steinbrenner, who died on July 13 at the age of 80, was a true-blue Yankee. After all, he was born on the Fourth of July, 1930. Sure, "The Boss" was overbearing and sometimes uncivil (his language was so profane I couldn't read his latest biography), but he was an All-American winner who demanded success and a cleancut image for the Bronx Bombers (haircuts and covering up tattoos). And he wasn't apologetic for his riches.

He got the last laugh by dying after winning the World Series and then avoiding the dreaded federal estate tax. The death tax is dead for 2010, but I'm sure it will return with a vengeance next year. His heirs saved $500 million in federal estate taxes this year (he was worth more than $1 billion, according to Forbes magazine).

But there's a downside to the new estate tax law. In eliminating the estate tax in 2010, Congress also ended the stepped-up basis for heirs. One hand giveth and the other taketh away. So the Steinbrenner sons don't have to pay any taxes now, but when they sell their ownership in the Yankees and other assets, they will have to pay capital gains. Ben Franklin is still right: "There is nothing certain in this world except death and taxes."

— Mark Skousen

Terra Incognita



New York

Laudable devotion to stereotypical behavior, from the *New York Daily News*:

City councilman Dan Halloran, who spotted a traffic cop blow through stop signs while yakking on the phone, confronted the officer — and got slapped with a $165 ticket for blocking a crosswalk, the irate lawmaker said.

The councilman was on his way to his district office when he says he saw Officer Daniel Chu zoom by, talking on a cell phone with his lights blazing. "I know the traffic agents have no emergency they have to run to," Halloran said. "It immediately set my radar off."

He said he followed the car as it blasted through two stop signs while weaving in and out of traffic before illegally parking in front of a Dunkin' Donuts.

Washington, D.C.

Innovative call for separating church and state, from the *Washington Examiner*:

Andy Stern, the former head of the Service Employees International Union who now sits on President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, said the United States needs an economic plan that does not include "worshipping" the free market.

"America needs a 21st century economic plan because we now know the market-worshipping, privatizing, de-regulating, dehumanizing American financial plan has failed and should never be revived, worshipping the market again," Stern said in remarks at the annual conference of the activist group Campaign for America's Future.

Minneapolis, Minn.

The march of social progress continues ever on, from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*:

For nearly two decades, Minnesota native Steve Horner has crusaded against what he considers a monumental injustice: Ladies' night.

The complaints he filed with Human Rights Departments in several states have earned him at least $6,000 in damages for being denied ladies' special prices at bars. The white, balding, bespectacled Horner has compared his quest to Rosa Parks' refusal to go to the back of the bus.

Beijing

A market for everything, spotted by CNN:

In China, white people can be rented.

For a day, a weekend, a week, up to even a month or two, Chinese companies are willing to pay high prices for fair-faced foreigners to join them as fake employees or business partners.

Some call it "White Guy Window Dressing." To others, it's known as the "White Guy in a Tie" events, "The Token White Guy Gig," or, simply, a "Face Job." And it is, essentially, all about the age-old Chinese concept of face. To have a few foreigners hanging around means a company has prestige, money and the increasingly crucial connections — real or not — to businesses abroad.

Tampa, Fla.

An idea whose time has come, from the *St. Petersburg Times*:

Jonathon "The Impaler" Sharkey wants to move to Washington, D.C. to become the nation's first vampire president.

"The Impaler" claims he's a direct descendent of Vlad II the Impaler, better known as Dracula.

He plans to file paperwork to run for President of the United States in 2012. He recently switched his party affiliation from Independent to Republican so he can run with the G.O.P.

"He does believe in Republican values," said A.J. Matthews, a state committeeman for the local Republican Party. "Is he going to make a big splash with his current identification of being a vampire? That's up to the voters to decide."

Culver City, Calif.

Interpretive differences, noted by the *Los Angeles Times*:

A graduation card sold at local Hallmark stores has been pulled from shelves after a civil rights group raised concerns about the content. The group claims the card's micro-speaker plays a greeting that's racist.

It is a graduation greeting that says, "Hey world, we are officially putting you on notice . . . you black holes, you are so ominous. Watch your back," the card vocalizes.

"That was very demeaning to African American women. When it made reference to African American women as whores," said Leon Jenkins of the Los Angeles NAACP. When Hallmark was reached by phone, they said the card is all a misunderstanding. The card's theme is the solar system and emphasizes the power of the grad to take over the universe, even energy-absorbing black holes.

But that's not what some people heard. "You hear the 'r' in there. 'Whores,' not, 'holes.' The 'r' is in there," said Minnie Hatley of the NAACP.

Columbia, S.C.

Curious perspective on comparative religion, noted in *The State* [S.C.]:

With a bead of sweat rolling down the side of his face outside a Columbia bar, Republican S.C. Sen. Jake Knotts called Lexington Rep. Nikki Haley, an Indian-American Republican woman running for governor, a "raghead" several times while explaining how he believed she was hiding her true religion from voters.

"She's a fucking raghead," Knotts said. He later clarified his statement. He did not mean to use the F-word.

Knotts says he believed Haley has been set up by a network of Sikhs and was programmed to run for governor of South Carolina by outside influences in foreign countries. "We got a raghead in Washington; we don't need one in South Carolina," Knotts said more than once. Knotts says he believes Haley's father has been sending letters to India saying that Haley is the first Sikh running for high office in America. He says her father walks around Lexington wearing a turban.

"We're at war over there," Knotts said. Asked to clarify, he said he did not mean the United States was at war with India, but was at war with "foreign countries."

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(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in Terra Incognita, or email to terraincognita@libertyunbound.com.)


I saw a government-backed casket cartel overcharging grieving families.
I saw not only an injustice—I saw an opportunity to change things.
I now sell caskets in nine different states, saving people money while giving them peace of mind.
I am the power of one entrepreneur.
I am IJ.
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